



**With Sr Patricia Mulhall
And
Sarah Gardner Lobo**

ZOOM MEETING HELD ON 10th March 2021 AT 7:30 p.m.

Introduction: "Laudato Si" Paragraphs 17 - 61

Participants: 23

Contributions

Group 1

Paragraph 35 – We are disturbing animals' natural habitat. Elephant trails are being replaced with avocado plantations. Fortunately, environmentalists are getting involved and restoring them to nature. We humans are damaging nature by building big cities and chasing the animals away. There is too much development of natural land. Water is a huge issue, even in rich countries. Water should be treated like precious jewels. We can all do our bit to conserve water like taking short showers.

The next war will probably be about access to water.

We must develop a culture of respect for water.

A response – in Paragraph 38 it states that the Amazon and Congo Rivers are the lungs of the planet so if there is a petition to stop internationalising the Amazon and the Congo River, we must be sure to sign it.



Paragraph 43 – we have a throwaway culture.

We are polluting our world with noise, building and congestion, there is no greenery.

We need physical contact with nature.

In Dubai they desalinate the sea water and use it to put up high-rise buildings, polluting the atmosphere.

In Singapore in 1994 and 1995 while she was there, there were penalties for littering. It was a clean city with low crime rates.

Education regarding the environment starts at home, at school, and at church, with strict standards of discipline upheld.

We must be held responsible for our actions.

A response – we must preserve nature as much as possible. By encouraging and educating the younger generation at home and at school and making sure they spend more time in the garden away from their devices.

The state of our world.

We see a mother and her two children cleaning out a ditch recently which gave him hope.

A response – people must take responsibility for cleaning up our world, just like the mother and her two children, and himself.

Paragraph 61 – Pope Francis is holding out hope that we can do something about the environmental problems if we all do something now. He says, “Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems.”



ROOM 2

Paragraph 18

Rapidification: Concern about the speed of human activity outstripping the natural slow pace of biological evolution; driven by a sense of entitlement and immediate gratification. The pace has been exponential; so much negative change in one lifetime. Pollution of Earth's natural resources but also pollution of the atmosphere by satellites and other defunct space debris circling the Earth.

Paragraph 44

Growth in cities: Rapid pace of urban development, systemic chaos leading to noise pollution and the wasteful use of energy and water. People are not meant to be surrounded by concrete, glass, and steel. The most fortunate can choose to move to quieter areas. Experience of countries such as Bangladesh where human ingenuity has created the ability to support a family with just one small piece of land. A recent initiative among the 400,000 Catholics in Bangladesh to each plant one tree; practical and much needed leadership.

Paragraph 22

Throwaway culture: still so little waste recycled. We have not yet found what Pope Francis refers to as the "circular model" of production able to preserve resources for the use of future generations and limiting non-renewable resources. The immorality of exporting our waste for other countries to dispose of; over reliance on land purely for the production of food.

Paragraph 33

Lost species: plant and animal species lost and extinct as a result of human activity. Necessary ecosystems undermined; plants and animals that our children will never see. We have no right to treat the World's resources as exploitable; because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence.



Paragraph 47

The omnipresence of the media and digital world: human relationships in all their complexity are being replaced by a type of internet communication; this facilitates choosing or eliminating relationships at whim; leads to a new type of contrived emotion expressed through devices and displays rather than with human relationships and nature. Negative connotations for meaningful relationships, human contact, language, expression, and an altered way of thinking; new book by Columbian priest and author Sean McDonagh - "Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs".

Group 3

Paragraph 25: Migration due to Climate Change

Paragraphs 28 & 30: Concern about water the element basic for survival

Paragraph 33: Extinction of Species

Paragraph 48: The human environment

Scientific analyses of the degradation of the Earth takes into consideration the quantification of its variables: quantity of CO₂, population, extinction of large mammals, etc ...

Technology will play a great role in the solution to many problems. The argument is that technology can accelerate solutions to present environmental challenges, if there is a will to do so, i.e. the creation of a vaccine against COVID-19, not in 16 years but in a few months.

Water, being the element basic for survival cannot be commercialized as a commodity only the wealthier can enjoy to the point of wasting it while access is denied to the great majority of the world population.

Degradation of the environment starts with the inequality between human beings, between the rich and the poor and the way out, we think it is by making the rich aware that their lifestyle is at the basis of the environmental crisis.

Indeed: "human deterioration and the natural environment deteriorate together". Therefore, we think that a change of mentality is possible through:



1. Social and environmental awareness, including awareness of our basic incongruency.
2. Through dialogue
 - a. The rich cannot perpetuate a lifestyle that leads to destruction.
 - b. The poor cannot pretend to get the same lifestyle that destroys the planet.
3. Care of the water as a limited resource. Access to clean water is a human right.

Jesus is the role model to imitate:

1. He was conscious of the value of creation: “Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple will never lose his reward” (Matthew 10: 42);
2. Being the King of the Universe, Jesus chose to live poor without a permanent house: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9: 58).

GROUP 4

Paragraphs: 20, 25, 33, 41, 43, 57 & 61

Paragraph 20

We were struck by the different forms of pollution listed & their impact in adversely affecting human health.

We were struck by the emission of pollutants to the atmosphere. A recent TV programme where councils are contracted for 9-10 years to supply waste materials to generating companies to burn in order to produce electricity. This was justified by the money raised which helped to reduce Council Tax. The programme highlighted that the volume of waste that they were contracted to supply was greater than the waste they collected. So they made up the shortfall by supplying recyclable waste; up to 50% of the required volume was made up of recyclable materials including plastics. This practice represents a significant problem of pollution to the atmosphere. Council tax reductions were given to the residents, but the excess carbon dioxide produced climate change



that mainly affects the poor. It seems that Slough Borough Council may be adopting this practice, which may be more widespread than we imagine.

We highlighted the comment on Technology at the end of the paragraph. We considered technology as a mixed blessing – facilitating communication as tonight, but in many cases causing significant damage and being used to damage the environment & our social organisation. (*see comments on fishing below*).

Paragraph 25

We were struck by the section on refugees driven out of their homes by climate change & how their status as refugees is not recognised by international conventions. We highlighted the example of Uganda & Congo. When civil war forced people of the Congo to flee to Uganda, the Ugandans gave each family a plot of land so that they could grow food for themselves. The gesture was reciprocated when Ugandans had to flee. With a small amount of capital (without strings attached) the poor can do a lot; they don't lack ideas on how to improve their lives. We stressed the importance of education to ensure that all of us in the parish, & especially the young, recognised the link between our consumption, environmental degradation, climate change & migrants /refugees. We highlighted 2 examples:

- i) Buying Broadband services – to facilitate both provider & customer, Broadband providers usually supply customers with a router – even if customers already have one. The provider's router is customised so that all the customer has to do is just plug it into the power and telephone sockets. Old routers are just thrown away even though they can be reset & reconnected to fit with the upgraded service. Routers are not easily recycled. They are composed of multiple materials that need to be disassembled in order to recycle them.
- ii) Car insurance – raising awareness about taking out higher voluntary excess in order to substantially reduce the annual premium – the money saved could be donated to parishes abroad to help the poor.



Paragraph 33

We are saddened by the loss of species, animals & plants that our children & grandchildren will never see. But more importantly as we will see in Chapter 2, each creature is valued by God, is created with a special gift or function (often critical to the functioning of the planet) and has lessons to teach us. As Pope Francis says, “We have no right to destroy them”.

Paragraph 41

We are aware of the horror of the accumulation of plastic in the ocean over the last 70 years. Consequently, now looking very carefully at the packaging used for goods. We try to only buy goods in paper bags not plastic ones – so now buying croissants from the local baker, who puts them in a paper bag rather than from Tesco – where they are in plastic cellophane. It’s a bit pricier but better for the environment & they taste better too! A win-win all round!

We are struck by the mention of destructive fishing methods in #41. Given up fish for Lent (& perhaps for ever), after seeing the ways in which fish were caught by inhumane methods, even in Cornwall, and the destruction rendered by fishing gear to the ocean floor and habitat.

Paragraph 43

We read how environmental deterioration affects quality of life, remembered beautiful lands now contaminated with pollution and plastic. People are very active in separating out the waste to try & maximise the materials that can be recycled.

Paragraph 57

We are alarmed by the idea that the decline of certain key resources might trigger new wars. Others noted that the Syrian war had links to water. The group highlighted that we, as consumers, have a final say in what products are adopted, policies progressed etc. We can all vote with our feet regarding shopping, with our money in what activities & consumption we will support, and with our vote regarding future government policies. We mentioned the plastic bag tax – how quickly it changed our behaviour as we all got used to using our own bags. But we felt it was peer pressure rather the tax which most influenced



our behaviour – making it a social norm to reject plastic bags. Perhaps we could do the same for plastic packaging, plastic toys, plastic windows & doors & synthetic fibres in clothes.

Paragraph 61

We did not find the message of Chapter 1 grim or discouraging but are saddened by Pope Francis' comment at the end of #61 *"If we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations"*.

What are we called to do?

Plant trees & collect ocean rubbish to help save the planet.

Give the money we save on insurance to CAFOD – for work in Ethiopia. Trust the locals to do the right thing.

Research the companies we purchase from more carefully – their impact on the developing world, on displaced people, on the planet. Are they doing anything tangible to ameliorate their impact.

Put our own house in order with respect to the planet – on the basis that every little helps & big change has small beginnings.

Continue to be aware of the horror of plastic & prioritising paper over plastic

Keep following in the footsteps of St Francis. Take small steps and educate others – particularly the clergy! Pursue initiatives such as CAFOD's Live Simply, the St Francis Peace Prayer, coming together in his Parish to continue to support a refugee family from Syria.

Continue planting, growing & gardening for God & the planet & to purchase products as locally & plastic-free as possible.



NEXT MEETING

24th March 2021

7:30 p.m.

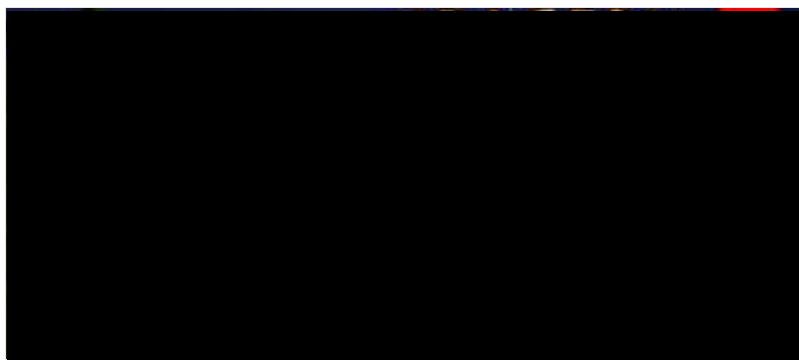
Laudato Si

Chapter 2:

“The Gospel of Creation”

Check the following links in preparation to the meeting:

1. Fr Kevin Vogel – the Gospel of Creation chapter 2 Laudato Si’
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlBiZL1f8o>
2. CAFOD animation film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Lz7dmn1eM>
3. Franciscan - video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNU8fn_ap_U
4. Video TED Talk
[*What is the tragedy of the commons? - Nicholas Amendolare*](#)



**What is the tragedy of the commons? -
Nicholas Amendolare**



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