

AFTER LAUDATO SI', CAN WE CONTINUE LIVING IN THE SAME WAY?



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“Good morning.

I'd like to start by thanking you for the invitation to be present at your General Assembly in which you are gathered.

It is a great privilege and gift to be here, and I'd like to share from my heart whatever might help you; no doubt it is I who will benefit the most in learning from you. It also seems to me that this inter-congregational collaboration is a sign of the times.

WE OURSELVES

With these sentiments, I will be commenting on the slides that will be appearing.

I have entitled this talk, as you can see: After *Laudato si*, Can We Continue Living in the Same Way?

What is new?

STARTING POINT – CONSECRATED WOMEN – AN ENDURING INVITATION

Allow me to remind us of the meaning of our life. I am sure that during these days you have been considering this and that it is on the minds of each person and of the Assembly as a whole, but since we will speak about change and conversion, it seems good to recall the foundation of our life and its focal points. As we will see, what is essential does not change, and so it is good to affirm it now and again.

Unless the motive for our fidelity is that we are women who are captivated by Jesus and impassioned by his life's project we will not be happy, and therefore we will not be good collaborators in bringing about a world that is more like the dream that God has for it.

For this reason, I emphasize that freedom is a precious gift to receive and keep hold of. We are women who are called, loved, sinful, forgiven, invited, and sent... this sequence seems significant to me.

Knowing that we are loved brings us to lovingly confide our lives into the hands of our God, Father and Mother.

Bible texts offer us the basis for this: there is a call, an invitation, and a response in freedom, one which is never forced or imposed.

The Lord calls, and we can open the door or not. He is not going to force His way in; His invitation is gentle, hardly a whisper, a breeze, or it could be a gale, a fall from a horse, as in Paul's case... but nothing will happen without our consent.

It is a personal call using our own name, a call to be sent, to go out and proclaim...

OUR WORLD TODAY

We live and grow in our vocation and mission in the world in which we find ourselves; our consecrated life is incarnated in time and place. This is our moment in history — a time marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, a global crisis with all that involves — this is our place and time.

Let us not live with nostalgia for a past which no longer belongs to us; the past is part of our personal and institutional histories, but we have to focus on the present with a view toward the future.

I think it is important to ask ourselves how we see the world, what our viewpoint is, what we see when we look, and through what color glasses. Is everything black? Are we negative, or do we look with kindness, with affection, with hope? Of course, we must critique without being naïve, but also intuit and perceive the seeds of the Word which are present, sometimes very explicitly and other times a bit hidden. We have to sharpen our focus so as to get beyond appearances to the depths.

When I look through contemplative eyes, something happens within me: I allow myself to be moved. What I see impacts me and I do not remain indifferent; rather, the pain I feel causes me to act. I do not ignore the suffering and pain of humanity.

INTRODUCTION - LAUDATO SI

We need to be converted, to change our points of view and our lifestyles.

Pope Francis, in the interview he granted to Radio COPE in Spain, spoke about his conversion. He used to hear the bishops of Brazil speak about the environment and he didn't grasp everything that they wanted to communicate. When he was elected Pope, he began to realize what was happening and sought out theologians and scientists who began a study that resulted in the encyclical *Laudato si*.

Let's slowly start to look at the contents of the encyclical. The introduction already reminds us that there is something misguided about our manner of consumption and lifestyle.

Our civilization causes destruction and death. Recognizing the harm that we inflict is the beginning of conversion.

This ecological and social crisis calls for a radical transformation of our relationships with the environment, with other persons, with God, and with ourselves.

This conversion begins with each person gazing at Christ to conform ourselves to him.

ATTITUDES

For this conversion to take place we have to cultivate certain attitudes: generous and tender care; gratitude and open-handedness, knowing how to give thanks for everything received as unearned gift, and knowing how to share it with the same generosity; loving awareness of not being disconnected from everyone else; develop enthusiasm—whose etymology is “to be in God”; availability which, with the eyes of faith, is freedom; and committed faith that does not ignore other people but is a mystique of open eyes which does not pass by, but stops before the need of a brother or sister.

THE FRUITS OF CONVERSION

This conversion will produce fruit in our lives if it is authentic.

We will have a new sensitivity, a new stance in relation to reality that is characterized by interior freedom which is not imposed but arises out of conviction. We must revise our outlook on reality—our political activity, lifestyle, the field of education — which requires a powerful mystique and motivation from deep inside ourselves and is manifested in the goodness of the way we live: inter-relatedness among ourselves, other persons, creation, and the Creator... everything is interconnected.

It is good to embrace the consciousness of native peoples about the interrelatedness of everything: myself, other persons, creation, God...

It is very necessary to develop this awareness in order to be able to change our lifestyle.

CORE THEMES OF LAUDATO SI

There is a single social-environmental crisis which has very specific consequences: there are not two crises, social and environmental, but only one, which is very complex.

Since everything is interconnected, we must have a holistic view from the perspective of ecology seen as integral to existence and which includes human and social dimensions.

We can also call to mind the socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic that is resulting in a global crisis. It is almost impossible to speak about distinct causes and consequences. Everything is woven together into a very complex whole which is very difficult at times to separate into its parts. We need analytical insight and a great deal of discernment in order to get to the heart of events and go beyond the surface.

HUMANITY

We are speaking about a new lifestyle because no ecology suffices without a proper anthropology. If we do not see the complexity and dignity of human beings, if we think that humankind evolved by chance, we run the risk of setting aside our awareness of co-responsibility.

Sometimes a person is presented as an adjective, a stereotype, a classification, but an actual person is not considered.

SOLIDARITY

The Pope forcefully calls our attention again to the ravenous and irresponsible development that has occurred for many decades, upon which we must impose reasonable limits before it is too late.

The behavior of those who consume and destroy is unsustainable, and meanwhile others cannot live with the minimum dignity that is their right. We see that lately with the Covid-19 vaccines: in some countries there are discussions about a third shot while others haven't even received a first.

For this reason, there is a strong plea for curbing growth in such a way that we can share and distribute resources so that all human beings can live as befits them.

SOBRIETY

What is written in article 223 is very significant: "...sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating." Along these lines this paragraph speaks of pleasures, joy, happiness. There is a beautiful description of finding satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in art and music, in service, in contact with nature, in prayer... In religious life, perhaps we don't know how to find moments of pleasure. We always have so much to do, so much for which to be accountable and very responsible... so much so that we sometimes lose sight of self-care, which is neither egotism nor selfishness. It is, rather, the capacity to rest because our mission is very complex and we have to have enough energy for it. This speaks of the many possibilities that life offers to us.

SUMMARY

The following is a synopsis of the points in *Laudato si* which are most relevant to our life:

- ⇒ Integral ecology: care for all life in all of its different forms.
- ⇒ Pay particular attention to indigenous peoples, and I would say, to all persons, cultures, languages, and traditions in their great diversity. In other words, act with care and respect, with a broad and inclusive vision that marginalizes no one.
- ⇒ Advance in living in harmony with all other human beings, and foster the growth of each sister, our communities, and our congregation.

NOW IS THE TIME: THE WORD OF GOD

The Word of God tells us that this is the right moment, that the day of salvation is here and now, and that this time and place is gifted to us to be converted and adopt other lifestyles. We must not be nostalgic for the past because it is in this world and this specific moment in history that the Lord is offering salvation to us.

IT IS LATE – VERSES BY CASALDÁLIGA

Here is nearly the same idea put into words by a poet:

It is late

but it is our time.

It is late

but it is all the time

that we have on hand

to make the future.

It is late

but it is us

this late hour.

It is late

but it is early morning

if we insist a little.

This is the right moment to commit ourselves; we cannot leave this for another time because of its urgency. St. Paul says this to us in his letter, and in the form of a poem so does Pedro Casaldáliga, who died last year.

It is a pressing charge which we cannot leave to future generations. This is our responsibility.

TOGETHER WE PROCLAIM

Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth...

We are invited to proclaim together: Laudato Si, in a commitment of joy and hope.