



CALIFORNIA
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

God Calls Us All to Care for Our Common Home

Pastoral Statement by the
California Conference of Catholic Bishops
On the fourth anniversary of
Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home

June 2019

California: Abundant in Beauty and Bounty

Throughout its history, the rich, natural beauty of California has inspired countless people to approach the gift of creation with awe and wonder, raising voices of thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father whose love is manifest in the magnificence around us.

Our state's great beauty and bounty has stirred the spirits of generations to act on behalf of environmental protection and for the justice that ensures the integrity of the land and its people. For these reasons, the Bishops of California find it both fitting and necessary to reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and its message of care for God's creation.

We are publishing our Pastoral Statement on the fourth anniversary of *Laudato Si'* with a two-fold vision in mind: To animate and energize the implementation in California of what *Laudato Si'* calls us to do, and to offer a dynamic teaching and evangelization tool for our Catholic faith community and beyond, especially for young people.

We propose a practical application of the *Laudato Si'* message of ecological spirituality—that the ecological well-being of California is meant to be deeply embedded in a spirituality that unites all creatures and all creation in praising God.

Our Catholic doctrine offers a rich teaching on the theology of creation and our role and meaning in the world. It is in this context that we invite the people of California to reflect together on ways we can more faithfully and effectively care for creation as a hymn of thanksgiving for our common home.

*Praised be you, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,
who brings the day. - St. Francis of Assisi*

The title of the encyclical comes from St. Francis' 13th century hymn, "The Canticle of the Creatures," which uses the metaphor of creation as family to convey a classical, traditional Catholic vision of harmonious relationships among God, humanity, and all of God's creatures. Inspired by his namesake, Pope Francis weaves two key themes throughout the encyclical: common good and integral ecology.

In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. (LS 1)¹

Our shared home—a common good— belongs to all and is meant for all. The common good is the sum total of social conditions that allow us to access the resources and services necessary for a dignified life. Pope Francis deftly extends the notion of common good to include all of creation, as well as future generations (LS 159).

Pope Francis uses the term “integral ecology” to convey how we are to live in harmonious relationships with our fellow human beings and with creation. He draws upon the teaching of St John Paul II, who proclaimed that “all development worthy of the name must be integral, that is, it must be directed to the true good of every person and of the whole person.”²

To live out integral ecology with joy and authenticity, we are called to recognize the interrelated character of our existence—its environmental, economic, social, and cultural dimensions—and to practice care for all that God has created (LS 10).

The first part of our Pastoral Statement provides a reflection on the beauty and bounty of California, drawing upon the image of creation as a family. The second part invites everyone to reflect upon the call to contribute to the ecological well-being of our state based on our own “ecological vocations”—and to live them out fully, with prayer and joy, to foster integral ecology and the common good.

PART 1: A CANTICLE OF CALIFORNIA

*Praised be you, my Lord, through **Sister Mother Earth**, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

The astonishing diversity of landscapes across California—formed by the dynamic interplay of diverse natural forces—moves us to recognize God’s artistry in creation. From the tectonic activity on the Ring of Fire, with unimaginable subterranean pressures lifting mountains, to rainfall and glaciers shaping our scenic valleys, beaches, bays, and coastline—all contribute to our understanding of what it means to live in California.

In this universe, shaped by open and inter-communicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God’s transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. (LS 79)

How do we learn to perceive creation as open to God’s transcendence? How could we deepen our faith so as to enter into the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding in God’s creation? How can we grow in our belief that creation is a common good?

California’s far north is quite wet, home to temperate rainforests, while its southeast is desert. This geographic variation makes California a biodiversity hotspot, a concentration of species diversity. “Among the fifty states, California is home to more species of plants and animals and the highest number of species found nowhere else. This richness spans the entire state from the coast to the mountains... and throughout the valleys and deserts.”³ The blessing of this biodiversity carries with it the moral obligation to conserve and protect it, maintaining its delicate balance. (LS 32-42)

God has written a precious book, whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe. (LS 85) Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. (LS 12)

California’s landscape, climate, vegetation, indeed the great diversity of creatures all give praise and glory to God by their very existence. All have intrinsic value, just because they were made by God (LS 33). How can we open our hearts so that creation moves us to this prayer as well? All Californians are called to read the book of nature, and thus learn the lessons of integral ecology.

Starting with the first human settlers, California’s Indigenous peoples, our state’s ecological bounty has attracted immigrants throughout California’s history. What is now California was once home to the greatest concentration of Native Americans, who flourished here due to its

ecological bounty. Immigrants of all kinds have brought their cultures, technologies, foodstuffs, and entrepreneurial spirit.

St. Junípero Serra encountered the wild beauty of the landscape, the flowers and the vegetation, as he walked the coast, valleys, and deserts of California.⁴ This pioneering Franciscan provided some of the first documentation of the complex biodiversity and climate of our state, including periods of drought. With humility and mercy, he brought the Gospel to this land and to the native people whose harmonious relationship with the fertile resources of California even now shape our connectedness to creation and our commitment to its protection.

The 1848 discovery of gold profoundly shaped the state's development, with people rushing in from all over the world seeking economic opportunity in gold mining and associated economic activities.⁵ Sadly, over its history, many have exploited California's riches for personal gain, creating injustices that have degraded the environment and harmed its residents, especially the Indigenous and the poor.

Not far from the gold fields, John Muir began his lifelong love affair with Yosemite. Muir named the Sierra Nevada the "Range of Light," inspired by its craggy peaks and steep cliffs, moved by the play of light across its rockfaces. A remarkable figure in California history, Muir inspired the protection of nature across the country and the world.

When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them. (LS 87)

Today, California is the top farm production state in the U.S., generating more than twice the production of any other state. California agriculture is astonishingly diverse and productive. The noble vocation of farming offers an essential service to the human family, but the benefits of agriculture here have not always been shared equally. Technology continues to advance production and harvesting of food, while the rights of workers have not always been protected and advanced.

People from around the country and the world have come to California for its promise of a better life, natural beauty, and economic opportunities in everything from farming and industry to Hollywood and Silicon Valley. Together, we have created an economy that continues to attract even more people. California has become one of the most urbanized states in the country, with some of the world's most fertile farmland now under pavement.

California faces significant new challenges as we seek to find balance between welcoming new residents and creating the infrastructure necessary to provide housing, water,

education, and jobs, while at the same time preserving our fertile farmland and protecting the integrity of our natural resources.

Urbanization and the resulting high housing costs lead to pronounced hunger and homelessness. Shortsighted land development practices and policies further the loss of farm and wild lands—without adequately addressing our shortage of more than half a million low-income housing units.⁶ In many ways, we have failed to uphold the common good.

We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment. (LS 141)

Laudato Si' calls us to eradicate hunger and homelessness, which reflect a pronounced moral failure in a place blessed with such bounty.

Some forms of pollution are part of people's daily experience. Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor. (LS 20)

A Catholic perspective on environmentalism is expressed by concern for creatures and land, but also for where people live, work, play, and pray. Land-use decisions play a crucial role in environmental justice—the integration of social justice and environmental protection—and in public health.

Laudato Si' makes clear the inter-relationship of care for the earth and care for the poor.

Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development, and the throwaway culture. (LS 43)

In many ways, *Laudato Si'* builds upon and extends the approach of the environmental justice movement, which has been active in California for decades. For too long, poor communities of color have been subjected to disproportionate pollution from landfills, dirty industries, and transportation corridors adjacent to their neighborhoods.

Both integral ecology and environmental justice call us to reduce all forms of hazardous waste, but also to demand fairness in land-use policy and practice, for these disproportionately harm the poor. A Catholic approach to the common good is dedicated to the health and well-being of everyone, especially those on the margins of society, demanding a strong commitment to environmental public health.⁷ Likewise, protection of public health

embraces care for every dimension of human life from its first moment of existence through all the pathways of this life until natural death (LS 120).

*Praised be you, my Lord, through **Brother Fire***

Fire shapes California's landscape. A natural process, fire was used historically by indigenous peoples in land management. Wildfires are natural in California and perform vital ecological services.

Recently, however, California wildfire behavior has begun to change in ominous ways, harming humans and public health at an unprecedented scale. Firestorms now explode across our landscape with more intense and longer-lasting winds, literally burning through our state starting in spring and extending into winter. Millions of Californians are now forced to breathe hazardous smoke from wildfires, a violation of the common good that we can taste.

The human toll of this new wave of wildfires is considerable. We have seen entire neighborhoods and cities destroyed, with people losing lives and families losing their homes and livelihoods. In some instances, wildfires are followed by devastating landslides.

What is happening to our common home?

The immediate causes are clear: Drought leads to dry vegetation, which is susceptible to burning. Lower-than-normal patterns of rain and snow prompt longer periods of lower humidity. Even though no single event can be attributed to climate change, the broad changes we see in fire behavior are consistent with scientific predictions dating back many years.⁸

Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it. (LS 19)

Adapting to these new environmental conditions means contemplating our common responsibility to understand the risks of a warming climate, and as Californians to prepare and adapt—together.

Most wildfires in California are started by people, the vast majority unintentionally.⁹ We Californians owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the tens of thousands of firefighters working to protect us. Protecting the common good of California requires widescale public education about fire prevention as well as a new, more prudent approach to land use planning, especially for California's three million houses on the wildland-urban interface.

While the acute character of wildfires captures our immediate attention, adapting to our changing climate will require our awareness of many different dimensions of life on earth. In the future, a changing climate might make some parts of our state unsafe to inhabit. There is a great need to prepare together to protect the health and safety of all Californians, especially those most vulnerable to instability.

Recognizing the need to prepare for our new environmental reality also requires contemplating the spiritual dimension of this new reality. Appropriate responses to align with larger and more frequent wildfires must be driven by deeper ethical concerns about how we can best work together to adapt.

The *Laudato Si'* call to live integral ecology means listening to creation and observing what is happening in it. The unprecedented scope and harm of wildfires across California gives notice that something in creation is awry, out of balance, and this calls us to explore how to better care for our common home. To live out a spirituality of the common good, we must recommit ourselves to fostering greater harmony in our relationship with the earth.

*Praised be you, my Lord, through **Sister Water***

Water determines what life is possible. California's north-south reach results in tremendous variation in rainfall. Conflict over water management dates back to the origins of California, but it is now becoming even more difficult and contentious.

The southern third of the state is highly desirable for farming and living, but ecologically this region is essentially a desert. Early in state history, groundwater resources were tapped out, prompting the search for more abundant sources. A century ago rapidly growing Los Angeles and San Francisco devised sophisticated infrastructure projects to transfer water from hundreds of miles away to thirsty urban populations. Through most of the 20th century, the pattern repeated: moving more and more water farther to meet demand.

California's climate is variable, with recurring droughts and occasional floods, but our warming planet exacerbates this variability. Droughts are becoming more common and more intense, with rainfall more volatile. Our climate is now characterized by wetter wet years and drier dry years. This stresses natural ecosystems and puts pressure on our water systems.

Most California water comes from Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade mountain snowpacks, with more than half of our population dependent upon rain or snow that falls in far northern California and is conveyed hundreds of miles to the south, for drinking and to farmlands for irrigation. The Sacramento Delta functions as an enormous intersection of

water systems, with a majority of Californians depending on water conveyed through this region.

As California becomes warmer, the most alarming implication is appearing in our mountains, where more precipitation is falling as rain, not snow. Increased winter runoff threatens more floods, and the Sierra snowpack is melting earlier, reducing water supplies. California's four warmest years on record have all occurred since 2014, with all predictions suggesting even greater warming.¹⁰ The Colorado River Basin, an important source of water for parts of Southern California, is warming and drying even more quickly.

The implications of a warming climate for California's water system are clear: Prudent actions are required to protect the common good. In the Catholic tradition, prudence is the practice of moral wisdom to take practical action in light of anticipated events, especially those indicated by reason and science. This is also climate adaptation: using scientific knowledge to forecast how our environment is changing, and undertaking responsible actions to protect everyone, especially the vulnerable.

Prudent climate adaptation requires the balancing of multiple social goals, even while conditions are changing. These goals include ensuring that everyone has access to clean drinking water, strengthening water systems so that they can withstand the stresses of drought and deluge, and protecting aquatic habitat to preserve biodiversity (LS 36).

California was the first state, in 2012, to recognize that: "Every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes."¹¹ However, this right has yet to be realized for all Californians, with tens of thousands of rural Californians unable to drink water from their taps.

Laudato Si' is unambiguous:

(A)ccess to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. (LS 30)

Our water systems must be redesigned and adapted to accommodate repeated and longer droughts, as well as more flooding, to sustainably manage California's constrained groundwater resources. Statewide, upgrading our water infrastructure can help it withstand the numerous stressors induced by climate change.

Climate change is exacerbating conflicts over water. Numerous new legal, technical, and financial initiatives designed to ensure reliable water supplies demand greater dialogue

across sectors in society, as called for by *Laudato Si'*. In all these, we must prioritize access to water by the most vulnerable communities and protection of aquatic ecosystems.

Human life in California depends upon engineered water systems to deliver water for drinking, our economy, agriculture, and cities. Our current infrastructure was designed for a stable climate, which we no longer have. Protecting the common good, and ensuring that all Californians can access water, means prudent collective action—applying intelligence and resources to update our water systems and to prepare for an increasingly unpredictable climate.

*Praised be you, my Lord, through **Brother Wind**,
and through the air ... and every kind of weather*

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. (LS 23)

California has decades of experience addressing air pollution. Yet climate change is something new, requiring new, innovative responses across all sectors of society. Climate is a pattern of weather, not a specific weather event. A change in climate is difficult to perceive, requiring special expertise to scientifically evaluate change. For this reason, Pope Francis proposed “integral ecology” as a fresh framework to guide us toward more harmonious relationships with each other and the earth.

The disruption of the earth’s climate is one of the principal challenges facing humanity today, with grave implications for the poor, many of whom live in areas particularly affected by environmental degradation and who also subsist largely on access to natural resources for housing, food, and income (LS 25). A broad consensus among scientists worldwide identifies the primary cause of climate disruption as the burning of fossil fuels for energy generation, industry, and transportation.

Laudato Si' identifies: an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. (LS 26)

Catholic concern for climate disruption is not new. In 2001, the U.S. Bishops wrote: “The virtue of prudence is paramount in addressing climate change. This virtue is not only a necessary one for individuals in leading morally good lives, but is also vital to the moral health of the larger community.”¹²

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... (LS 23)

The impacts of climate disruption are already being felt by many communities across the country. And without substantial, sustained global mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause growing losses to American infrastructure and property and impede the rate of economic growth this century.¹³

This is a serious moral problem with profound economic and social justice implications. The poor and vulnerable now experience and will continue to bear disproportionate harms from climate disruption—whether fires, floods, or extreme weather events. The negative health impacts of climate disruption, including increased disease transmission through insects and pests, also injure the poor the hardest. Climate disruption will exacerbate social and economic inequalities, which points to the need to prioritize strategies to help all those in need adapt to our new climate reality.

We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels—especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas—needs to be progressively replaced without delay. (LS 165)

California’s elected officials have shown good leadership in this area, establishing policies to support renewable energy and phase out fossil fuels. These efforts are commendable, even exemplary.

Individuals and families, no matter how rich or poor, can conserve energy on a daily basis by considering the full energy budget of any purchase, such as an appliance, a vehicle, or a home. Homebuyers can seek houses that are energy-efficient or, even better, energy-generating, such as through home solar panels. In this pursuit, our parishes and Catholic leaders can be both prophetic and helpful—exemplifying conservation by our own policies and offering practical assistance to families to do the same, to the extent that they are able.

While individual actions are helpful, shared action for the common good is morally required of us. *Laudato Si’* calls for regional, national, and international dialogue on our common home—dialogue informed by integral ecology that leads to action.

Our approach to the energy transition envisioned by *Laudato Si’* is informed by the Catholic social teaching principle of subsidiarity, “which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power” (LS 196).

Thus, subsidiarity presents an opportunity for all of us to act locally, but with an eye to broader social transformation to advance sustainability and climate protection. For example, some local public agencies, designed to be responsive to local citizens, may be best able to facilitate the transition to renewable energy sources while saving customers money.

Californians as a whole will have to actively work together, in solidarity, to achieve the ambitious transition toward a future where food is affordable, sustainable, and healthy.

Laudato Si' calls for a response to the perils threatened by our changing climate: ecological conversion—a holistic response of opening our hearts and minds to the grave crises around us and undergoing a process of transformation, rooted in faith. Rather than ideas or concepts, Pope Francis proposes a spirituality that can inspire “a more passionate concern for the protection of our world” (LS 216).

Changes in lifestyle, policy, and economics are absolutely necessary, but *Laudato Si'* calls for more: the moral and religious renewal of humanity. California has been blessed with great beauty, and through this, God is revealed. *Laudato Si'* calls us to rediscover this beauty and recommit ourselves to the protection of the resources of creation. At the same time, we must respond to the cry of the poor and the vulnerable, who suffer from the rampant individualism and consumerism that have led to mistreatment of God’s creation.

Pope Francis calls us to recognize our “throwaway culture,” which “affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish” (LS 22). We see this in our consumeristic culture and in international policies that keep people and nations in poverty. We see this in our exploitation of natural resources and disrespect for God’s creatures. And, most profoundly, we see this in abortion and the direct taking of life through euthanasia and assisted suicide.

How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? (LS, 120)

This same “use and throw away” logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary (LS 123). There is a vital link between the ecology of the natural world and a human ecology. When humans and nature are in right relationship, there is balance and respect for ourselves, each other, and all of creation.

Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world’s poorest. (LS 13)

We can begin by acknowledging the steadfast work of environmental and social leaders throughout California. The Church joins itself with many of these efforts and salutes their

example. Now, though, it is up to all of us in California to amplify these efforts, working together to fulfill the vision of *Laudato Si'*.

PART 2: LIVING OUR ECOLOGICAL VOCATIONS

We face a great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge (LS 202), which calls for a profound interior conversion (LS 217) and a renewal of our common humanity (LS 9). In this context:

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. (LS 217)

Just as California's many ecosystems find expression in diverse beauty and bounty, there are many paths by which each of us might travel as we contribute to the renewal of our common home. Those who work on behalf of environmental justice, such as air pollution prevention and ensuring access to clean water, are pursuing a clear "ecological vocation." For the rest of us, discerning an ecological vocation can mean not only a career path or a means of earning a living, but also a means of undergoing ecological conversion as individuals, families, and communities—in ways that are authentic, personal, and ultimately practical.

To inspire everyone in California to care for our common home, this pastoral statement offers invitations to action and reflection for specific groups, in the hope that every Californian can find themselves touched by at least one.

We Bishops, in communion with pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions

For our part, we Bishops commit ourselves to fulfilling our calling to lead the Catholic Church and its institutions in life-giving responses to *Laudato Si'*. The encyclical calls for ecological conversion across all aspects of life in church and society.

Our Catholic communities have a special responsibility to bring the message of the encyclical to life in our worship, common prayer, and public witness. The very title of *Laudato Si', Praise Be to You*, is a prayer in the language of worship, and a liturgical vision is woven throughout the encyclical.¹⁴ The Lord can use these to further our ecological conversion—if we enter in to the grace they offer.

For our part, we commit ourselves to fulfilling our calling to lead the Catholic Church and its institutions in life-giving responses to *Laudato Si'*. We pledge to work with **pastoral leaders and Catholic institutions** to:

1. Encourage the faithful to take the St. Francis Pledge—to pray, act, and advocate for solutions to climate disruption—and live out its tenets.
2. Support clergy, liturgists, musicians, and pastoral leaders to integrate the messages of *Laudato Si'* into our life of worship. We commit to offering priest study days and days of recollection to share practical tools, such as homily helps, music, and resources that will regularly help proclaim themes of *Laudato Si'*.
3. Examine with (Arch)dioceses their institutional operations to determine the full extent that each can adopt renewable energy, energy efficiency, and water conservation practices.
4. Explore with (Arch)dioceses opportunities for divestment from fossil fuels, whether through Diocese bank investments, oil leases, etc.
5. Cooperate with Catholic charities and Catholic health care institutions to undertake environmental health and social initiatives, with special attention to the needs of the poor and excluded.

Youth and young adults

You already demonstrate leadership in protecting God's creation and promoting the common good. You rightly demand change (LS 13).

Young people have a new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit, and some of them are making admirable efforts to protect the environment. (LS 209)

The change you demand for protecting the earth and advancing a more sustainable lifestyle is noble and virtuous. Everyone can benefit if you share your vision for a more just and sustainable society while living your lives faithful to your dreams.

We call upon **youth and young adults** to:

1. Seek out opportunities to pray in natural surroundings, and reflect on how to embrace integral ecology in your daily lives.
2. Initiate conversations with those adults older than you about your concerns for environmental protection and a more inclusive society.
3. Consider how your life path and career can best balance your personal needs with the call to care for our common home.
4. Engage with others in personal hands-on care for God's creation (e.g., community gardens, environmental cleanup, or healing the Earth in some way).
5. Actively participate in the political process to advocate for environmental justice, for we need your voices and contributions.

Parents, teachers, and catechists

Laudato Si' proposes ecological education as fundamental to meeting our environmental and social challenges.

Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis, and elsewhere. (LS 213)

California has a fine tradition of environmental education, recently affirmed by state legislation enhancing environmental literacy.¹⁵ But Pope Francis calls for more than the presentation of scientific information:

Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility, and compassionate care. (LS 210)

We call upon **parents, teachers, and catechists** to:

1. Create an environmental consciousness within all Catholic families that incorporates the principles of *Laudato Si'* into the formation of their children, and let a concern for integral ecology and for the common good guide every family's lifestyle.
2. Ensure that environmental education in California public, private, and Catholic K-College classrooms is not only based on authentic scientific information, but also develops an ethics of ecology (LS 209-215).
3. Enhance environmental literacy by educating all California students in environmental principles and concepts, as well as an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and respecting life by protecting nature.
4. Expand opportunities for outdoor environmental education and access to experiential learning about nature for all California students, especially those in poor communities.
5. Weave themes from *Laudato Si'*, especially our shared home as a common good and integral ecology, throughout parish religious education programs and Catholic school curricula.

Public officials

Leaders in society, because of their influence over institutions, have extra responsibilities for upholding the common good.

Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life. (LS 189)

Laudato Si' calls for the renewal of political life and a healthy politics, informed by the common good and integral ecology.

What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis....A healthy politics needs to be able to take up this challenge. (LS 197)

We call upon **public officials** to:

1. Address environmental issues with an *integral* approach that cares for all of creation's ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions as interrelated.
2. Strengthen water systems for times of drought and deluge to assure a plentiful supply of clean water to drink, grow food, power California's robust economy, and also protect precious ecosystems.
3. Enact policies that further improve air quality and drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions and other polluting gases. This includes the substituting of fossil fuels with renewable energy sources as well as developing greater energy storage and efficiency. Ensure that any transition from a fossil-based economy to one of renewable energy does not add to the burden of the poor.
4. Support assistance programs that help relieve the financial burden on seniors and low-income families to deal with the significant costs of water and energy.
5. Provide environmentally impacted communities with sufficient resources to help them mitigate health impacts and to implement community-led solutions. Prioritize projects that improve, protect, or reduce risks to disadvantaged communities.

Leaders in business

Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good. (LS 129)

Businesses certainly have the potential to be a force for great good in any society, and many do live up to their moral and economic promise.¹⁶ And yet, economic institutions' tremendous power too often leads to harm when environmental care is not prioritized.

Laudato Si' calls for a re-examination of our economic models and assumptions about progress—summoning its leaders to chart an alternative course, guided by integral ecology and the common good.

We call upon **leaders in business** to:

1. Read prayerfully and reflect thoughtfully on your vocation in light of *Laudato Si'* and its messages regarding economics, finance, and business.
2. Consider: Does your business support the transition toward sustainability and human development?
3. Consider: Does your enterprise produce goods and services that meet genuine human needs and serve the common good, while taking responsibility for the social and environmental costs of production and distribution?
4. Consider: Do you incorporate care for creation and integral ecology into your business practices and business models? Describe for yourselves and the public how the mission of your business contributes to the common good and to the protection of the earth.
5. Reflect on what practical steps each organization might take to foster active care for creation in your business and among your customers. Can you communicate responsible environmental messages through your marketing?

Those who work the land and care for it

In many ways, you represent the human family as stewards of the lands and waters. Farming, fishing, and forestry are noble vocations, and we all depend upon your work to harvest their produce for us, and to care for them on behalf of all of us.

Let us, when we give thanks to God at our meals (LS 227), express our gratitude to those who work the land. Your vocation has a special dignity and fosters the common good of society.¹⁷

Caring for land and water employs a great diversity of people, beyond the production of food and fiber—including, for example, foresters, landscapers, water and land managers, conservationists, park rangers, and firefighters. Through your work, you have the ability to put *Laudato Si'* into action on a daily basis, to foster beauty and environmental protection.

We call upon **those who work the land and care for it** to:

1. Reflect on *Laudato Si'* and examine how your work can best balance economic production and environmental protection. Draw on your practical wisdom of direct contact with creation to guide the transition to greater sustainability within your economic sector.
2. Collaborate together with others to foster farming and agricultural economies that are socially inclusive, respect those who are vulnerable, and address the needs of the hungry.
3. Present ideas to help all of us foster authentic development that cultivates farmland as a viable rural economy.
4. Protect ecosystems and their services, upon which nature and human society depend. Actively educate our society about our dependence upon healthy ecosystems, including their careful stewardship to conserve biodiversity.
5. Help society at large understand how we can best live in harmonious relationship with nature in light of climate disruption and its effects of more fires, floods, and droughts.

Artist and innovators

California has long been home to creative and innovative people, exemplified today by two prominent industries:

- Hollywood, which is a tremendous cultural force, manifesting astonishing creativity and imagination. Hollywood has, to a considerable degree, shaped our narrative myths, the stories of explanation we all share.
- Silicon Valley, which is the world's most entrepreneurial ecosystem, one that has created dramatic innovations affecting, and in many cases improving, the lives of most people on the planet.

Beyond these two industries, innovators and artists, entrepreneurs and architects, designers and creative people of all types have shaped the culture of California and the world. Now, *Laudato Si'* calls for a renewal of human culture, informed by the principles of ecology.

If an artist cannot be stopped from using his or her creativity, neither should those who possess particular gifts for the advancement of science and technology be prevented from using their God-given talents for the service of others. (LS 131)

We call upon **artists and innovators** to:

1. Find ways to highlight the beauty of creation in your work, and to inspire a culture of care in the human family.
2. Evaluate, if you work in California's technology innovation or entertainment industries, how you are shaping human culture in light of the message of *Laudato Si'*.
3. Determine how technology and human creativity can be marshalled to foster the creation of an ecological culture.
4. Invite those engaged in technology's design and development to consider how you can build ethical considerations into each step of a technology's creation, including ensuring its moral application.
5. Invite all persons working in technology innovation and entrepreneurship to evaluate their vocation and work products to see how both can be put in service of ecological culture and the common good.

These questions are deceptively simple. But we invite everyone to chew on them, reflecting sincerely on their implications for their own life of faith. We pray that contemplation of these questions can stimulate a deeper ecological conversion among us all.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this Pastoral Statement will inspire all its readers to a new lifestyle that respects our common home and cares for all who belong to the earth, especially the poor and vulnerable (LS 202-207).

At the heart of all spirituality is conversion. We all need to change for the better. Conversion is not just turning back to God, but always embraces new thinking and new decisions—a new way of life as we move into the future.

Ecological conversion challenges us to advance in culture, to grow spiritually, and to be better educated about the world entrusted by God to our care. The heavens and the earth belong to God, but we have been called to be good stewards.

It is our hope that this pastoral statement will inspire creative, life-giving responses here in California.

God has united Himself definitively to the earth, and His love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. (LS 245)

PRAYER: CARING FOR CALIFORNIA

O God

You call us to care for our common home

California is where we live, and we ask for your help

to better care for this place

We thank you for the inspiring beauty and abundant bounty of California

When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and

beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity¹⁸

May this prayer draw us deeper in to our ecological conversion

May our common origin in you and a deep sense of integral ecology move us

To undertake new efforts to fashion a more inclusive society and protection of

our Sister Mother Earth

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,

who loves us so much

Amen

¹ On *Care for Our Common Home: Laudato Si'*, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference/Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2015). Hereafter, LS. References are to the encyclical's numbered paragraphs.

² Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church, 483.

³ California Natural Resources Agency and others. 2018. *California Biodiversity Initiative A Roadmap for Protecting the State's Natural Heritage*. <http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180907-CaliforniaBiodiversityActionPlan.pdf>

⁴ St. Junípero Serra, whom Pope Francis has called one of America's "founding fathers" (Homily, May 2, 2015), was among the first Europeans to catalogue the wild beauty of California's landscape. He wrote evocatively about the mountains and the plains, the blazing sun, the brooks and rivers, the cottonwood and willow trees, even the sound of a roaring lion that kept the missionaries awake at night. Among the many passages we find in his diaries and letters, he writes: "It seems that the thorns and rocks of California have disappeared, since these enormous mountains are almost entirely of pure soil. But there are flowers in abundance and beautiful ones. And that nothing should be wanting in that direction, when we came to our stopping place, we met the queen of flowers—the Rose of Castile. While I write this, I have in front of me a cutting from a rose tree with three roses in full bloom, others opening out, and more than six unpetaled—Blessed be He who created them!" (Diary, June 2, 1769). *Blessed be He who created them!* This is the meaning of the created world in the Catholic vision. All that we see has been given as a blessing from God, whom St. Junípero called "The Lord, the Author of Nature" (Diary, May 30, 1769).

⁵ Holliday, J.S., 2015. *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience*. University of Oklahoma Press.

⁶ Poverty in California: Amid Plenty, Want. 2018. *The Economist*. October 27. Pages 25-26.

⁷ Warner, Keith Douglass, OFM. 2016. A Holistic Vision^[SEP] Of Human Flourishing. *Health Progress: The Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States*. May-June, 15-18.

⁸ National Assessment Synthesis Team. 2001. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change*, Report for the U.S. Global Change Research Program, Cambridge University Press. <https://data.globalchange.gov/assets/e9/97/436129058f2107f4925aeec13ed8/nca-2000-foundation-report.pdf>

⁹ Thomas Fuller. 2018. California's Chief Firefighter Looks Back on 30 Years of Infernos. *New York Times*. December 13. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/california-chief-firefighter-retires-ken-pimlott.html>

¹⁰ Public Policy Institute of California. 2018. Climate Change and Water. And, Public Policy Institute of California. 2018. Managing Drought In a Changing Climate: Four Essential Reforms.

¹¹ This quote is taken from Assembly Bill 685. See Jonathan London and others. 2018. The Struggle for Water Justice in California's San Joaquin Valley: A Focus on Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

¹² US Catholic Bishops. 2001. *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

¹³ All of the current impacts—from effects of extreme weather and climate-related events on the interconnected natural, built, and social systems we rely on to threats to our air quality, agricultural productivity, and health—were predicted by the 2001 Second National Climate Assessment. National Assessment Synthesis Team. 2001. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change*, Report for the US Global Change Research Program, Cambridge University Press.

<https://data.globalchange.gov/assets/e9/97/436129058f2107f4925aeec13ed8/nca-2000-foundation-report.pdf>

¹⁴ Bob Hurd, “Every Creature is Sister and Brother: Reading and Enacting *Laudato Si’* Liturgically. *Worship*, 92 (Mar 2018), 141-156.

¹⁵ SB 720 (Allen) Environmental Education: Environmental Principles and Concepts.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. 2014. *The Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*.

¹⁷ International Catholic Rural Association. 2016. *Vocation of the Agricultural Leader: Integrating Faith with Agriculture and the Environment, a Reflection*.

¹⁸ John Paul II. 2000. *Catechesis*. See LS 238.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

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