

October 4: *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis

On this feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, we recall that his namesake Pope Francis has written a lengthy encyclical focused on the environment: *Laudato Si* – *On Care for Our Common Home*. This document proposes that the care of the earth is a moral and spiritual concern. Francis issues an urgent call to action, pointedly asking: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS 160).

Recalling the beautiful canticle of creation of Francis of Assisi, the pope notes that the earth, our sister, “now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her” (2). Francis seeks to “address every person living on this planet... I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (3). Francis of Assisi helps us see the need for “an integral ecology” (11).

We may ask: What is happening to our common home, our beautiful world? “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (21). “These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture” (22). We need to take a “frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair” (61). Although “humanity has disappointed God’s expectations” (61), there is genuine hope.

Pope Francis sees “the rich contribution which religions can make towards an integral ecology and the full development of humanity” (62). “The work of the Church seeks not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but at the same time she must above all protect humanity from self-destruction” (79). Like Francis of Assisi, we must adopt “the gaze of Jesus” on the world and all creation.