**Summary of Laudato Si, Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment**

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Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si* is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that man is rendering to the environment and his fellow man. While addressing the environment directly, the document’s scope is broader in many ways as it looks at not only man’s effect on the environment, but also the many philosophical, theological, and cultural causes that threaten the relationships of man to nature and man to each other in various circumstances.

This document is in many ways the epitome of Pope Francis. It is an unexpected topic. It presents Gospel truths. And, it provides a challenge for every believer (and non-believers too).

Similar to [Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis' first Apostolic Exhortation](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/evangelii-gaudium-summary-pope-francis.html?referrer=https:/www.google.com/), *Laudato Si* is also a lengthy document – almost 42,000 words (In comparison, this blog post is 3,500 words if you read it all). **Given the size of this Encyclical and this summary, I would like to make it easy for you to learn about the document no matter how little time you have.**   
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**I’ve separated the blog post into different sections below:**

**If you have 2 minutes to learn about the document**, read the [General Summary](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#gensum).  
  
**If you have 10 minutes**, read the [General Summary](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#gensum) and [Table of Contents](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#toc). This will give you a great starting point in understanding the message *Laudato Si*.   
  
**If you want to learn even more about the document**, check out the list of [quotes on the main themes](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#mainqs) as well as [various topics](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#variqs) and quotes that are easy to share on social media.

Our team has also taken a few of the quotes and turned them into [graphics for sharing on social media](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html#gqs).  
  
As always, the best option is to read the document yourself ([Web version](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) | [PDF](http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf)). I know this isn’t always possible or realistic, especially the day of the release. The summary I provide below is by no means exhaustive (or perfect, I might add).  
  
**Note:** I will accompany quotes with a number (e.g. #134). These numbers signify paragraph numbers on the document, not page numbers.  
  
--**General Summary (in 2 minutes)**

*Laudato Si i*s Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the environment or more formally – On Care for Our Common Home. Laudato Si means “Praise be to you” which is the first line of a canticle by St. Francis that praises God with all of his creation.  
  
From the outset, Pope Francis states **the goal of the document**: “In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (#3).

Normally, papal documents are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful. But, similar to Pope Saint John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*, Pope Francis address his message to all people.

**The goal of the dialogue:** “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environment challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (#14).

The above is at the heart of the document, but Pope Francis also has a **very striking call to conversion** for those in the Church as well.

“The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; **it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience**” (#217) (bold mine).  
  
No matter who you are or where you find yourself in relation to protecting the environment, Pope Francis has this message for you: “I invite all to embrace with open hearts this Encyclical which is in line with the Church’s social doctrine” (General Audience, June 17, 2015).  
  
**Table of Contents (With Brief Summary Quotations for Each)**

In many ways, the structure and format of the document is very straightforward and logical. It consists of six chapters. I will list them below and then provide two quotes for each that I believe summarizes that chapter.  
  
**CHAPTER ONE – WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME**  
**CHAPTER TWO – THE GOSPEL OF CREATION**  
**CHAPTER THREE – THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**  
**CHAPTER FOUR – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**  
**CHAPTER FIVE – LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION**  
**CHAPTER SIX – ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY**  
  
**CHAPTER ONE – WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “Theological and philosophical reflections on the situation of humanity and the world can sound tiresome and abstract, unless they are grounded in a fresh analysis of our present situation, which is in many ways unprecedented in the history of humanity. So, before considering how faith brings new incentives and requirements with regard to the world of which we are a part, I will briefly turn to what is happening to our common home” (#17).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “But a sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves” (#34).  
  
  
**CHAPTER TWO – THE GOSPEL OF CREATION**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “Why should this document, addressed to all people of good will, include a chapter dealing with the convictions of believers? I am well aware that in the areas of politics and philosophy there are those who firmly reject the idea of a Creator, or consider it irrelevant… Nonetheless, science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both” (#62).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us…. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.   
  
The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). ’Tilling’ refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations” (#67)

**CHAPTER THREE – THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “It would hardly be helpful to describe symptoms without acknowledging the human origins of the ecological crisis. A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us. Should we not pause and consider this? At this stage, I propose that we focus on the dominant technocratic paradigm and the place of human beings and of human action in the world” (#101).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “It can be said that many problems of today’s world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society.   
  
The effects of imposing this model on reality as a whole, human and social, are seen in the deterioration of the environment, but this is just one sign of a reductionism which affects every aspect of human and social life. We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups” (#107).

**CHAPTER FOUR – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions” (#137).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment” (#141).

**CHAPTER FIVE – LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “So far I have attempted to take stock of our present situation, pointing to the cracks in the planet that we inhabit as well as to the profoundly human causes of environmental degradation. Although the contemplation of this reality in itself has already shown the need for a change of direction and other courses of action, now we shall try to outline the major paths of dialogue which can help us escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us” (#163).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.” (#164)   
  
**CHAPTER SIX – ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY**  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s goal:*** “Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” (#202).  
  
***Summary quote of this chapter’s message:*** “In calling to mind the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, we come to realize that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change” (#218).

**Quotes on Some of the Main Themes in *Laudato Si***

**On the effects of the market on the environment**  
“Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention” (#190).  
  
**On the false belief in technology**  
“There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means ‘an increase of “progress” itself’, an advance in ‘security, usefulness, welfare and vigour; …an assimilation of new values into the stream of culture’, as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such. The fact is that ‘contemporary man has not been trained to use power well’, because our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. Each age tends to have only a meagre awareness of its own limitations. It is possible that we do not grasp the gravity of the challenges now before us” (#105).  
  
**On global warming**

“A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.” (#23). (For more on global warming and climate change see, #24-26, #52, #169-170, #172, #175, #181 #188.)  
  
**On science and technology as a belief system**  
“It can be said that many problems of today’s world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society. The effects of imposing this model on reality as a whole, human and social, are seen in the deterioration of the environment, but this is just one sign of a reductionism which affects every aspect of human and social life” (#106).  
  
**On the environment and the poor**

“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: ‘Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest’” (#48).  
  
**On the right balance with the respect of the environment and humanity**

“This situation has led to a constant schizophrenia, wherein a technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with the other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings. But one cannot prescind from humanity. There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (#118).  
  
**On consumerism**

“When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality. In this horizon, a genuine sense of the common good also disappears” (#204).

**Other Topical Quotes of Importance**

**On what we individally can do to help the environment**

"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity. (#211)

**On water as a fundamental right**

“One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor…. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” (#29-30).  
  
**On social media’s effects on our culture**

“When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop  
people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously…. True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution.   
  
“Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature” (#47).  
  
**On overpopulation**

“Instead of resolving the problems of the poor and thinking of how the world can be different, some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate. At times, developing countries face forms of international pressure which make economic assistance contingent on certain policies of ‘reproductive health’….  To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues” (#50).  
  
**On transgender issues**

“Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek ‘to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it’” (#120).  
  
**On abortion**

“Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? ‘If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away’” (#120).  
  
  
**On genetically modified food**

This, then, is the correct framework for any reflection concerning human intervention on plants and animals, which at present includes genetic manipulation by biotechnology for the sake of exploiting the potential present in material reality. The respect owed by faith to reason calls for close attention to what the biological sciences, through research uninfluenced by economic interests, can teach us about biological structures, their possibilities and their mutations. Any legitimate intervention will act on nature only in order ‘to favour its development in its own line, that of creation, as intended by God’” (#132) (More on this topic in #133-135)  
  
**On the problem of modern day politics**

“That is why, in the absence of pressure from the public and from civic institutions, political authorities will always be reluctant to intervene, all the more when urgent needs must be met. To take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility” (#181).  
  
**On hope in this situation**

“Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us. (#205)”  
  
[[Click here to read a summary of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium](http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/evangelii-gaudium-summary-pope-francis.html?referrer=https:/www.google.com/)]

**Shareable Quotes on Social Media**

“The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume” (#204). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611473476394704897))

“One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross” (#99) #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611479981026226176))

“The deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet (#48). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611473942868443137))

“When we fail to acknowledge… a poor person, a human embryo… it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself” #117). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611474947408408577))

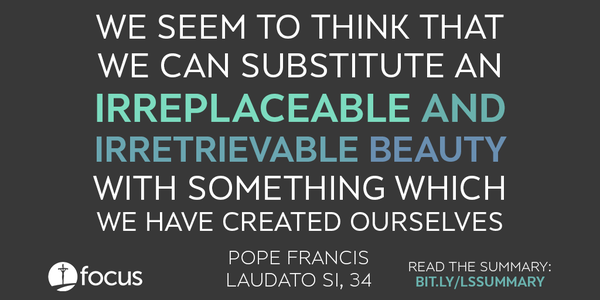
“In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (#3). #LaudatoSi

“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (#21). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611475200090071040))

“We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves” (#34). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611481042692640768))

“It is possible that we do not grasp the gravity of the challenge now before us” (#105). #LaudatoSi ([share on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611475965546369024))

**Graphics for Sharing on Social Media**

[](http://twitter.com/FOCUScatholic/status/611481042692640768/photo/1)

