

Praise God
TO ALL PEOPLE
of GOOD WILL on the
CLIMATE CRISIS

GROUP READING GUIDE

to POPE
FRANCIS'
Laudate
Deum



BILL HUEBSCH

Material marked with quotation marks are direct quotes
from *Laudate Deum* or *Laudato Si'*.
All other material is paraphrased.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Six sessions for families, individuals, or small groups

Gather. If you are gathering with others, welcome everyone. Offer a special welcome to participants from other faith traditions who may join you. Ask participants to introduce themselves if needed.

Pray. The reading and conversations below include the prayer accompanying this Guide.

Read. Moving around the circle in your group, read aloud the stanzas of this summary. Rotate readers with each stanza or paragraph. Group members should note items in the pope's teaching that strike them as especially important. Feel free to write notes in the margins of the booklet. (Do not read aloud the article numbers. Their purpose is to help you find each article in the original document.)

Discuss and Pray. When you come to the group reflections, pause to continue around the circle, discussing or praying as the notes direct. Use our suggestions as a starting point and add your own questions, prayers, or action plans.

Finish. As you end your process, invite participants to identify the one or two large ideas they hear the pope teaching in that segment of the document. Each participant may listen to the text differently; no "correct" answers exist. Conclude your session with hospitality.

SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION

1 St. Francis of Assisi urged us to “Praise God for all his creatures.” He taught this through his life, his actions, and the gift of his songs. In this message, he was reflecting on both the beautiful Psalms of Creation (part of our prayer in this Reader’s Guide) and the tender sensitivity of Jesus toward the Earth. “Consider the lilies of the field,” Jesus taught in Matthew 6. “They neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” And again, he taught in Luke 12 that God remembers every sparrow, no matter how insignificant they might seem to us. Let us imitate Jesus in loving nature!

2 I published an encyclical entitled *Laudato Si’* eight years ago, which dealt with the fate of the Earth. I pleaded with humanity to respond to the care of our common home. But our response has not been adequate to forestall the dangers that are before us on this planet. Many people—especially the poor—will lose their employment, access to resources, their homes, and even their native land as they’re forced to migrate. It’s already unfolding!

3 This is a global crisis, and human life’s very dignity hangs in the balance. The U.S. bishops summarized this well in their statement on climate change in 2019. How we care for each other and how we care for the Earth are intimately linked. They said climate change is one of the top challenges facing us today. The final document from the 2019

Amazon Synod agreed, saying that many people's lives are disrupted by climate change. Likewise, the African bishops speak of this as an example of corporate sinfulness.

4 This letter comes to you because the situation is even more urgent, and our unwillingness to address it is more evident than eight years ago. Let us take another look at our situation. These issues remain at the forefront of my mission and should be important to all Catholics and people of good will.

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: In your own words, express your personal concerns about climate change. How do you see it unfolding? How has it changed how you live and consume goods?

.....

Pray: PSALM 104:24–25

Side 1: O Lord, how diverse are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: There is the sea, great and wide;

creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

.....

Act: Study the climate crisis. Come to understand it more deeply. Consider what you or anyone can do to help avert a tragedy on Earth.

CHAPTER ONE: THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

5 Some people wish to deny, minimize, or even hide the issue of climate change, but the signs are all around us that it is real. We have all witnessed extreme weather in recent years: record heat, drought, and storms. The Earth groans in silent pain. Of course, we know that not every natural catastrophic event is caused by climate change. However, scientists have verified that what we are seeing is not normal. In numbers, every increase in average global temperatures increases the likelihood of rain, snow, and floods in some areas, while others suffer from drought. An average increase of just 0.5° C is a major increase, but we are now approaching a 1.5° C average increase! If we allow it to go higher, the ice caps will melt, causing an untold catastrophe.

RESISTANCE AND CONFUSION

6 Some people mock and minimize these facts, saying that we've always had warm summers and cold winters. They consider what we are seeing to be normal and deride those of us who are concerned as alarmists who will wreck the world's economy. But these doubters fail to mention another key fact: global temperatures are rising at such a rate that major changes will occur within several decades—within many people's lifetimes.

7 We must be careful not to confuse naturally occurring cycles in our weather with the irregularities we are now seeing unfold.

8 When speaking of climate change, we aren't referring to a local weather report here or there, nor to seasonal adjustments, but to the long view: decades of global data showing how the climate is deteriorating.

9 Some people blame the poor for this crisis, claiming that their large families and dependency on local natural resources cause it. It is typical to blame the poor, but the reality is that a small number of wealthy people consume more and contaminate the environment far more than

the poor. The 2022 UN Emissions Gap Report makes this clear. The poor are not solely responsible.

10 Other people claim that shifting away from fossil fuels to clean energy will cost jobs, but they fail to mention that many people—people who depend on farming, fishing, and forestry in particular—have lost their jobs due to other elements of climate change. Furthermore, the conversion to clean fuel will produce countless jobs for many people around the world and is already doing that. Business and political leaders should recognize that and capitalize on it to make everyone a winner.

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: How do you experience people who resist climate change science and try to confuse the conversation? How do you respond to Pope Francis' ideas here if you are one of them? If you aren't one of them, what would you say to someone who made this argument?

.....

Pray: PSALM 89:11–12A, 13–14

Side 1: The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it—you founded them.
The north and the south—you created them.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: You have a mighty arm;
strong is your hand, high your right hand.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

.....

Act: Together, collect some information and facts about climate science that will enable you to speak to others about it.

SESSION TWO

HUMAN CAUSES

11 We can no longer deny that we humans are causing climate change, and here is the evidence. Until the 1800s, greenhouse gases that cause global warming were stable below 300 parts per million. However, as industrial development unfolded around 1850, this changed, and the level of gases increased substantially. In recent years, the Mauna Loa observatory measured the increase in such harmful gases at 400 parts per million eight years ago and an alarming 423 parts per million in 2023. Nearly half of such gas has been produced since 1990.

12 Meanwhile, global temperatures have risen at an equally alarming rate in the past 50 years, greater than in any period of history in the last 2,000 years! The trend right now is an increase of 0.15° C per decade. Since 1850, the average temperature has risen by 1.1° C, including high in our atmosphere, deep in our oceans, and especially on our polar ice caps. This is all causing terrible harm to sea life, plants, and us humans. It is indeed a crisis!

(This body of data comes to us from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, based on some 34,000 studies and reported in their Synthesis Report in 2023.)

13 Almost the entire scientific community agrees on these data. Only a tiny number of people in that community still deny this. But the world's top economic powerhouse nations seem unable or unwilling to respond. They are focused on maximizing profit in the shortest amount of time.

14 I am mentioning all this again here because of how so many people—including within the Catholic Church—dismiss these concerns. It is undeniable, however, that the trends I just cited directly result from unparalleled and unchecked industrial activity. We are doing this to our planet.

14 I feel obliged to make these clarifications, which may seem obvious, because of certain dismissive and scarcely reasonable opinions that I encounter, even within the Catholic Church. Natural events such as warmer-than-usual summers or volcanoes, while they do cause some warming, do not explain the significant trends we are seeing. These trends are the result of greenhouse gas emissions.

DAMAGES AND RISKS

15 We also know that it will take at least several hundred years to recover from some of the effects we have caused. In the oceans, for example, acid levels have risen and oxygen has decreased. They have thermal inertia from this, and it will take centuries for them to return to normal. This is just one of many indicators of the challenge before us.

16 This is also true of the ice sheets at the poles and on the glaciers. We can no longer halt the damage we have caused and scarcely have time to prevent further harm.

17 We are approaching a critical point in all of this. Even small changes can cause harm that reaches deep into our ecosystems. A cascade of further events will likely result from what has already occurred. We are now powerless to intervene or stop it. We don't know what effect this will have on the planet, but we know that the loss of forests, the melting of ice sheets, changes in ocean temperature and currents, and the reduction of permafrost in Russia are all indicators of trouble ahead.

18 Therefore, we need a broad and long perspective to act together. No one could have imagined this a century ago, but now, we must ask what kind of world we will pass on to the next generation.

19 Finally, we learned during the Covid-19 pandemic that we are all related to each other. When one of us gets a cold, another one of us sneezes. I repeat what I have often said: “Everything is connected. No one is saved alone.”

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: *America* magazine reports that more than forty percent of U.S. Catholics reject the idea that climate change is caused by human activity (according to a 2023 Pew Research survey). Others simply give up, saying that there is nothing anyone can do about climate change. These people would not say that about abortion or immigration, but there is a sense of resignation when it comes to climate change. When you consider all of this, what does your heart tell you is needed? To what are you being called in light of this?

.....

Pray: PSALM 24:1–4

Side 1: The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: For he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 1: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: Those with clean hands and pure hearts,
 who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
 and do not make false promises.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

.....

Act: Small as this seems in light of the huge challenge we face, identify one or two changes you can make in your lifestyle that could help move us in a better direction.

CHAPTER 2: A GROWING TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

20 I wrote about the so-called technocratic paradigm in *Laudato Si'*. In a nutshell, it is a way of thinking about commerce, life, and economic activity based on the idea that all reality and truth flow automatically from economic power. The logical outcome is believing we can have unlimited technological and economic growth.

21 The recent developments in so-called artificial intelligence are based on the idea that we humans have no limits and that our abilities and possibilities are infinite and endless. Such thinking feeds on itself and can become a monster.

22 We all know that the natural resources needed for technology, such as silicon, lithium, and others, are not unlimited. But a greater risk is the belief that becomes an obsession, namely that human power is unlimited. This causes us to subdue everything nonhuman around us. The Earth is no longer a gift but is now merely a resource to be used up and thrown away.

23 What is more frightening is that those with the technology and money can now dominate everyone else. It is very risky for such a small number of people to have so much power over everyone else; this has not happened before in our history. How can we ensure that such power will be used wisely?

Reflection and Prayer

Discuss: What is your response to all this information, especially the last four paragraphs? How do you feel about others capturing information about you and controlling technology?

.....

Pray: PSALM 33:6–9

Side 1: By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: God gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
God put the oceans in storehouses.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 1: Let all the earth be in awe of the Lord.

Let all people of the world stand in awe of God.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: For God spoke, and it came to be;
God commanded, and it stood firm.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

SESSION THREE

RETHINKING OUR USE OF POWER

24 Not all power is used for good. Power can hurt humanity. Think, for example, about germ warfare and nuclear bombs. We were so busy making “progress” that we didn’t consider the horrible effects it could have. Sometimes, our technological abilities grow faster than our human understanding of morals, values, and conscience. We have power, but we can no longer control it. We have the power to destroy life, but we are blind to the consequences of that.

25 We must never forget that we are part of the Earth and nature itself. Nature isn’t some plaything, a stage on which we conduct our projects. We must see this world from within.

26 Human life is not outside the world or economic and political systems. We are an integral part of it all.

27 In the past, cultures did invent and make changes, but always in harmony with the natural world. This has gone on among Indigenous peoples for centuries. They understood that to destroy nature is to kill themselves. Our technocratic cultures don’t think like that, but we must all learn it.

28 For example, what is human power, what does it mean, and what are its limits? As I said above, our incredible technological advances have put us all at risk of being dangerous beings. As Vladimir Solovyov has

asked, is our age one that is so advanced that it will actually be the last age of human history? We need to think through this together to avoid us turning on ourselves.

THE ETHICAL GOAD

29 When an entrepreneur decides to develop a new project that will cause changes in the environment, a message is always communicated about what a benefit it will be to the “local” people. Those with power thus shape public opinion and convince people to support them, but then they often contaminate, destroy, deforest, and walk away. They leave behind not the dream jobs for the local young people that they promised but a decline in the quality of life and serious harm to nature. It’s insidious.

30 For example, some local communities accepted nuclear waste in exchange for money, but once agreed and enacted, the plan caused untold health damage, reduced property values, and brought much sadness.

31 Our mentality—that maximum economic gain is always a good end in itself—threatens our common home, does not assist the poor, and tramples on human rights. The poor themselves often fall prey to such schemes.

32 The core idea behind much of this is that those born to wealth, education, opportunity, and security believe they can dominate others. The few have many privileges, while the many remain poor. And if the few are secure behind their financial shields, why should they care about what happens in some remote village of Indigenous people?

33 “In conscience, and with an eye to the children who will pay for the harm done by their [the few with great power’s] actions, the question of meaning inevitably arises: What is the meaning of my life? What is the

meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?”

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: How do you answer the questions asked by Pope Francis in article 33? Are you among the few who are rich and comfortable or among the many who are poor and at risk? In either case, how do you speak about the meaning of your life?

.....

Pray: PSALM 95:6–7

Side 1: O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: He is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

.....

Act: Gather friends, neighbors, or family members to discuss what steps might be possible for you to take to turn around the damage done by our technocratic society.

CHAPTER 3: THE WEAKNESS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

34 Even though today we feel that things have been getting more dire, we know that each generation must take the struggle for justice forward and aim higher than the last. “Goodness, together with love, justice, and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each

day,” as I wrote in *Fratelli Tutti*. I believe that today, we need more than ever to make use of “multilateral agreements between nations.”

35 Please don’t confuse multilateral agreement with a “world authority concentrated in one person or in an elite with excessive power.” They are not the same. Multilateral agreements effectively provide for the common good, reduce poverty and hunger, and defend human rights. Such agreements must be sincere and given enough power to succeed and must be able to survive changes in political winds within nations.

36 When we faced recent global crises together—such as the financial crisis of 2007–2008 or Covid-19—we did not take advantage of the opportunity to build better societies. Instead, the rich became more powerful and escaped unscathed.

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: What actions would it be possible to take from the local level where you live? How could citizens organize to promote eco-friendly practices and lifestyles?

.....

Pray: PSALM 139:13–14

Side 1: For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

.....

Act: Decide on two concrete actions you can take in your local community to reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gases. Share them with neighbors or family and enact them soon.

SESSION FOUR

RECONFIGURING MULTILATERALISM

37 When we speak of multilateral agreements today, we don't mean to conjure up the old system that involved only nations in such agreements with each other. These days, non-governmental groups and organizations can tackle the needs based on the principle of subsidiarity, which means allowing activity to occur at the most local level rather than always at the top level. This helps protect local human rights and is often more efficient.

38 Again, encouraging activity “from below” rather than always by governments favors the use of local talent, ideas, initiative, and mutual-ity. Actions from below can result in pressure on national governments. As I said in *Laudato Si'*, the best way to manage the climate crisis is for local citizens to step forward, exercise local power, and take action.

39 In the current day, there is a new awareness of those who are vulnerable and lacking in power. We place the human person before all else in our economy and culture. This helps ensure that the dignity of the human person will always override economic goals.

40 I'm not suggesting that we replace politics but that we be aware that local forces, even in very small communities or nations, often discover the best solutions. For that reason, all should be included in multilateral agreements.

41 The “old diplomacy” among national leaders must be retained. It’s important and necessary alongside all other multilateral agreements.

42 Today, we see many centers of power, and we need a framework in which they can all cooperate. National powers work alongside corporate powers, and corporate powers work alongside local communities. What framework can coordinate this to care for our common home and protect human rights?

43 It seems we need a way to make sound decisions together and have those decisions seen as legitimate. This requires a method by which we can consult, compromise, resolve conflicts, and increase local input. It’s not enough to support only those means that benefit the powerful and rich.

CHAPTER 4: CLIMATE CONFERENCES: PROGRESS AND FAILURES

44 Since at least 1992, representatives from more than 190 nations have been meeting periodically to manage climate change. These members adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1994. These various nations now meet every year in the Conference of the Parties (or COP), as it is known, a very high-ranking decision-making body. Throughout these years, we have seen both success and failure in our work to address climate science. In 1997, in Kyoto, members agreed to set the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 5 percent by 2012.

45 The Conference of the Parties also agreed to other important steps and to provide financial support for poor nations to help them meet their goals.

46 The Parties also discussed a way for rich, more heavily polluting nations to compensate poor nations for the damage already done.

47 The meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Paris in 2015 was a significant moment. A new beginning was set in motion by way of an agreement among all nations. It did not call for sanctions in the case of rule breakers, but it set a high standard for worldwide cooperation.

48 The Paris Agreement set forth an ambitious objective: to keep the increase of average global temperatures to under 2° C, based roughly on the 1850 levels. It's difficult to evaluate these results because talks are still underway about how to evaluate individual nations' progress.

49 The Paris Agreement was relaunched in 2021 in Glasgow after a pause due to the pandemic. While this is a positive development, no progress was made in Glasgow to implement a transition to alternate fuel sources.

50 With the Russia–Ukraine war starting in 2022, nations began to feel threatened in terms of their access to energy. The fact that 80 percent of the world's energy remains from combustible fuels was widely known. The conference in Egypt that year (Sharm El Sheikh) was difficult because of the war.

51 The difficulties at the Egypt meeting were clear, although some progress was made in helping poor nations finance loss and damage from climate change. But this work was imprecise and remains to be developed later.

52 Accords flowing from the Conference of the Parties have not been widely implemented. There are few ways to oversee activities within nations, few penalties are applied, and the principles articulated there lack any means to implement them. It's also true that many nations place their own interests above the common good, leaving this process severely wounded. "Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility."

Reflection and Prayer

Discuss: Climate watchers estimate that signatory nations have committed less than one fifth of the \$4 trillion needed to achieve the Paris Agreement’s goals. Meanwhile, natural disasters continue to occur and increase in number and scope every year. Why do you think the international community struggles to find a way forward on climate change? What is needed for this to work? How can we bridge the divisions among nations?

.....

Pray: PSALM 65:10–11

Side 1: You water the earth’s furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagons overflow with rich produce.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

SESSION FIVE

CHAPTER 5: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COP28 IN DUBAI?

53 The 2023 meeting of the Conference of the Parties is in the United Arab Emirates. This nation is well known as an exporter of fossil fuels. Many gas and oil companies are planning expansions of that fuel. Still, we can't hope for nothing—we must hope for some progress—so we must put our shoulders to the wheel and push forward.

54 We must hope in human nature, believing that people can rise above their national interests to attend to the common good. It's possible for this meeting to do this and change direction, showing that all the work of the past 30 years has been worthwhile.

55 Despite everything that leaders of climate change efforts have done, emissions continue to rise around the world. The transition from fossil fuel to clean energy is not advancing as fast as we need. It seems to some that this effort is meant as a diversion from real progress. It keeps everyone busy while the use of fossil fuels grinds on.

56 We know the risks involved in doing nothing or too little. At the present rate, we will move well beyond the 1.5° C goal and even reach the 3° C level. This is a critical point from which recovery will be more difficult. What we need to do now is costly, but it will be much more costly to try to repair this later.

57 We need more than merely a technical remedy to this problem. It's complex and has many dimensions, so we need a comprehensive approach. There is promising technology on the horizon to help us, but we cannot naively believe that a technical solution will magically present itself to us when we reach 3° C.

57 As I wrote in *Laudato Si'*, #111, we cannot rely on a weak series of urgent and partial responses to crises as they arise with pollutants, the decay of the environment, and the depletion of natural resources. We must develop a common view of this, a way of thinking about it, effective policies, education for all, lifestyles of reduced consumption, and a spirituality that drives and sustains our efforts. The technocratic culture of the world will otherwise continue to dominate, and our best efforts will be reduced to dust. We need a change of heart to sustain a change of activity in our global systems.

58 We must permanently end the derisive attitude that climate science is merely some romantic, green movement of do-gooders who don't know anything about the economics involved. Let us admit that it is a problem we must all face together. This is a matter of interest to everyone. Every family's children are at risk. Their futures are at stake.

59 If we want to be successful in the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, we must insist on three conditions. First, that all agreements are doable and, second, obligatory for all. Third, they will need to be monitored to ensure compliance. May this be the inauguration of a new process, one that is drastic for drastic times, one that is intense, and one that everyone agrees to implement.

60 I hope that everyone taking part in the upcoming conference in the UAE be sincere, be strategic, and hold a long-term view. This will help create a noble outcome. As I asked in *Laudato Si'*, "What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?"

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: What gives you hope regarding the world's ability to come together to reduce climate change? What frustrates you about it?

.....

Pray: PSALM 8:3–5

Side 1: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: What are we humans that you are mindful of us,
us mortals that you care for us?

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 1: Yet you have made us a little lower than divine beings
and crowned us with glory and honor.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

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Act: Spend some time online or in your local library and learn about the COP meeting in the United Arab Emirates.

SESSION SIX

CHAPTER 6: SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS

61 I turn my attention now to the Catholic faithful. I remind everyone that our faith is what motivates us. I hope my sisters and brothers in other religions will also be motivated by their faith. Authentic faith gives us hope, keeps us strong, and transforms all of life into service for others.

IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH

62 The Creation story in Genesis 1 reminds us that, after the creation of the world, God looked everything over and saw it as very good. The book of Deuteronomy reminds us that the Earth and all that is in it belongs to God. Hence, we are all responsible together for this Earth. We must bring our intelligence and love for Creation as a delicate balance of all creatures to the table.

63 We, people of faith, should be alarmed that so many species on Earth are disappearing. We cannot be indifferent to this because as nature goes, so do we. Creation is composed of many relationships!

64 Jesus himself was entranced by nature and used it in his teaching. He saw its beauty and often pointed out how much God loves us. He invited his associates to see the hand of God in all of nature.

65 We must see all plants, animals, fish, birds, and even the minerals of the Earth as imbued with the presence of God, their Creator. He holds everything mysteriously in his hands. He directs everything to its fullest life. This is why we find it such a mystical experience to behold a dewdrop, a forest in the evening, a mountain, and the roaring waves of the oceans. Likewise, we see God in the faces of the poor.

JOURNEYING IN COMMUNION AND COMMITMENT

66 We are united with everything else in Creation. We must fight against the way technology or industry tries to separate us from this divine connection.

67 We Jews and Christians see the entire universe as shot through with divine presence. We see the human being—that's us—at the center of Creation, but only in the way we are related to everything and everyone else. There is a great mystery in this, but unseen bonds link us, and together with all Creation, we form a sort of universal family. Our hearts are moved with gratitude, awe, and respect.

68 Therefore, when the Earth is scorched, ruined, and suffering, we feel that in our very bones. God has joined us to all parts of Creation. When a species goes extinct, we lose a partner in life. Let us consider our humble place in this God-driven world. “Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler but more fruitful way.”

69 So, let us be reconciled to this Earth and all its many creatures. This is our home, our only home, our common home. Let us make it more beautiful because that reflects our human dignity. At the same time, let us prevail upon our leaders to act swiftly, decisively, and sincerely.

70 Whatever we can do, even small actions, is important. Avoiding an increase of just one tenth of a degree in global temperatures would end

suffering for many people. This requires that we also make significant changes in our lifestyle and convictions.

71 Can your household reduce waste? Can you buy fewer single-use items? Can you reduce pollution, drive less, and change your family habits to consider the fate of the Earth in each decision? The more you do, the more your leaders will hear you! You are bringing about transformation.

72 Let me close by reminding the rich of something. The amount of emissions per person in a place like the United States (or Western Europe) is about two times more than someone living in China and seven times more than someone living in a poor nation like Guatemala. Therefore, “we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact.”

73 I entitled this letter *Laudate Deum*, which is Latin for “Praise God.” I chose this name to remind us that we will become our own worst enemy if we fail to respect the hand of God in Creation and begin thinking that somehow it belongs to us.

Reflection, Prayer, and Action

Discuss: What do you make of Pope Francis' advice to Catholics and other people of good faith in this session? What is your response to his blunt assessment in #72?

.....

Pray: PSALM 100:1–3

Side 1: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: Serve the Lord with gladness;

come into his presence with singing.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

Side 2: Know that the Lord is God.

It is God who made us, and we belong to God.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

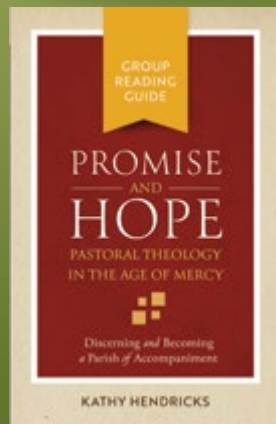
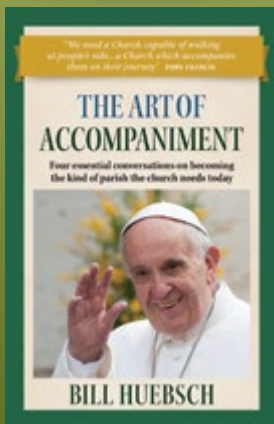
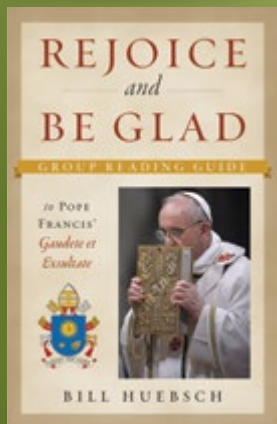
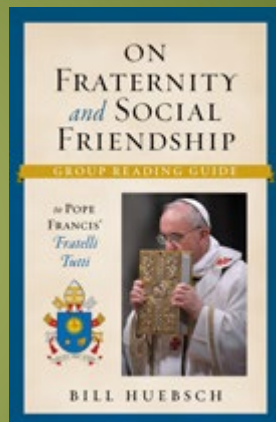
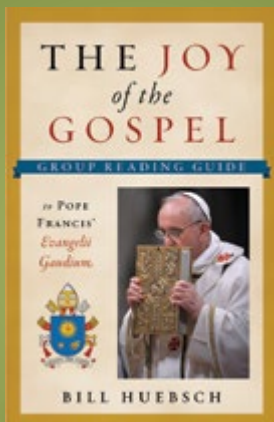
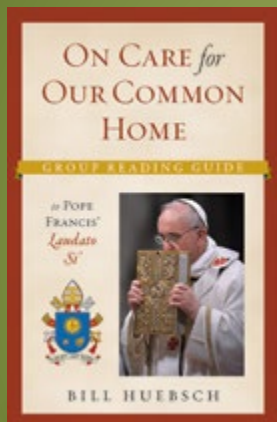
Side 2: We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

Response in unison: We praise you with all your creatures.

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Act: What might change in your life after having studied this entire Apostolic Exhortation? What steps might you and your household take to help reduce climate change?

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