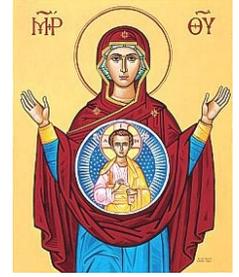




Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home



January- A Season of Promise

Despite the cold and darkness of January, this month holds promise of new life. A new calendar year begins, new resolutions made, and new attitudes embraced. On the first day of January, Holy Mother Church reminds us of this “newness” by celebrating Mary, as the Mother of God or “birth-giver” of God. Through her Divine Motherhood, Mary is mother not only to Jesus, but to all of us. As Catholic Christians, this solemnity of Mary also reminds us that we are God’s children, made in his image and likeness. This Christian understanding of human dignity undergirds our understanding of the sanctity of life and our roles as stewards of God’s creation.

Pope Francis echoes these teachings on the sanctity of life in his encyclical “*Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home*” Our Holy Father writes: “*Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but, man, too, is God’s gift to man(115)... everything is interrelated.*”(120) Pope Francis expresses his concern that not all persons receive the respect while on this earth as they are not recognized as God’s children, destined for heaven. The Holy Father notes that often the presence of the poor, the needy, the unborn makes us “*uncomfortable or creates difficulties.*”(120) These attitudes are not of Christ! As the Gospel records,

Jesus ministered to the most vulnerable and “throw away” of society. To be Christ, we must tenderly care for and defend life, from the beginning to the end.

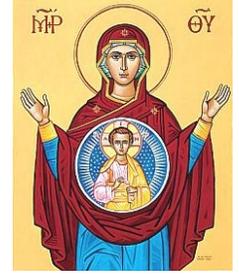
Furthermore, the Pope writes: “*When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities— to offer a few examples— it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, for “instead of carrying out the role as a cooperater with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature.” (117)* Neglecting God’s call to protect all stages of life and as overseers of the natural world is a “striking sign of disregard” of God’s plan for salvation and an ignorance of God’s message “contained in the structures of nature itself.”(117) We then set ourselves up as gods who rule our own little portion of life. This self-centered approach to life robs us of the joy of Gospel living as we were made to know, love and serve God in this world in order to be happy with Him in the heaven.

January brings much promise and hope when one turns towards God and becomes a “cooperator” in the work of creation. Ask yourself how can I embrace this God-given role? Happy New Year!

January 1 Solemnity of Mary Holy Mother of God	Luke 2: 16-21	<i>“Mary kept all these things in her heart.” What prayer gives you comfort when you are having a difficult time? Why?</i>
January 8 The Epiphany of the Lord	Isaiah 60: 1-6	<i>How do you “radiate” the glory of God to others? If you don’t, why don’t you?</i>
January 15 Second Sunday in ordinary Time	John 1: 29-34	<i>Why does the Sacrament of Baptism call the newly baptized to be cooperators of God’s creation?</i>
January 22 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time	Matthew 4: 12-23	<i>Name a time when you heard Jesus’ call to follow Him. How did it change you?</i>
January 29 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time	1Cor. 1: 26-31	<i>Name a time when God worked through you to help another or take care of the earth.</i>



Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home



BACKGROUND FOR THE RESOURCE

Picture on right side: Icon of *Theotokos*, Mary, Mother of God. *Theotokos* is a Greek title which sometimes is translated as “God Bearer” or “Birth-giver” of God.

What is an encyclical?

An encyclical is a letter usually written by a Pope to a particular audience of Bishops. Pope Francis said this encyclical was not only written to the bishops of the world and not even just to Catholics but to all people of the world. He said the issue of care for creation is too important to write to only some people when all people are needed to do something about caring for creation today.

What does “Laudato Si” mean in English?

Laudato Si are the first two words of the Canticle of Creation, a prayer written by Saint Francis of Assisi. The literal translation from the original Umbrian language is “praise be.” Umbrian is an ancient Italian dialect. In relationship to the encyclical, the official Vatican translation is “praise be to you, my Lord.”

For a complete copy of the encyclical go to: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

For additional lesson plans and parent/youth newsletters go to: www.sophiainstituteforteachers.org Click “FREE RESOURCES,” then “Curriculum Exchange.” Type *Laudato Si* in the search field.

JANUARY— A MONTH TO CELEBRATE LIFE

March for Life: Annual peaceful march in Washington DC which began as a small demonstration on January 22, 1974 to protest the Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision (1-22-1973) which legalized abortion on demand. Today it is the largest pro-life demonstration in the world. It is held annually on January 22nd, except during an inaugural year when it is transferred to the Friday after the Presidential inauguration.

For more information, go to: <http://marchforlife.org/>

A PROJECT: COOPERATORS WITH GOD IN CARING FOR CREATION!

The earth needs trees! Trees help sustain the earth as they absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen into the air. However, the earth is losing trees through the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. Encourage your students to plan now on a tree planting project for the Spring. It can be done at home or perhaps as a class project. It is a wonderful way to help restore clean air to the God’s earth!

Use Pope Francis’ prayer from *Laudato Si* as part of your planting ceremony.

“All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.” (*Laudato Si*)

