

Laudato Si All of God's Creation

St Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home, our planet earth is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

In September this year our St Vincent de Paul hotline received a call from a Neighbor who had received a notice that her electric was about to be shut off, due to an overdue bill. The call was assigned to my wife Lois and I to investigate.

Upon looking into her situation, we found a single woman in her 70's who was living on her Social Security and a small pension that amounted to a little over a \$1,000 a month. She was living in subsidized housing and when we reviewed her expenses, she was doing a good job of managing her money. When we asked her why she fell behind with her electric, she explained that because of how hot the summer was, by the end of summer she owed \$500 on her electric bill which she couldn't pay and was going to have her electric disconnected.

I've seen on the news the effects of our climate's rising temperatures -

- a. The Fires in California, Canada, Portugal and Greece this year
- b. The flash floods in NYC, California, Europe
- c. At one point this year, 1/3 Pakistan submerged by water.
- d. In Phoenix Arizona this year, the month of July was the hottest on record – it was over 110 Degrees every day in July.
- e. I've seen where small farmers in Africa were being driven from their land by drought where they made their living for generations – who were now in refuge camps – looking for handouts.

But our Raleigh neighbor's problem made the problem of Global Warming more personal and real. Also, that it will affect those the most, with limited resources. These are "the least amongst us"; the people Jesus most identifies himself with in today's Gospel.

As I thought about it more. I thought what is our neighbor going to do next September. Is she going to calling us again for help? Are we going to get similar calls from more people asking for help with paying electric bills due to rising temperatures? Are we going to be able to help her and others or will our funding run short and will our neighbors end up homeless. The effects of Global Warming, right here in Raleigh became much more personal to me.

I know that discussions on Global Warming can be difficult, but addressing the issue is the right thing to do, instead of hoping the problem will go away. By addressing the problem gives me hope that we can solve it.

One issue about Global Warming that should be resolved is "Whether it is happening". The increase in the Earth's average temperatures has been increasing for decades, resulting in the increase of fires, floods, and farm land turning into deserts, all indications that Global Warming is happening.

The one issue that remains contentious is, if the increase is due to earth's environmental cycles or due to human activity. Who is right? I'm no expert on the issue but there are a few observations that make me believe that the warming is due to human activity.

First there are almost **200 nations** who believe that human activity is causing the problem and these nations are meeting regularly to come up with a plan to stop Global Warming from

happening because they believe we are the cause of the problem. The gathering this year is called COP28 and will meet from Nov 30th through Dec 12th in Dubai.

The vast majority of weather scientist believe the warming of the earth is due to Human activity. The 5th National Climate Assessment, prepared by over 500 Weather Scientist and recently released by the US Government confirms that the warming is due to human activity.

Then there is Pope Francis who has written two papal documents addressed to each one of us, on the negative effects that human activity is having on our Earthly home. First there is his encyclical Laudato Si which presents data as to what is happening with our environment. Then he wrote Laudate Deum, an Apostolic Exhortation presenting more recent data and encouraging us to take action to reverse the negative effects we are having on our earthly home's environment. Pope Francis is asking us to "Do Something".

Most of all, Pope Francis writes as a pastor, deeply concerned with people through the world, and above all, for those who don't have the resources to fend off the negative effects of our changing environment.

Bishop Luis Zarama is fully supportive of Pope Francis' efforts to take action to stop the negative effects of our changing environment.

We have a Care for Creation Ministry, at St Francis which has been putting Pope Francis Encyclical Laudato Si into action. There will be representatives of the Ministry in the Stewardship center after Mass if you're interested in more information or in helping out.

You might think, "The Problem is so massive what can one person do?" But "Each of us have done things that have caused this problem, so by our making some changes we can help stop the negative effects of Climate Change from happening."

As Catholics we don't believe that our salvation is based on our works but on our faith. The letter by St James tells us though that "Our works are a measure of our faith."

This weekend we have given thanks for many things, especially for the beautiful land that we live in, in the United States and the abundant harvest of food that our land provides us with, to nourish our lives. We need to be good stewards of this world that God has given us so that future generations, including all God's children could continue to enjoy what God has provided. All humans on this earth are children of the same God. We are all brothers and sisters.

Finally, I believe there is something that we might not fully appreciate about St Francis. He not only believed that all of creation was created by the same creator but the unique way he put that belief into practice. He truly believed that the Sun, Wind, Air, Animals were his brothers. He believed that the Moon and Water, were his sisters and the earth, a Mother who sustains us. Francis's love for all of Creation was as close to Francis's heart as were any of his closest family members. Maybe if more of us believed as St Francis, there would be no environmental crisis and mother earth would be capable of sustaining all of her children well into the future, even those with limited resources among us.

Notes:

- 1) Laudato Si – "Praised Be"
- 2) Laudate Deum – "Praise God for all his creatures"
- 3) Care for Creation – stfccreation@gmail.com
- 4) InterfaithCreationCare.org - Cherish Our Common Home