

Unpacking *Laudato si'* for the school and classroom

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'Laudato Si': on care for our common home. Encyclical letter. 2015 Catholic Truth Society and also available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Key quotations and paraphrases from the document	Questions for school self-evaluation	Practical suggestions
<p><i>Laudato si, mi signore</i> – praise be to you my Lord. A canticle of St Francis when reflecting on the world – like a sister with whom we share our life, and a beautiful mother who embraces us. [1]</p> <p>This document links to the overarching principle in Catholic teaching, the Common Good, which is defined as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment.” [<i>Gaudium et spes</i>, 26].</p>	<p>How aware are our students of this, and other, Church documents that speak to the issues that animate them?</p> <p>How does this new work sit within our overarching commitment to the common good?</p> <p>How do we show that eco care goes hand in hand with care for the vulnerable, inclusivity, non-bullying, service...</p>	<p>Pictures of Pope Francis associated with this document</p> <p>Use the title <i>'Laudato si'</i> and translate it and explain it simply.</p> <p>Pope Francis addressing the G20 leaders prior to COP 26</p> <p>Redouble our efforts to help our students understand the wealth of Catholic social teaching which directly chimes with their concerns [justice, equality, fairness, peace...]</p> <p>Challenge our eco-minded students to look more deeply and the underpinning principles</p>
Powerful statement		

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<p>“Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights order to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups...Outstanding among those groups is the family as the basic cell of society. Finally, the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice, whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good.” [157]</p> <p>Unpack: Inalienable rights – doing the right thing when no one is looking Distributive justice – a fair share</p>		
<p>‘we have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will’. [2]</p> <p>Common good includes those who will come after us [159]</p>	<p>How does our school reflect a care for the environment in terms of: -how it is managed -staff attitudes Student attitudes</p>	<p>-a ‘care promise’ – how we will take care and respect our school and our environment</p> <p>A Legacy project – outgoing students [Yr 13?] responsible for overseeing a legacy project that, specifically, will not benefit them, but future generations.</p>
<p>Pope Paul VI, writing as far back as 1970 -inasmuch as ‘the most extraordinary scientific advances, the most amazing technical abilities, the most astonishing economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic social and moral progress, will definitely turn against man’ [3]</p>	<p>-how do we offset our increasing reliance on technology in school?</p>	<p>Display Pope Paul VI quote</p> <p>Links to how social media can be bad as well as good</p> <p>What is the environmental impact of technology we use every day? Cars, IT, school boiler, electricity</p>
<p>Pope St John Paul II recognised that to promote environmental awareness, it was not just enough to ‘care for the environment’ – it meant it was necessary to ‘safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology’ [5]</p>	<p>-are students challenged to wide their care for the environment</p>	<p>-develop a deep understanding of ‘care’ and celebrate real-life examples of selflessness from inside and outside school</p>

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<p>Pope Benedict said that creation is harmed ‘where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognise any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves.’ [6]</p> <p>“the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all” [95]</p>	<p>by, not only better understanding what it is to ‘care’, but also the many other vulnerabilities there are in addition to the environment [the dying, the unborn, the poor and marginalised]</p> <p>-how do we ensure we retain a spirit of ‘tenants, not owners’ in our school?</p>	<p>-explore ideas of unconditional love [KS3]</p> <p>-a major annual environmental award [say £50]</p> <p>-What can be shared in school? Between schools?</p>
<p>In this quest we need to take everyone with us – which means it cannot be party-political, nor can it be imposed [certainly not without every effort to bring people with us] [14]</p> <p>-it is impossible to separate ecological and green issues from how we feel about our own communities. Anything we do must “integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear <i>both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor</i>”. [49]</p>	<p>-how are <i>all</i> members of the student community <i>encouraged</i> to see in care for the environment a service they can offer and a duty as part of a community?</p> <p>-and the staff, too?</p> <p>-how are the poor and vulnerable in our society [and our community] particularly</p>	<p>-wide participation across and beyond the school [suggest – work with our 16 <i>Koinonia</i> primary schools as a landmark project on this]</p> <p>-different approaches e.g. addressing our throwaway culture [20-22],</p> <p>-greater energy awareness, creative activities [e.g. art, dance, writing]</p> <p>-working with Local Authority / MAT Trust on the loss of biodiversity and its remedies at a local [urban] level as well as in our many local farms. [32-42]</p> <p>-advice on choices of what to buy</p>

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	<p>affected by a lack of love for our environment and our common home?</p>	<p>-working with Local Authority to understand the impact on the climate and atmosphere, for example via local air quality testing units [perhaps ‘how clean is the air near my house?’] [23-26]</p> <p>- a 3 year strategy giving, particularly older students, an insight to ‘investment’ and ‘legacy’ – their doing things now from which they will not benefit but others will. Inter-generational thinking. [<i>“The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”</i>] [Nelson Henderson]</p> <p>-how can our International School partners be engaged?</p>
<p>Scriptural references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the creation of man and woman, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.” (Genesis 1: 31) • “The harmony between the creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.” [66] • Recognise that two different readings of genesis are possible, with very different results. <p>Reading 1 – as humans we ‘have dominion’ over the earth [Gen 1:28] so we can do what we want with it.</p> <p>This then is all about ‘me’ and ‘my needs’ and “a misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle.... when human beings placed themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to</p>	<p>As a school, how are we consumers, users and stewards?</p> <p>How do we ensure people’s dignity? [this will link to the school’s HR/People strategy: how do we ensure our thinking is at least medium term?</p>	<p>Visualise / illustrate the love of God, neighbour and love of earth as the golden triangle</p> <p>Incorporate some of the prayers from section 246</p> <p>Display key scripture quotes with practical implications</p> <p>Promoting sharing, exchanging, recycling as against consumerism</p> <p>What simple changes could the whole school community commit to making?</p>

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<p>immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.” [122]</p> <p>Reading 2 - Genesis 2:15 people are called to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world, where tilling speaks of cultivating and working and keeping speaks of showing real care. And this care means recognising that we are passing tenants and have a responsibility to future generations: ‘The earth is the Lord’s’ [Ps 24:1] and to him belongs ‘ and ‘The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me’ [Leviticus 25:23]</p> <p>And ‘the Lord rejoices in all his works’ [Ps 104:31] And ““Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way array of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things.” [Catechism of the Catholic Church, 339]</p>		<p>The ‘pollution’ of too much information means it has never been more important to show the value of silence and reflection.</p> <p>So a systematic ramping up of quiet places in the school, e.g. Lectio Divina</p>
<p>An awareness of the environment is rooted in, supported by, and supportive of, a love of neighbour and the promotion of justice and peace. When this goes wrong [Cain and Abel, Noah...] the results are disastrous. [70]</p> <p>So, for example, we cannot be concerned with trafficking of rare species without being [pre-eminently] also concerned with the trafficking of people. [91] “human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognised and valued.”[118]</p>	<p>How do we funnel the very real concern with the environment into a renewed concern for ‘neighbour’? At the student level, but also as a school working in a neighbourly manner?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student service expanded even further • The school at the heart of school-to-school collaboration • As a Catholic school, we may seek to establish ecological virtues, whilst always recognising that these must subsist within the greater virtues derived from a belief in, and relationship with, God.

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<p>The environment works according to natural rhythms [growth, hibernation etc] and the Jewish people, respecting the Sabbath, recognised how this teaches us to do the same. Proper time to rest and reflect. [71]</p> <p>The idea of creation is more than nature – it is recognising a plan, and goals, for each of us and how these goals will be achieved interdependently, not independently [77].</p> <p>“God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only independent on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.” [Catechism of the Catholic Church, 340].</p> <p>“Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaningful stop it needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.”[210]</p> <p>In everything we do in this area, it needs to come from a place of care, generosity and love as against extremism, anger and the kind of sectarianism which pits one group of people against another. This means cultivating character / virtues of care, generosity, inclusivity, compassion...also humility and sobriety</p>	<p>Does our school give enough time for celebration?</p> <p>Do our staff enjoy an appropriate work-life balance?</p> <p>Do we teach our students how to relax and reflect?</p> <p>Do we instil an understanding of creation based not only for the world around us [natura and man-made] but also for each person, achieving her ends?</p> <p>How do we ensure due regard for STEM subjects goes hand in hand with developing creative capacities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload reduction work for staff • Lectio Divina/prayer/retreat programme for students [and staff] • Make explicit the link between a care for, respect of and understanding of the environment with an understanding of ourselves as a created being, caught up in this creative act. Posters, assemblies, mapping • Demonstrating the values of Interdependence versus independence e.g. PE, service, collaborative learning • Encouraging all students to engage in creative activities, irrespective of curriculum pathway • Include the school garden in the thinking as a

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		<p>symbol and a reality of '<i>Laudato Si</i>'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reaching out for the transcendent which Pope Francis talks about includes pausing to appreciate beauty – what place for our creative subjects?? Music in the corridors...art installations...?
Prayer of St Francis [extract]		
<p>Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord, All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.</p> <p>To you alone, Most High, do they belong, and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.</p> <p>Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.</p> <p>Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.</p> <p>Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, And fair and stormy, all weather's moods, by which You cherish all that You have made.</p> <p>Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, So useful, humble, precious and pure.</p> <p>Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.</p> <p>Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs. Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.</p> <p>Blessed are those who endure in peace, By You Most High, they will be crowned.</p>		

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<p>We have privileged ‘mastery’ – getting hold of things and making them/using them/consuming them as our own [106].</p> <p>‘The fragmentation of knowledge proves helpful for concrete applications, and yet it often leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant.’ [110]</p> <p>Pope Francis calls the focus on technology being the answer to everything – which he fervently believes not to be the case – the ‘technocratic paradigm’. [109]</p> <p>This includes the world of work where technology can strip away jobs and the dignity of work: ‘In order to continue providing employment, it is imperative to promote an economy which favours product diversity and business creativity’</p> <p>This can extend to how we teach and learn</p> <p>[I have written about <i>Mastery over Meaning</i> personally – please see <i>Heidegger in Lockdown – from ‘mastery’ to ‘disclosure’ here</i> https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/areas/education-and-teaching/reflected/blog/latest.aspx</p>	<p>Does our idea of teach-learn-reproduce-become qualified lead to a dry sense of learning as consumption and regurgitation ?</p> <p>One based on ‘been there, done that’?</p> <p>How do we celebrate jobs and vocations, through careers education, which contribute to the common good?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interdependence between subjects e.g. literature, science, history, geography and RE • A real moral purpose for curriculum sequencing, arising from the need to avoid fragmentation and ‘mastery without meaning’ • More systematic ‘alumni association’ showcasing what our ex-students are doing now and how they are making a positive difference
<p>GREAT QUOTATIONS</p> <p>[A] We can have so much, yet feel so empty</p> <p>“There is a growing awareness that scientific and technological progress cannot be equated with the progress of humanity and history, a growing sense that the way to a better future lies elsewhere. This is not to reject the possibilities which technology continues to offer us. But humanity has changed profoundly and the accumulation of constant novelties exalts a superficiality which pulls in one direction. It becomes difficult to pause and recover depth in life. If architecture reflects the spirit of an age, our megastructures and drab apartment blocks express this spirit of globalised technology, where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony. Let us refuse to resign ourselves to this, and continue to wonder about the purpose and meaning of everything. Otherwise we would simply legitimate the present situation and need new forms of escapism to help us endure the emptiness.”[113]</p>		

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<p>[B] Relativism</p> <p>“the culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts. The same kind of thinking leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. It is also the mindset of those who say: let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage. In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs, what limits can be placed on human trafficking, organised crime, the drug trade, commerce in blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species? Is it not the same relativistic logic which justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation, or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted? This same ‘use and throw away’ logic generates so much waste, because of the disorder desire to consume more than what is really necessary. We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because, when the culture itself is corrupt, and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided.” [123]</p>		

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<p>Pope Francis calls for an ‘Integral Economy’ based on the proper relationship between an environmental, economic and social ecology. [138]</p> <p>“merely technical solutions run the risk of addressing symptoms and not the more serious underlying problems.” [144]</p>	<p>How does our ‘green’ agenda reflect Pope Francis’ insight?</p> <p>What about environment in the wider sense? – understanding how the housing that some of our students and their families live in affects their school life? [150-5]</p>	<p>-Secure ‘Romero Award’</p> <p>-Secure ‘Green Flag’ award</p> <p>Royal Horticultural Society School Garden Award</p>
<p>the father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self - communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united</p>	<p>How do we ‘use’ the Trinity as the underpinning to the importance we place on relations and</p>	<p>Liturgies celebrating our common home</p> <p>Harvest-type activities</p>

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<p>himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways.”</p> <p>This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold Connexions existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment.</p> <p>“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she entered into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures.” [240]</p> <p>The holy Family of Nazareth – relationship, care, unconditional love</p>	<p>interrelationships in school?</p> <p>How do we use Christmas – the idea of the Holy Family, the unconditional love of Mary and the Trinity, as a key part of our eco work, hardwiring the theology into the activism?</p>	