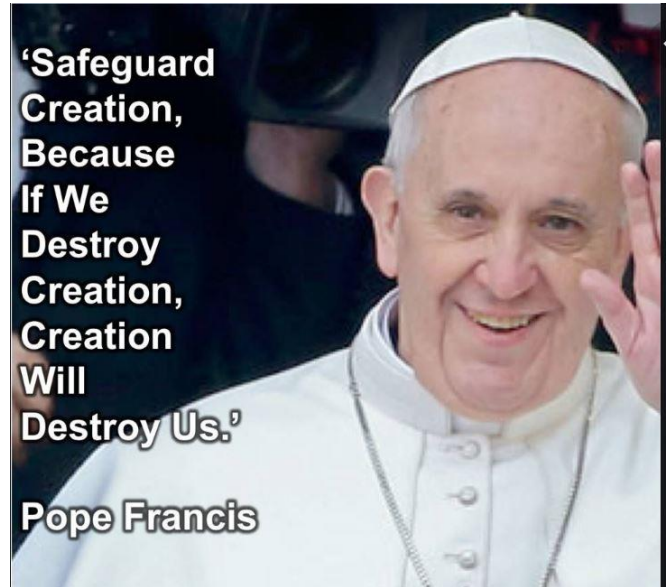


Warm greetings again on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology!

OLF parishioners may be noticing more Prayers of the Faithful around caring for Creation, and quotes from Pope Francis' famous encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in the parish newsletter. These are part of the parish's response to the Pope's call for a year of activities dedicated to implementing *Laudato Si'*, beginning May 24, 2020. The occasion is the fifth anniversary of the encyclical's release.

The initiative is designed to involve families, dioceses and local parishes, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, businesses, farms and religious orders in drafting plans for sustainable living going forward.

Among the goals of the platform are adopting simpler lifestyles and developing "ecological economics" based on sustainable production, fair trade, using less plastic and adopting a more plant-based diet to reduce meat consumption, as well as a broader use of public transport in order to reduce pollution. (*Crux*, 19 May, 2020)



How this relates to COVID-19

On September 1, Pope Francis said the pandemic "has given us a chance to develop new ways of living," and reiterated his call to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Indeed, "already we can see how the earth can recover if we allow it to rest: the air becomes cleaner, the waters clearer, and animals have returned to many places from where they had previously disappeared."

He said: "The pandemic has brought us to a crossroads. We must use this decisive moment to end our superfluous and destructive goals and activities and to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life-giving. We must examine our habits of energy usage, consumption, transportation and diet. We must eliminate the superfluous and destructive aspects of our economies and nurture life-giving ways to trade, produce and transport goods."

Pope Francis advocates for the strengthening of "national and international legislation to regulate the activities of extractive mining companies and ensure access to justice for those affected," especially Indigenous communities. (*America Magazine*, 2 Sep, 2020)

Australia's post-COVID challenge

At a personal level, Australians have already developed new ways of living which we wouldn't normally have imagined possible. It's been a terrible time for many people and we grieve for those who have lost their lives or livelihoods. On the other hand, many of us appreciate the slower pace of life and time with family. Why not reflect on Pope Francis' call to examine our lifestyles? Given that Australians' average per person carbon footprint is one of the highest in the world, there's lots of

room for improvement. The ABC series, “Fight for Planet A”, now available on iView, gives lots of great tips. Here are a few.

- a) Perhaps we could eat less meat, especially red meat? The digestive processes of cows and sheep, in particular, create the potent greenhouse gas methane, and much deforestation occurs to make way for sheep and cattle. If you and your family decided to skip meat two days per week for an entire year, you would save as much carbon pollution as taking your car off the road for ten weeks!
- b) Already we are travelling less. More than any other activity, air travel is the most carbon intensive thing any individual can do. One person avoiding a return trip to Europe saves as much carbon pollution as a whole average household switching to 100% GreenPower in one year.
- c) Pope Francis is encouraging the faithful to divest from fossil fuels, both individually and as organisations. It’s normal for a large proportion of people’s savings and superannuation to be invested in fossil fuel intensive industries such as coal and gas mining. To make our savings work for a better world instead, it’s usually not difficult to switch to one of the smaller banks and to a Super Fund which seek to invest in low carbon options. These days, the returns are higher too!
- d) Finally, we can write to our local MP to ask them to advocate for post-COVID recovery spending that is good for people and good for the environment. Right now, the federal government is proposing a “gas-powered recovery”. Already it has invested four times more in fossil fuel projects than renewables since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

Pope Francis calls for fossil fuel extraction to be reined in. Many people of faith, along with people of goodwill, are calling for the stimulus spending to be on sectors which build greater fairness, create as many jobs as possible and protect the environment. The gas sector cannot do any of this, whereas spending on education, health, welfare, the arts, renewable energy and battery storage, etc, can provide more employment, and lead to less pollution, fewer threats to our scarce water resources, better health outcomes and a more resilient economy.

What kind of world do we want for our children?



Brisbane Student Strike. Credit: NCR Online.

Most of us are in position to do *something*. Let’s each do what we can and *together* we can create a safer, cleaner, more life-giving future for our children and grandchildren.

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OLF parishioner

President, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

Last Summer’s catastrophic fire season reminded us what we stand to lose as a nation if climate change isn’t slowed down.

Through the Student Strike for Climate movement, young people have been expressing their worry about the climate. Pope Francis affirmed them with this: “Future generations stand to inherit a greatly spoiled world. Our children and grandchildren should not have to pay the cost of our generation’s irresponsibility. Indeed, as is becoming increasingly clear, young people are calling for a change.” (*The Guardian*, 15 June, 2019)