



How Catholics Can Respond to Pope Francis and His Encyclical Letter Laudato Si.

Understand! Step outside of your politics, whether they be of the left, right, or the center. Pope Francis is doing his job as the Bishop of Rome and instructing us in faith and morals. His message is not new. It goes back to the first chapter of the book of Genesis. St. John Paul and Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI all made statements similar to the message of this letter of Pope Francis, only not with such visibility. And then of course there was St. Francis of Assisi.

Pray! Prayer is the answer to confusion. Open your heart to Christ, pray that the Holy Spirit comes upon you and fills you with understanding. Believe that God will answer your prayers.

Beware! Political factions will manipulate the Pope's words for their own agendas. If your first impulse is to reject what the Pope says, that is a sign of danger! Pope Francis deserves a fair hearing, without the dubious “assistance” of political spin masters who have agendas that may be in opposition to the Church.

Repent! All of us sin against Creation. Our culture makes it easy to pollute and damage the planet. Changing that begins with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we understand that we are sinners against God & His Creation, we confess that sin, we resolve to forsake our sin – so that we live more lightly upon the land.

Change your ways and manners of living! This is an essential fruit of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We got into the present situation with millions of bad decisions by billions of people over long periods of time. We will get into a better situation as we learn to make good, better, and best decisions. That process begins in each individual heart. It's hard to do good because **structures of sin**, built up by those billions of sinful decisions, make evil easy. Every time we do the right thing, we create **structures of beauty, wisdom and goodness** that make it easier for everyone to do good. So never tell yourself that what you do doesn't matter, because it does. It matters to you, to your family, to your community, and to the future.

Pay attention to what is happening! Watch the weather and your local climate and ecology. Discern the signs of these times – politics, economics, culture, community. Give careful thought to necessities, risks, challenges, resources, hazards, & opportunities for both your household and your community. No one is an island! Will your life be a blessing or a curse to your community and this planet?

Start here: Use a clothesline to air dry your clothes. It's the easiest thing we can do to bless the planet. It's a great first step. (We start small or we don't start at all.) Your clothes will last longer (dryer lint is the dryer beating your clothes to death!) and smell better. The time involved is minimal and a little exercise is good for us all. During wet or extremely cold weather, use your dryer if you must (although air drying inside also works) but during most of the year, when it is not wet nor extremely cold, allow the sun to dry your clothes and bless the planet with your actions.

Do something about energy conservation. The first thing to do is find and seal air leaks! Turn lights off when not in use. In the summer use fans and set your thermostat at a higher temperature. In the winter, dress for the season indoors and lower your thermostat. Beware of “vampire loads” from your electronics. **Windows** are a major heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter. Shade is your friend in the summer – but get your shade from deciduous trees that shed their leaves in the winter, because then the sun is your friend! Find many more energy conservation ideas at <http://www.energyconservationinfo.org/summer.pdf> and <http://www.energyconservationinfo.org/winter.pdf> .

Invest in solar power for your home. If you have money in the bank, a solar hot water system will pay for itself in a few years and solar electric systems can pay for themselves over about 10 years (depending on the local situation). You will get a better rate of return on money invested in solar power for your house than you will with money in the bank and it is much less risky than money in the stock market. Pope Benedict installed solar cells at the Vatican, and he didn't do that because it was going to lose money.

Stop, or greatly reduce, your use of toxic chemicals on your lawns. Urban areas apply hazardous fertilizers, herbicides, & pesticides at rates that would never be found in farm country. These chemicals are death to the planet and its creatures and hazardous to humans. They destroy the micro flora and fauna in our soils. The chemicals kill beneficial pollinating insects like bees – one-third of our food supply is dependent upon pollinating insects! If we kill off all our bees – say goodbye to most nuts, fruit, squash, pumpkins, melons, chocolate, or cucumbers & 3/4ths of our flowers! Since 2006, the commercial bee population has declined **forty percent!** Stop killing bees with lawn chemicals! Never buy a plant contaminated with *neoniconitoid pesticides!* Learn more at <http://www.bettertimesinfo.org/lawncare.htm> . Bishops should mandate organic lawn care methods for all church properties.



Compost! Because a rind is a terrible thing to waste. Brown and dry materials, plus wet and green materials, in a pile, over time change into a wonderful brown earthy smelling material that your plants will adore. No, compost doesn't stink. Read more about compost at <http://justpeace.org/compost.html> .

Walk, take public transportation, carpool, or ride a bicycle more, drive less. If possible, integrate the geographies of your life so you live close to your work, in an area with easy access to schools, churches, shopping, and entertainment.

Support public and private initiatives that promote public transportation, carpools, bicycles, walking, organic gardening and farming, free-range and pastured flocks and herds, urban agriculture, local food systems, and community capacities for food security. Parishes should provide bike racks to encourage bicycle use.

Be careful how you spend your money. Every dollar you spend is a vote – and you get what you pay for. A purchase may also embody other, costs – environmental degradation, slave labor or other moral evils. Don't subsidize the work of demons who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls! Buy food from local farmers & locally owned supermarkets, eat at local restaurants. If you buy stuff because of emotional needs, get counseling. You can't spend your way to prosperity, so don't try. Your life will not improve if you buy more stuff. Your kids will not be smarter if they wear designer stuff. Remember the advice of our grandparents: Reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, make it over, make do. *The borrower is the slave of the lender.*

Plant trees and bushes! Shade your parking lots, buildings, and houses with trees! Grow some of your food, even if it is only a tomato plant in a pot. Plant fruit & nut trees and bushes in parks. Line your streets and roads with shade trees.

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. Don't let the perfect become the enemy of the good. Don't bite off more than you can chew! Making small changes in your life over time will bless Creation and reduce the amount of stress, risk, and emotional trouble in your life. Procrastination, however, is the thief of time, so don't delay, start today.

Start projects – big or small – that will save the world, or at least your little corner of it. Work together with your neighbors to increase the safety, security, health, & well-being of your family & community. Laudato Si is a call to a better life, a world with more justice, peace, equity, and sustainability. If we want truth, wisdom, justice, and beauty, then the best thing to do is to practice truth, wisdom, justice, and beauty in our own lives and neighborhoods. Eventually we will get good at it.

Nurture blessings and hope in your own life and in the life of your community. Promote solidarity & cooperation. Trust yourself, respect others and God's Creation. Understand our interdependence with each other & the natural world. Leave nobody behind for the wolves to devour. Turn your back on the demons who without ceasing preach the gospel of Greed – “Buy more stuff! Make more trash! Don't listen to the Pope!” *By Bob Waldrop, Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House, Oklahoma City, June 17, 2015.*

Waldrop is the founder of the Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House in Oklahoma City. He holds a certificate in permaculture from Elfin Permaculture of Florida, and five diplomas in Permaculture (in Education, Community Service, Research, Media, and Finance) awarded by the Permaculture Institute of the U.S. He is one of the founders of the Oklahoma Food Coop, the first food coop in the US to only sell locally grown and made food and non-food items. He is director of music at the Church of the Epiphany of the Lord.