

**SAVING OUR COMMON HOME
AND THE FUTURE OF LIFE ON EARTH**
International Conference on the 3rd Anniversary of *Laudato si'*
(Vatican City, 5-6 July 2018)

WORDS OF WELCOME

H.E. Card. Peter Turkson

Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Your Eminence, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness

Your Eminence, the Most Reverend John Zizioulas, the Eastern Orthodox metropolitan of Pergamon,

Your Eminences and Excellencies,

Members of the Diplomatic Corp and Government Representatives,

Leaders from the Civil Society Groups and from Indigenous Communities,

Representatives of International Institutions, non-Governmental Organizations, Faith Communities,

Dear Young People,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you all very warmly in the name of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; and on its behalf and on behalf of all our partners, I welcome you heartily to the Vatican and to this Conference to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis' landmark Encyclical letter on care for our common home.

Thank you also: one and all, for your very generous response to our invitation, and for having travelled from far and near to this anniversary celebration that endeavours to assess the impact of *Laudato si'* and to refashion a serious listening to its prophetic message.

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, My Dear Friends, three (3) years ago, here at this podium and in the company of His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Pergamon: the Most Rev. John Zizoulas here present, I had the singular honour of presenting to the world Pope Francis' newly written Encyclical Letter, *Laudato si', on the care for our common home*. Shortly thereafter, Pope Francis himself presented his Encyclical Letter and its central message, in a crisp 90 seconds video. Let us see it!

<https://thepopevideo.org/en/video/care-creation.html>

Here are the important take-aways of the Pope's video:

- Our nature is created by God and surrounded by the gifts of creation.
- Our failures are that we over-consume and that we do not share the gifts of creation.
- These sins have dire consequences for the poor and the planet.

- And so it is urgent that we change our sense of progress, our management of the economy, and our style of life.

And they lead to the core message of the Pope's Encyclical Letter with which he also ended the video: CARE, CARE and CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME!

For Pope Francis then, *the present ecological situation poses the twofold challenge of protecting our common home and bringing the human community together to seek a sustainable and integral development* (§ 13). These challenges constitute the two profound convictions that have motivated and guided our preparation for this Conference.

The very first motivation is the urgency of the situation. As all of us know, and as we will hear again during this Conference both from the experts and from the victims on the frontline of climate change and other manifestations of the current ecological crisis, we are indeed in the eleventh hour.

Today, our common planetary home is falling into ruins. We are on the brink of an unprecedented global challenge regarding the sustainability of our common home, which places a question mark on the very future of human existence and its civilization.

We are running out of time. We may be condemning future generations to a common home in ruins.

We are indeed playing a reckless gamble with our common home, and ultimately with the future of life on Earth. Our actions today will determine the future not only of the present generations but also of future generations for millennia. As the Irish theologian Seán McDonagh points out "if this generation does not act, no future generation will be able to undo the damage that this generation has caused to the planet"¹.

We, our generation, has indeed a huge responsibility in "Saving our common home and the future of life on Earth" - the very title of the Conference for which we are gathered together from around the world.

At the same time, we are convinced - and this is the second motivation that guided us in the preparation of this Conference - is that by acting together we can succeed in saving our common home. We are aware that we need to act in partnership, that we need to create a global alliance for the care of our common home.

We have accordingly envisaged this Conference as a journey in partnership. Our Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has organized this Conference in collaboration with some important partners who are very active in the area of creation: the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the *Caritas Internationalis*, the CIDSE, the CAFOD, the Global Solidarity Fund, Fastenopfer, and many others. I also take the occasion to thank them all on behalf of the Dicastery for their precious collaboration which we hope to strengthen even more in the future.

The desire to enter into partnership and collaboration is equally evident in the list of participants. We have invited you to the Conference as representatives of the various local churches, our sister churches, other religious traditions, indigenous communities, young people, scientists, academics, politicians, economists, finance people, artists and many others. Along with you we would like to create a real "network of people" passionate

¹ Seán McDonagh, *The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2004), 151.

about the care of our common home. You are here as our partners and thank you so very much for having come.

We have come together to reflect and act together on how to save our common home, moved by the urgency of the situation and as partners in this common mission. I conclude by saying once again that you are all most welcome and please do "feel-at-home", and consider the Vatican as your "home" these days.

As we say in Italian:

"Benvenuti e buon lavoro"!