

Pre-Launch of the Resource

Our Common Home: A guide to caring for our living planet'

Joint Initiative of the Holy See and the Stockholm Environment Institute

14 February 2023

Words of Welcome

Card. Michael Czerny S.J.

Dear honoured guests, dear siblings all,

we are very happy to celebrate this joint initiative of the Holy See and the Stockholm Environment Institute, a collaborative effort to meet the challenges of the current climate crisis. Today we launch the resource, *Our Common Home: A guide to caring for our living planet*. Inspired by the 2015 Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'* (LS), this guide calls for urgent and immediate climate action and supports it by providing information, inspiration, and tools essential for community-based responses.

We are at a critical historical moment where actions today will determine the fate of generations to come. Here is the prophetic question that Pope Francis asks in *Laudato Si'*: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS 160). A few years later he added: “From the hands of God we have received a garden. We cannot leave a desert for our children.”² The challenge ahead is monumental; we need nothing short of a “bold cultural revolution” (LS 114) to respond to it adequately. And bold, indeed, is this booklet: thin to the touch on paper, modest in length online, it is packed with action suggestions that promise to bring about just and sustainable transitions.

The guidebook we offer today to local churches and community groups represents an important and hopeful collaboration between two great sectors: that of science, and that of faith. It emerges from a process during which we sought to listen and learn from one another, and engaged in an open and empathetic dialogue about how to respond to the crises that we face in common. While starting from complementary worldviews, what we hold in common is what matters – science and faith share core values and purpose capable of healing the world, but neither in isolation. Principles of inter-connection and co-responsibility frame our climate as a common good, and the planet as our common home. The call to protect, care, and regenerate creation must be a priority for everyone, regardless of one’s belonging to this or that religion or none at all.

The guidebook invites us to come together and act on many manifestations of a warming climate and ecological breakdown, from food waste to air pollution, from water insecurity to biodiversity loss. Current modes of economic development rely on the unsustainable burning of fossil fuels; the current market pushes harmful levels of consumption that pollute the environment with garbage as well as our souls and spirits with insatiable greed. But this wild license to consume is enjoyed by a shrinking minority of the global population that hoards power and wealth and ignores any sense of the genuine common good. The response and protest are plain to hear:

the increasingly pained cries of the earth and of the poor most exposed to climate dangers and deepening inequalities and exclusion. By understanding the earth as a *shared* inheritance, the guidebook shows how to shift priorities so that the gifts of creation benefit everyone, as intended by God.

Indeed, it is the land rights of local and Indigenous peoples that must be strengthened to regenerate our soils and protect all species; it is the education and empowerment of women that bring about the best possible social and environmental outcomes; and it is concern for intergenerational justice that will ensure a bright and meaningful future for our youth. Such interventions can be accommodated and welcomed only if economic priorities shift from raw GDP growth towards integral human development.

And so, the guidebook identifies relevant actions at the level of local communities. This aligns strongly with the vision running through *Laudato Si'*. Our Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development strives to hear the voices, grasp the needs and sustain the actions of the local Church as the latter responds to urgent needs emerging.

The guidebook we launch today aims to empower such actors and actions at the local level with inspiration, with introspection, with careful consideration of what has to change, and with commitment to have this change come about. Movements of people need to arise from below for the care of our common home and of our most vulnerable siblings. The new booklet suggests practical actions that can be shared and networked on the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform.

“Let us dream,” Pope Francis invites everyone, “as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, [siblings] all” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 8).

May this booklet, born of patient and fruitful collaboration, encourage openness in dialogue, collaboration in planning, and great courage in action.