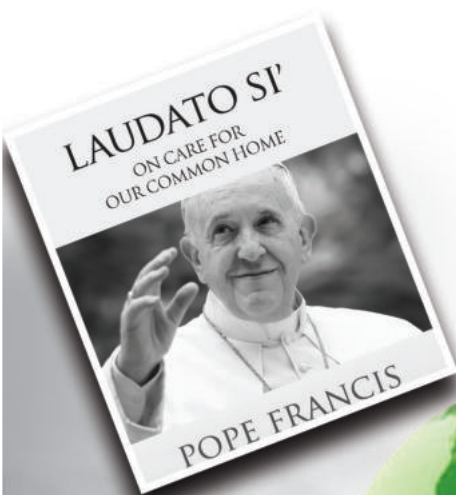


# VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

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Periodical published by FIMARC in four languages.  
It highlights the rural world's life and activities of  
the member movements belonging or not to the Federation

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Dear Readers of VMR

*Greetings from International Secretariat!*

This edition of VMR is on Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si*, which is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that man is rendering to the environment and his fellow man. While addressing the environment directly, the document's scope is broader in many ways as it looks at not only man's effect on the environment, but also the many philosophical, theological, and cultural causes that threaten the relationships of man to nature and man to each other in various circumstances. This document is in many ways the epitome of Pope Francis. It presents Gospel truths. And, it provides a challenge for every believer (and non-believers too).

*Laudato Si* is Pope Francis' Encyclical on the environment or more formally – On Care for Our Common Home. *Laudato Si* means “Praise be to you” which is the first line of a canticle by St. Francis that praises God with all of his creation. From the outset, Pope Francis states the goal of the document: “In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (#3). Normally, papal documents are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful. But, similar to Pope Saint John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, Pope Francis address his message to all people.

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environment challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (#14). This call for dialogue to every one is at the heart of



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the document, but Pope Francis also has a very striking call to conversion for those in the Church as well .It says “The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (#217)

No matter who you are or where you find yourself in relation to protecting the environment, Pope Francis has this message for you: “I invite all to embrace with open hearts this Encyclical which is in line with the Church’s social doctrine” (General Audience, June 17, 2015). In just a few sentences and paragraphs, Pope captures the issues which are at the core centre of our food and agricultural systems, climate and environment. The encyclical gives a feeling that the pope is speaking on behalf of us and raising the same issues and opinions and resonates with many of the issues that FIMARC tackled. Let me give you some reflections in this regard.

The Pope highlights the predominance and importance of small-scale food producers as well as the need to put them at the centre of food policies: “For example, there is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world’s peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste, be it in small agricultural parcels, in orchards and gardens, hunting and wild harvesting or local fishing. Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops. Their attempts to move to other, more diversified, means of production prove fruitless because of the difficulty of linkage with regional and global markets, or because the infrastructure for sales and transport is geared to larger businesses. Civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production. To ensure economic freedom from which all can effectively benefit, restraints occasionally have to be imposed on those possessing greater resources and financial power.” (Page 55) Another example , “Political activity on the local level could also be



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directed to modifying consumption, developing an economy of waste disposal and recycling, protecting certain species and planning a diversified agriculture and the rotation of crops. Agriculture in poorer regions can be improved through investment in rural infrastructures, a better organization of local or national markets, systems of irrigation, and the development of techniques of sustainable agriculture. New forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interests of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction (Page 76)”.



On GM crops pope says, In many places, following the introduction of the GM crops, productive land is concentrated in the hands of a few owners due to “the progressive disappearance of small producers, who, as a consequence of the loss of the exploited lands, are obliged to withdraw from direct production”. The most vulnerable of these become temporary labourers, and many rural workers end up moving to poverty-stricken urban areas. The expansion of these crops has the effect of destroying the complex network of ecosystems, diminishing the diversity of production and affecting regional economies, now and in the future (Page 57/58).

On the environment and the poor, the pope says “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet:” (#48).

On the effects of the market on the environment, pope says “Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention” (#190), On global warming pope says



“A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human

causes which produce or aggravate it.” (#23). (For more on global warming and climate change see, #24-26, #52, #169-170, #172, #175, #181 #188.)

Let me conclude with Pope’s call on what we individually can do to help the environment “Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity. (#211)

*You can read other relevant messages and quotes of the Encyclical in the main article*

Enjoy your reading

George Dixon Fernandez  
Secretary General



# AUDATO



## POPE FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

**Laudato si** ‘ (‘Praise be to you my lord ‘) is the first encyclical entirely written by the Pope Francis dated from 24 May 2015 and published on 18 June 2015 in the feast of Pentecost . It is devoted to the issues of environmental and human ecology. The publication of this text is preceded by few months to the Paris Conference on climate change (COP21). Many Christians, but also heads of States and organization welcomed this initiative and its possible influence on the next conference on climate because it is the first time that a Pope devoted an encyclical about environmental issues, recognizing that the ecological issue is a major challenge for humanity.

### **To whom this encyclical is addressed?**

With the encyclical “Lautado si”, the Pope Francis wish to address to “Every person who inhabits this planet”. He proposes «to enter into dialogue with all about our common home”. For him, it is a way of saying that everybody should feel concerned by the ecological issue which queries our ways of living. Everyone is somehow held accountable and must take its responsibilities.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote that the world was on the brink of a nuclear crisis, today Pope Francis suggests that the world is on the edge of an unparalleled ecological disaster and it is therefore urgent to act. It is for this reason that it does not merely denounce problems but in his final chapter proposes guidelines and possible actions.

### **The encyclical**

The document is presented in six chapters. The first one provides an overview of the problems encountered on the planet: climate, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, social degradation, quality of life and global inequalities.





Then the Holy Father iterates through various texts of the Gospel to draw instruction and guideline of action for humanity. In Chapter 3, the Pope analyses the roots of the ecological crisis through our dominant model and its consequences both for the economy and life in society. He then describes social integral ecology and human dimensions to reach the chapter where he offers some orientations and lines of action that could help us to get out of the spiral of self-destruction in which “we embed us”.



In his diagnosis of the society and climate problems, for the Pope, “what is happening in our Home” is a big concern: pollution and climate change, threat to drinking water resources, loss of biodiversity and deterioration of the quality of human life and social degradation... Pope Francis do not go by four paths: Yes, climate change is extremely serious. He stresses in particular the irreversible changes that the way of life and production of the richest subjected to biodiversity and ecosystem balances infinitely fragile and precious (31). The Pope is concerned for the ecology but also strongly emphasized that the first victims of this way of life are poor people. The Northern countries have is this way, contracted an “ecological debt” (51) towards the South.

“We have never been so mistreated nor did wrong to our common home in last two centuries”, writes Pope Francis who criticizes a development model which leads to the degradation of the environment. What is inevitably reflected on the lives of people, starting with the poorest. He defends the thesis that “we are faced not with two separated things, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (139).



Throughout of his Encyclical, the Pope Francis speaks of systems: global system, industrial system,







the planet will adapt herself. The Pope writes: “Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions.” (14).

He is particularly harsh towards the international political community: “The failure of global summits on the environment makes it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected. (...)The alliance between the economy and technology ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests. Consequently the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment, whereas any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented. (54).

The Pope has also harsh words for rich countries when they propose as a solution, the limitation of births in developing countries arguing that population growth is not good for their development. Pope Francis denounces the selfishness of the rich and writes: “To accuse the increase of the population and non-extreme and selective consumerism is a way of not confronting the problems. It is argued thus to legitimize the current distribution model where a minority feels the right to consume as much as it would be impossible to generalize, because the planet may not even contain waste of such consumption. »



Where does this “culture of waste” come which causes such disaster? The diagnosis of the Pope is clear: “the idolatries techno sciences linked to financialisation and the madness of an economy based on production and consumption without limits”(56). Those are three “evils” at the root of the problem. Suffice to say that the Pope Francis does not believe in a solution by geo-engineering. And still less by the market. It is a radical change of lifestyle



that should move the rich, if we want to assume our human condition on a finite planet. This implies, according to Pope Francis, that we agree to subordinate private property in what is defined in the Catholic tradition as the “universal destination of goods”. In other words that everyone has the right, to breathe clean air and drink clean water or benefit from a decent.

Continuing its denunciation of the evils of our civilization, the Pope does not spare what he takes as «the greatest resistance” (56) to progress towards a humanity reconciled with itself and with the creation: finance markets.

### **The hope**

The situation is serious, we said, but we should not be resigned... “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change,” Pope wrote in his introduction (13).

The reasons for his confidence, he found in sacred history and cited the episode of the Ark of Noah and the Babylonian exile. “ Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems. (61)

### **Proposals for guide line and actions**

The Holy Father calls all men of good will to dialogue: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. (14). “The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that “realities are greater than ideas”(201).



Dialogue is the forced way to full answers that nobody owns: dialogue between science and religion

“Nonetheless, science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to



understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both (62); between faith and reason (63); between believers of different traditions and religious denominations (64); between scientific and technical language and popular language (143); between politics and Economics (189); between disciplines (197) and sciences (201); between the different movements and environmentalists, “ The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that “realities are greater than ideas (201)

The Pope also insists on the quality and transparency of the dialogue in the process of negotiations at the international level with a view to obtaining consensus (165).



In the last chapter of the encyclical, the Pope Francis indicates the type of change that humanity needs to respond to the current challenges. He invites to “bet on another style of life” in a world where “the market tends to create a compulsive consumerist mechanism to place its products” (203).

He also stresses the importance of education which must not only create an ‘ecological citizenship’, but should also cultivate ‘of solid virtues’, condition of the «gift of self in an ecological commitment”(211). This environmental education can even be a path to God with us “to make the jump to the mystery, from which an ecological ethic acquires its deepest sense’ (210).

All efforts are encouraged - “avoid the use of plastic and paper, reduce water consumption, sorting waste, cook only what can be reasonably eat, treat with caution other beings alive, use public transport or share the same vehicle among several people, planting trees, turn off unnecessary lights» (211) - can help change the world by allowing the property to spread in society (212).

The Encyclical ends with ‘some lines of ecological spirituality’, taken from the Gospel and Christian experience, and calls for a conversion path that must lead to a renewal of our relations with the world that surrounds us, with others and

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with God. “Integral ecology implies to devote a little time to find the serene harmony with creation, to reflect on our lifestyle and our ideals, to contemplate the Creator who lives among us and in that which surrounds us, whose presence ‘shall not be manufactured, but discovered, unveiled’ (Evangelii gaudium, 71)» (225).

### **Question for the movements and the organizations**

- Did you hear about the encyclical “Laudato si”?
- Did you work it out in your movement or organization?
- Do you think this will be a good help to lobby your government in the preparation of the COP 21?

**Christophe Dickès:** *From my point of view, this encyclical is, with the question of the Mercy (the theme of the Jubilee Year 2016), one of the two or three pillars of the Pontificate. Nothing that the choice of the name of François reveals his willingness to place the ecological question at the center of his concerns that he binds to economic and social questions. We know, the Cardinal Bergoglio has taken the name of Francis because one of his friends Cardinal has blown to his ear a few minutes after his election: “Do not forget the poor.”*

*But the name Francis is also a reference to Saint Francis of Assisi who, in the 13th century, loved nature.*

*He was the author of a Canticle of the Creatures which is pulled the name of the encyclical of Argentinian Pope. The Italian Saint evokes the water, the earth, the stars, etc. It is a hymn. But the Pope goes further. As shown in the text Laudato si’, the ecology is well a way to also mention the major concern of the first Pope from a megalopolis hit by the misery and poverty. From a more general point of view, we can also reframe the encyclical in the tradition of the great papal texts condemning the ideologies seeking to make the man GÖDS.*

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The quotations that you’ll read and the numbers mentioned as reference are sometimes the words of the Holy Father, extracted from the paragraph mentioned in to brackets, sometimes just a “free translation” of these words. That is why we invite you to refer to the paragraphs of the Encyclical to acquaint the deep thought of Pope François.

## FIMARC NEWS

### 2015, A KEY YEAR FOR WORLD SOCIAL FORUM ACTIVISTS

#### RECLAIMING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

For the second time in a row, the World Social Forum (WSF) gathered in Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab spring. The 2015 edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) closed with a march in solidarity with Palestine through the streets of Tunis, which was hosting this grand annual celebration of alter-globalisation for the second time

Between 40,000 and 50,000 people from 120 countries met in Tunis to proclaim that “another world is possible

During four days, over 1000 workshops, seminars and round tables brought

together members of associations, NGOs, trade unionists, researchers and activists from 120 countries at the El Manar University campus and discussed a wide range of issues and topics including, fiscal justice, a healthy environment, free universal healthcare, new consumption models, or a people’s revolution, climate justice, immigration, media freedom, women’s rights, refugees and energy, etc

The Forum provided some organisations with a chance to sharpen their arguments in the run-up to two major events this year: the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement



*At the WSF in Tunis, the team from the workshop on Reclaim the city and rural areas , reclaim our food systems! representing , George Dixon Fernandez from FIMARC, Judith Hitchman from Urgenci, Community Supported Agriculture around the world, Adriana from the MST and La Via Campesina, Emily Mattheisen from HIC, and Jason Nardi from RIPESS*

on Climate Change (COP 21), at the end of 2015, and the UN Special Summit on Sustainable Development, which will give birth to the new post-2015 agenda as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) reach their deadline.

In its final declaration, the Assembly of Social Movements, for its part, returned to the foundations on which the Forum has been built since its advent in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, less than two years after the “Battle of Seattle” put the spotlight on the WTO and its promotion of free trade.

It points the finger, first and foremost, at the “transnational corporations and the financial system (IMF, WB and WTO), who are the main agents of the capitalist system, privatizing life, public services and common goods such as water, air, land, seeds and mineral resources, promoting wars and violating human rights, and ransacking resources

FIMARC organised a workshop on Reclaiming Local Food Systems in collaboration with via campesina,

Habitat International and Urgency on 25 March 2015 at World Social Forum held in Tunis this year. The workshop discussed and shared the links between the Right to the City platform, the food sovereignty movements, and solidarity economy. This activity focused on enhancing local and regional food systems, including tangible experiences in creating better and more sustainable access to food. Presenters George Dixon Fernandez from FIMARC, Judith Hitchman from Urgenci, Community Supported Agriculture around the world, Adriana from the MST and La Via Campesina, Emily Mattheisen from HIC, and Jason Nardi from RIPESS shared

their organizational experiences in implementing structural change in urban and rural areas including implementing Right to food. The workshop also highlighted the need to strengthen more the food sovereignty and solidarity

economy movements around the world and to raise the voice against the ongoing land and resource grabbing.





# LIVING

# Laudato Si'



## VMR

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