



**Key Messages & Talking Points on the Ecology Encyclical**  
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***KEY MESSAGES***

***THE ENCYCLICAL ADDRESSES A MORAL ISSUE:*** Pope Francis is speaking as a pastor offering moral guidance rooted in central Catholic teachings about care for others and care for God's creation.

***THE ENCYCLICAL IS A CALL TO CARE FOR OTHERS:*** The poor suffer the most when we don't responsibly care for God's creation, and it's up to us to help them. More fully caring for God's creation will help real people right now, especially the poor and vulnerable.

***THE ENCYCLICAL IS A CALL TO CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION:*** God gave us this world, and He asks us to take care of it. The natural world is a gift. Let's stop and think about what kind of world we want to leave our children and grandchildren.

***THE ENCYCLICAL SPEAKS OF CATHOLIC DISTINCTIVENESS:*** Catholics bring a distinctive and important voice to this conversation. Care for God's creation is woven throughout the Bible, and has been emphasized by recent popes and bishops of various countries.

***THE ENCYCLICAL INVITES US TO AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY:*** We are called to live an integrated life rooted in what Pope Francis calls an "integral ecology." We're called to cooperate with God's design in our relationship with the natural world and with one another. When we get these intertwined relationships right, we grow closer to God. We understand that our individual decisions have social consequences. We recognize the strong link between respecting human dignity and care for the natural world. We

know that population isn't the problem: it's the throwaway culture that's the problem.

***THE ENCYCLICAL INVITES Catholics to participate in public life and work for the common good.*** We are a global church with experience with what's going on in communities around the world.

***THE ENCYCLICAL IS A TIME TO ACT:*** Pope Francis is encouraging us all to care for others and for the gift of God's creation. He is touching people's hearts and moving them to action. It's time to work together to better protect the gift of God's creation. Let's build a culture of stewardship.

***THE ENCYCLICAL is a teaching document, not a set of policy proposals.*** Let us prayerfully respond to Pope Francis' call for a change of hearts. Let us try our best to live rightly within the world we've been given, and with each other.

***Why now a need for this Encyclical?***

Since his election in March 2013, Pope Francis has often shown concern for the environment, following the example of Benedict XVI who was sometimes labeled the first "Green Pope." Benedict consistently called for the safeguarding of creation, arguing that respect for the human being and nature are one.

- From the beginning of his Petrine Ministry, Pope Francis made it clear that his choice of his papal name after St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology was indicative of his concern for the environment. In his inaugural Mass homily, he called on everyone to be "protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."
- On World Environment Day, June 5, 2013, Francis stressed the need to "cultivate and care" for the environment, saying it is part of God's plan that man "nurture[s] the world with responsibility," transforming it into a "garden, a habitable place for everyone."
- In his June 5, 2013 address Francis said: "We are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation, listening to creation. The implications of

living in a horizontal manner is that we have moved away from God, we no longer read His signs.”

- Pope Francis has issued to the Church and the world a profound challenge to rethink the culture of waste and to contemplate seriously and act with conviction against the dynamics of an economy and finance that lack ethics. “Man is not in charge today, money is in charge, money rules.” He notes that for many: “If you break a computer, that is a tragedy, but poverty, the needs, the dramas of so many people end up becoming the norm.” Focusing specifically on hunger, he says: “the food we throw away is as if stolen from the table of the poor, the hungry.”
- As Benedict had often done, Francis links human ecology with environmental ecology, issuing a strong challenge to rethink the culture of waste and to oppose a lack of ethics in economy and finance. “I would like us all to make a serious commitment to respect and protect creation,” he said, “to be attentive to every person, to counter the culture of waste and disposable [mentality], to promote a culture of solidarity” and of living alongside others, especially on the margins, as opposed to individualism.
- In an address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on January 13, 2014, Pope Francis noted the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013 and warned against “greedy exploitation of environmental resources.” He quoted the popular adage: “God always forgives, we sometimes forgive, but when nature – creation – is mistreated, she never forgives.”
- The forthcoming encyclical is a good opportunity for us to distinguish between ecology as a science and ‘ecologism’ as an ideology. Ecologies that seemingly begin with the program of saving our environment quickly run their logic to the point where the environment takes absolute priority over human beings. When taken to the extreme, many make the erroneous claim that the human person is simply one of a very large number of species, all equally valuable and enjoying the same rights.
- One ideology which is widespread in environmentalist circles is the myth about overpopulation. Those who exaggerate the effect of

climate change are also the same ones who want population control and all which that that entails.

- Care for the environment was a natural way of life in the medieval monasteries.
- To recover the integrity of creation, we need a renewed Christian culture.

### **Recalling Benedict's contribution in *Caritas in veritate***

- For Benedict, human ecology is an imperative. Adopting a lifestyle that respects our environment and supports the research and use of clean energies that preserve the patrimony of creation and that are safe for human beings should be given political and economic priority.
- In his encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*, and in subsequent writings, Pope Benedict XVI has called for the development of a “human ecology” grounded in the idea of creation as gift. “The human being will be capable of respecting other creatures only if he keeps the full meaning of life in his own heart. Otherwise he will come to despise himself and his surroundings, and to disrespect the environment, the creation, in which he lives. For this reason, the first ecology to be defended is ‘human ecology.’ Without a clear defense of human life from conception until natural death; without a defense of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman; without an authentic defense of those excluded and marginalized by society, we will never be able to speak of authentic protection of the environment.”
- Benedict called for a “change in mentality” in order to “quickly arrive at a global lifestyle that respects the covenant between humanity and nature, without which the human family risks disappearing.” He said that “every government must commit themselves to protecting nature and assisting it to carry out its essential role in the survival of humanity.”
- Technology that dominates human beings deprives them of their humanity. The pride that it generates has created an impossible economism in our societies as well as hedonism that subjectively and

selfishly regulates behavior. The debilitation of the primacy of the human person provokes a loss of the meaning of life.

- In his 2010 World Day of Peace Message entitled “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, protect creation”, Pope Benedict XVI used the term “human ecology.” Benedict reaffirmed the Catholic understanding of our relationship with the goods of the earth and our call to stewardship of the planet which has been given to us by the Creator as a gift. *Here are some salient excerpts from that 2010 letter:*
- “There exists a certain reciprocity: as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person. If the Church’s magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism, it is because such notions eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things.”
- “In the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the “dignity” of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings. They also open the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism, which would see the source of man’s salvation in nature alone, understood in purely naturalistic terms.”
- Benedict has called for an “integral human development” which recognizes the centrality of the human person and the primacy of our relationships with one another in family and society. He underscored the truth that creation is a gift, given to human persons by a God of love who entrusts us with responsibility for one another – and therefore for the goods which promote our human flourishing. We all have a responsibility for one another. We need to live together as good stewards of creation, recognizing the need first for a “human ecology”.
- “If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole

of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church's Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make.”

- Pope Benedict articulated a Catholic Environmental vision which is *pro-life, pro-family, pro-poor, pro-peace and fundamentally relational*. We are to receive one another as gifts. We must never use human persons as objects. We should receive creation as a gift, our common home, to be shared with one another, and not as an object of use. He articulates a vision for a «human ecology» which can promote a path to authentic peace.

### **Pope Francis' forthcoming encyclical**

- Pope Francis' forthcoming document on ecology is likely to put the human person at the center and draw attention to the connection between environmental problems and poverty. Such a document is urgently needed to correct many philosophical and theological errors that have crept into the environmental movement.
- We have every good reason to believe and expect that in this encyclical, Pope Francis will present the human person as central and focus also on the margins of society, those places where there are environmental problems because of poverty. Pope Francis intends to put “particular emphasis” on the theme of “human ecology,” a phrase used by Pope Benedict XVI to describe “not only how people must defend and respect nature but how the nature of the person – masculine and feminine, as created by God – must also be defended.”

### **➤ A MORAL ISSUE**

Pope Francis is speaking as a pastor offering moral guidance rooted in central Catholic teachings about care for others and care for God's creation.

- **CARE FOR OTHERS:** The poor suffer the most when we don't responsibly care for God's creation, and it's up to us to help them. Pope Francis knows that more fully caring for God's creation will help real people right now, especially the poor and vulnerable. The poorest are least responsible for these changes to the climate, yet they suffer the most from them.

This is about helping our children and grandchildren. Responsibly caring for the natural world will help families just like yours and mine. Whether it's a child in Windsor suffering from asthma or a family in the Philippines whose home is threatened by rising seas, the health of our environment affects all of us, especially the most vulnerable.

Every day, environmental impacts like intensifying storms and droughts, increased pollution, food and water insecurity, conflicts over declining resources, and the spread of disease affect the lives of countless people right here at home and around the world.

- **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION:** God gave us this world, and He asks us to take care of it. The natural world is a gift. Let's stop and think about what kind of world we want to leave our children and grandchildren.
- **CATHOLIC DISTINCTIVENESS:** Catholics bring a distinctive and important voice to this conversation. These are longstanding Catholic teachings, and Catholics are called to respect them. Wonder, gratitude, and care for the gift of God's creation are woven throughout the Bible from its very first pages.

Recent popes and bishops of many countries have spoken on the need to care for creation. St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict both saw that our calling to care for the natural world grows from our calling to care for one another as brothers and sisters. Both St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict linked the dignity of the human person with care for the environment and recognized this as a moral issue. Both St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict warned about greenhouse gases and climate change. Pope Francis echoes Pope Benedict, who said that "the environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole."

- **INTEGRAL ECOLOGY:** We're called to live an integrated life rooted in what Pope Francis calls an "integral ecology." This means that we're called to cooperate with God's design, both in our relationship with the natural world and in our relationships with one another. When we get these intertwined relationships right, we grow closer to God. How we care for the natural world reveals something important about our understanding of our relationship to God and our

responsibilities to one another. We recognize the strong link between respecting human dignity and care for the natural world. We see these issues as part of an integrated whole. Living an integral moral ecology begins with protecting human life from its beginning to its natural end. Authentic development begins with recognizing the dignity of the human person.

- Pope Francis has strongly rejected what he calls “ideological colonization”, through which rich countries impose an ethos that fails to respect human dignity and is destructive of family life. We know that population isn’t the problem: it’s the throwaway culture that’s the problem. We understand that our individual decisions have social consequences.
- Pope Francis is reminding us that we’re called to orient our hearts to others. He’s calling us to a renewed sense of solidarity and interdependence. He’s calling on us to move from a “throwaway culture” and an “economy of exclusion” towards right relationships with God’s creation and with each other.
- Catholics are called to participate in public life and work for the common good on the local, national, and international level. Invoking the role of prudential judgment here doesn’t give you a free pass. This is at its root a moral issue.
- Catholics are called to consider the prudential judgments contained in this encyclical prayerfully, thoughtfully, and humbly. We can disagree about the particulars, but only after having considered them with open hearts and minds. We’re not called to live our faith grudgingly or to assent to its teachings as minimally as possible. In fact, we’re called to just the opposite: to overflow in our love and generosity towards others, and in our humility and docility to our Church. Exercising prudence on environmental issues means facing them head-on and working together with other nations as best we can. We’re a global church with experience with what’s going on in communities around the world.
- **TIME TO ACT** Pope Francis is encouraging us all to care for others and for the gift of God’s creation. He’s touching people’s hearts and moving them to action. It’s time to work together to better protect our



natural world. Let's build a culture of stewardship. The time to act is now.

- Change is happening to the climate. The scientific consensus on the link between human activity and recent climate change is strong – as strong as the scientific consensus on the link between cigarettes and cancer. What can we do? This is a teaching document, not a set of policy proposals. First, let's prayerfully respond to Pope Francis' call for a change of hearts. Let us try our best to live rightly within the world we've been given and with each other.
- We must resist the "throwaway culture" wherever it manifests itself. Our "throwaway culture" drives many of our environmental problems. We can resist this by taking small steps toward simpler, fuller lives.
- Living more simply helps us grow closer to God. Living more simply helps us grow in our relationships with those we care about. It frees up time and money. It frees us to be more generous. Small everyday actions matter. From recycling to advocating for faith-informed environmental policies, we can all take action at home, in our communities, and at the national level. Our businesses and communities can work together to find sustainable energy solutions. This will foster innovation and create tens of thousands of jobs. At the end of the day, responsibly caring for the natural world is a global challenge and it needs a global solution.

***THE ENCYCLICAL OFFERS US*** a chance here to witness to our faith.

***Salt & Light Television Creation* documentary series**  
**Outline of Episodes**  
**Series will be available in June 2015**

**Link to trailer:** <http://saltandlighttv.org/creation/>

**Guiding Question: Why Should We Care for Creation?**

**Episode I**

**Theme:** Awe and Wonder

**Answer:** Because it's wonderful and points to something greater than itself.

**Notes:** We all have the longing for beauty, for mystery. Awe and wonder at creation is the starting point. It draws us in because there is something more there. Benedict XVI (*Caritas in Veritate* #48, 51): "Nature expresses a design of love and truth. . . Nature speaks to us of the Creator and his love for humanity."

**Episode II**

**Theme:** The Human Person in Creation

**Answer:** Because we can; we have a special capacity to do so. If we don't care for creation, who else will?

**Notes:** Benedict XVI (*Caritas in Veritate* #48, 51): "Nature is a vocation."

**Episode III**

**Theme:** Respect

**Answer:** Because creation has an inherent order and dignity which we must respect.

**Notes:** Benedict XVI (*Caritas in Veritate* #48, 51): "Nature is at our disposal as a gift of the Creator, who has given it an inbuilt order, enabling man to draw from it the principles needed in order to till and keep it."

**Episode IV**

**Theme:** Universal Destination of Goods/Consumer Mentality (Need a better title here → "The Problem of Consumerism"?)

**Answer:** Because everyone deserves their share; everyone is entitled to a “little portion” of creation.

### **Episode V**

**Theme:** The “Grammar” of Creation

**Answer:** Because “Our Earth is talking to us and we must listen to it and decipher its message if we want to survive.” (Benedict XVI, address to priests, deacons, seminarians, July 26, 2007)

**Notes:** We care for creation because we are part of it and our role is to learn the grammar of creation.

### **Episode VI**

**Theme:** Connecting Natural and Human Ecology

**Answer:** Because “disregard for the environmental always harms human coexistence;” and vice versa (Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace message, 2007); because we restore ourselves physically and spiritually as we care for creation; we elevate creation, and creation elevates us.

**Notes:** As we improve natural ecology we improve our human ecology; and we can’t improve human ecology without respecting natural ecology + vice versa: we can’t improve natural ecology without respecting human ecology. --> “We can win the future only if we do not lose creation.” (Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning. . .*)