

Earth, Our Common Home – a call to cherish and preserve the only home we have.

Pat Long, St Brendan's, Flemington, Victoria

Pope Francis' plea to engage in a transformation of insight, attitude and awareness regarding our common home is at the heart of the 2015 encyclical 'Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home'. Experiences of the interdependence of all life on the planet will evoke in our hearts a desire to honour the sacred permeating the creative unfolding of life over Earth's 4.5 billion year emergence. *The universe unfolds in God who fills it completely... there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face (LS #233)* The awesome magnificence of unique expressions of great beauty from the tiniest to the largest living beings provide the impetus to protect and nurture this gift for future generations. *...there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night (LS #85) The Spirit is intimately present at the very heart of the universe (#238)*

The depth of our interconnectedness with all Earth's systems shifts our perception of the place of the human within a living Earth from that of *masters and consumers* to participants who recognise and respond to *the appeal, the urgency and challenge we face (LS #15)*. *if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then care will well up spontaneously in us (LS #11)*

Pope Francis describes some elements of an ecological spirituality arising from these insights. He is interested in *a spirituality capable of inspiring us... motivating us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world... an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning (LS 216)*. Current threats to life on Earth have been well documented and the impacts are being felt at a more rapid and expansive rate than had previously been predicted. Keeping in touch with that interior impulse is a critical counterbalance for feelings of powerlessness and helplessness in the face of the challenge we face.

Addressing this issue by making it a key theme in the Plenary Council is strongly recommended. It is an opportunity for the Church to show it takes seriously the urgency of these times and the enormity of the challenge before us. Alongside so many practical changes which can be made to reduce carbon emissions, protect the vulnerable and simplify our lives, is the potential to engage members in an ongoing exploration of the richness of Laudato Si'. In the process an authentic ecological spirituality will provide the strength needed to respond in a timely and relevant manner to Earth's cry. Can there be a more important focus than acting with and for the children of the future?