

## THE IMPORTANCE OF OCTOBER 4 IN LAUDATO SI'



October 4, 2015 is Respect Life Sunday and often the date upon which we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis. The threads of both are woven throughout "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home," Pope Francis's social encyclical.

Respect Life Sunday is a program of the U.S. Bishops underscoring that "Life and Dignity of the Human Person" is the foundational principle of our faith; it is the core of Catholic social teaching. Human life is sacred. The human person is unique. Humans are special, the pinnacle of creation.

Care for Creation is another principle of Catholic social teaching: "Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan; it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of

God's creation." *USCCB*

Saint Francis is the patron saint of ecology.

Ecology is the relationship of everything in one system of life; one glorious, messy, complex system of life where the cause and effect of our actions are not ignored but studied.

Human ecology is the discipline that focuses on humans and their interactions with their environments. For example, human values, wealth, life-styles, resource use, and waste, to name a few. By definition human ecology recognizes the uniqueness of the human person.

Ecology is both caring for creation and caring for humanity, both natural ecology and human ecology. In the pages of *Laudato Si'*, these two ecologies are inseparable from each other. Ecology begins with the human person as the lens through which to assess our impact on creation.

The Columbia River Watershed Pastoral Letter provides an example: "The first and primary good to be preserved is the good of the individual person. Human life is sacred and the good of the community demands respect for that life." Then through the lens of the human person: "Environmental degradation can be particularly harmful to the unborn, the young and the elderly."

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stresses that "human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good," that "climate is a common good," and that "the notion of the common good ... extends to future generations."

*The Catholic Culture of Life Initiative: First 1000 Days* is a campaign to underscore the most crucial period of a child's development, from conception through a child's second birthday. These 1000 days are our best opportunity to shape a healthier, more prosperous future for today's children, born and unborn, who are tomorrow's generation.

Consider that the unborn, infants and young children are more sensitive than adults to toxins, that fetus and newborn are subject to contaminants in greater concentration, and that "Children, inside and outside the womb, are uniquely vulnerable to environmental hazards and exposure to toxic pollutants in the environment." (USCCB)

We have a moral imperative to care for all creation. Not "if" but "how." To quote Pope Francis, this is "an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings." *Laudato Si'*

This October 4<sup>th</sup> let us recall that our foundational principle is Life and Dignity of the Human Person, upon which Care for Creation sits firmly cemented.



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