

## Laudato Si' Reflection, July 2025

### “Gratitude, Generosity, and Joy...”

When I consider the way that Laudato Si' and Catholic Church teaching on the environment has affected me over the last 10 years, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of gratitude to Pope Francis and to everyone who has joined the movement begun when our dear, departed Holy Father issued the encyclical in 2015.

Before Laudato Si': I always thought I was “environmentally friendly”, taking care to avoid plastic, using public transportation when I could, choosing Energy Star appliances, and making other sensible choices that are available to people in North America. (But to be honest, I was aware that my lifestyle required more resources than most people have available to them, and more resources than any person actually needs).

Before Laudato Si': Regarding my faith, I was already committed to God, a dedicated Catholic, attending Mass regularly, serving where I could, donating, doing my best to be full of faith, hope and charity. (But I was looking for ways to love and follow God more closely).

When Laudato Si' was issued: I was in a lay Catholic community when I first read Laudato Si', and so I had the opportunity to share and discuss it with others who were used to reading and discussing church documents. Laudato Si''s assurance that God loves all of Creation, and the encyclical's urgent call for humans, especially those in rich countries, to better care for our world encouraged and motivated me.

The Pope's language in the encyclical is alternatively beautiful and heartbreaking. Passages such as, *“the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely...”* (LS, 233) and *“Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection.”* (LS, 77).

Return to God: For me, Laudato Si' has been a call to “return to God”, the same call we hear in the Liturgy every Lent. For example, it's teachings helped me see the Sabbath as a sacred gift from God, which I am meant to share with all of Creation by slowing down and refraining from unnecessary tasks, especially on Sundays (LS, 237) . It's teaching on the Jubilee also helped me see rest in a new way, including rest for the land and forgiveness of debt. (LS, 71).

Living in Exile: Laudato Si' also helped me see that often I am living in a land exiled from God, where it is easy to stray away from God and His Way. Like the ancient Israelites, I can be tempted to take part in wrongful things which are offered all around me and even seen as “good” in our society. Another quote from Laudato Si' which comforts and motivates me, *“Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life...one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson...the conviction that “less is more”. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment... Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.”* (LS, 222). This passage reminds me that I'm not meant to pursue more, more, more things and that when I do act in that way, I harm myself while harming the Earth.

Ecological Conversion: A person in our society can't live without the things that are wreaking havoc on our earth, such as fossil fuels, plastics and industrialized animal agriculture. But I've learned that I can live with much less of them than I thought I could. For me, the point where I decided to try much harder at it was watching a documentary called “A Plastic Ocean.” Seeing ocean animals suffer because of careless and unnecessary consumption broke my heart. Knowing that the suffering ocean animals are also a warning, an outward manifestation of the deeper physical and spiritual havoc that overconsumption is inflicting on us made me rededicate my personal habits to be as “Zero Waste” as possible. (I can also advocate for change). Pope Francis associated this kind of behavior, “doing without,” with gratitude, generosity and joy.

Toward a New Lifestyle: Looking for ways to go “Zero Waste” in my life made me see that I could also find ways to reduce my use of fossil fuel, even when the activity wasn't directly related to Zero Waste. Then I

decided to see if I could reduce the use of harmful chemicals (household cleaners, yard chemicals, toiletries and hair products, non-organic foods, etc). Then I decided to see if I could reduce water consumption, and animal agriculture products. It all started with plastic. I learned the other changes were possible and made me happy. From Laudato Si': *"We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognized for their true worth...(if) we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society."* (LS, 208).

More on Ecological Conversion: I also learned that changes made for the "good of the environment" are "good for my soul." Being more closely connected to everything on Earth that helps feed and house me, and feeling gratitude and kinship toward of it, helps me grow closer to God and the rest of Creation. From Laudato Si', *"...human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself."* (LS, 66). Without all three relationships, we are incomplete. With all three, we can live in the joy God intended for us.

Community and The Laudato Si' Action Platform: I wouldn't have been able to see any of the goodness contained in Laudato Si' without others who shared the same concerns and were on the same path. For this reason, I'm deeply grateful to all who have spent time over the last 10 years lifting up Laudato Si', and for the **Laudato Si' Action Platform**, which gives us a community to walk together toward God. I am looking forward to my 7-Year Journey.

In gratitude,

Marilyn Kott, California, USA  
July 16, 2025  
Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

From Laudato Si':

#### *IX. BEYOND THE SUN*

*243. At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. Even now we are journeying towards the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven. Jesus says: "I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all.*

*244. In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for "if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator".[172] Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.*

*245. God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!*