

Living Social Justice.....Laudato Si

Spring Focus: Ecological Injustice & the Impact on the Poor

In this encyclical Pope Francis strongly criticizes the wealthy who ignore the problem of climate change and the impact it has on the poor. He notes that decision-makers are “far removed from the poor,” physically, with so little direct contact with their brothers and sisters. (90, 49) Selfishness also leads to the evaporation of the notion of the common good. The disproportionate effect of environmental change on the poor and the developing world is highlighted throughout the encyclical. He notes that people in poverty have contributed least to climate change, yet they suffer from pollution, lack of access to clean water, hunger, and more. The poor have fewer financial resources that enable them to adapt to climate change. Additionally, the natural resources of those poorer countries “fuel the development of the richer countries “at the cost of their own present and future”. (52)

Ponder:

- Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and eco-systemic services such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry. (25)
- We are faced with not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (139)
- A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings. (91)

- As the United States Bishops have said, greater attention must be given to the needs of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests. We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers behind which we can hide; still less is there room for the globalization of indifference. (52)

Pray:

That God’s Spirit will enable us to be attentive to the energy of nature in this season and to ask ourselves whether we waste or use wisely our sources of energy – electricity, oil, gas, etc. and how our choices will affect future generations.

Include intercessions in the Liturgy of the Hours that ask for a deeper awareness and sense of responsibility toward the poor in the use of nature and its resources. Pray for the conversion of heart in making choices that impact the poor and the vulnerable.

Practice:

Support local efforts to solve environmental problems.

Go vegetarian for a day.

Buy locally grown foods.

Unplug your chargers when not in use.