

## The poor and the earth are crying out!

Ten Green Commandments #2  
– Listen to the cry of the poor

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis (2015) describes the earth as “burdened and laid waste” and “the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22) (section 2). Fr Joshrom (2019) sees *Laudato Si'* as “a loud clarion call” to “create a more equitable and just world” and “to care for our common home and for the most vulnerable members of our common household” (Kureethadam pp 49-50).

The poor are the worst victims of the destruction of the environment. The poor benefit least and suffer the most, even though their carbon footprint is virtually non-existent (Kureethadam, 2019, pp 38-40). The poor are going hungry as the oceans are depleted by over-fishing, they are going thirsty as there is no clean water to drink, they are becoming sick due to “today’s chemical-dependent and waste-producing economies” continuing to pollute (McDonagh, 2003, 21).

Developed countries owe a climate debt to the poor “for over-using and substantially diminishing the Earth’s capacity to absorb greenhouse gases... for the adverse effects of these excessive emissions... Ultimately, the responsibility for the ecological crisis comes down to communities, households

and individuals who constitute the human society” (Christian Aid cited in Kureethadam, 2019, pp 43-45).

As Pope Francis (2015) notes in the encyclical, “this calls into serious question the unjust habits of a part of humanity” (section 93). And he laments the loss of our most basic human relationships, “if the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships” (section 119).

As we approach *Laudato Si'* Week (16-24 May) Pope Francis has asked the global Catholic community to “undertake ambitious actions to address the mounting environmental perils facing the planet and its people.” In *Laudato Si'* he invites us “to pray for the grace to become responsible stewards of the Earth and the poor” (Kureethadam, 2019, p50).

The cry of the poor and our earth is a call for eco-justice and a call to action. This is a cry that should make you squirm in your seat. It is the cry you hear that makes you imagine the worse. You cannot cover your ears. You must not turn away!

**O God of the poor,  
Help us to  
rescue the abandoned  
And forgotten of this earth,  
So precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives,  
That we may  
protect the world  
and not prey on it,  
That we may  
sow beauty,  
not pollution  
and destruction.**

(Laudato Si, 2015, section 246)



REFLECTION > How do we soften our hardened hearts and to truly live Matt 25:35-40?

> How can we change our personal habits to help care for the poor of the Earth?

REFERENCES: 1. Pope Francis. (2015). *Laudato Si'* [Encyclical letter]. Retrieved from [www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

2. Kureethadam, JI. (2019). *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press.

3. McDonagh, S. (2003). *Dying for Water*. Dublin, Ireland: Veritas Publications

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE