



Welcome to  
**ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM**  
DISCUSSING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED



**SISTER CAROL ZINN, SSJ**  
**MERCY CENTER CHAPEL**  
**FARMINGTON HILLS, MI**  
TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2017, MACAULEY CENTER

## Introduction: Bishop Tom Gumbleton

Good afternoon. Tom Lumpkin, Gerry Bechard, Bill Petron and I, and a few priests from Detroit, attended a meeting of the U. S. Association of Catholic Priests; and the keynote speaker of that meeting was Sister Carol Zinn. And after her talk, Tom Lumpkin came up to me and said, "We've got to get her for the Elephants." (Laughter) And I agreed; and so did Gerry and the other priest from Detroit, because her talk was so outstanding, so well received. And so, he went that day, actually, and she said, "Yes, of course." And then, it took a little while for her to clear her very heavy schedule for us to coordinate a date when she could be here. And we finally did it; and so, she is here today with us; and we are so very grateful.



Sister Carol is a member of the community of Sisters of St. Joseph out of Chesterfield Hill, outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her life—professional adult life—has been very much as an educator. In —this amazes me— she has taught pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary, secondary, university, and post graduate. She has taught the whole gamut; and I am sure every person she has taught has been deeply influenced by her ability to teach and share knowledge and share commitment. Sister Carol, in her own education, earned a bachelor of science degree in education from Chesterfield Hill College in Pennsylvania, a masters degree in theology from St. Bonaventure University in New York, and a doctorate in curriculum development and education foundations from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. She was also a research fellow at Episcopal Divinity School and Harvard University on the topic of leadership and transformation. So, she comes very well prepared. She has worked in grass roots organizations and also in international movements as consultant and facilitator. She served as the main representative for her Congregation of St. Joseph, as an NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations. She represented over 15,000 Sisters of St. Joseph who lived and did serve in 57 countries throughout the world.

In this capacity, she participated in UN meetings on the topics of human rights, eradication of poverty, environment, peace and disarmament, education, sustainable development, and women, children, and health care.

Sister Carol has also served in leadership roles in her own community. She was a leader of that community, but also was the president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious for a three-year term 2012 to 2015. She has spent a lot of her time giving retreats, attending provincial congregational assemblies, and speaking. She has helped in chapter gatherings and community meetings in various religious communities throughout the country. With all of this background, Sister Carol is truly prepared to speak to us today; and we are very happy that she is going to address the topic that is so important: *Care for our Common Home, our Climate*. So, I ask you to welcome Sister Carol Zinn this afternoon. (Applause)

## Care for our Common Home Sister Carol Zinn, SSJ

Good afternoon. I always like to say after a very warm and loving and certainly affirming and humiliating introduction, (Laughter) that if my dear mom were here she would say, "That is all well and good, Tom, you sit down and I'm going to tell who she really is." (More laughter) But I bet even my dear mom this afternoon from heaven is smiling, because it's truly an honor for me to be introduced by someone who has held a vision of the Church for so many of us across the country; and who has, in fact, been a leader, a vision of the Vatican II Church, and actually became that vision in his own way. So, I am honored, not only to be here with you but I am humbled to be introduced by Bishop Gumbleton. (Loud applause) I will remember that introduction for a long time to come, Tom.



So how are you this afternoon? Can't wait to hear about *Laudato Si*, right. Well, we'll do our best. How many of you have heard about *Laudato Si* before? There you go. Thanks! I'm finished. (Laughter) I would dare to say that folks like us are kind of like elephants really. We travel around in herds, don't we? You tend to meet one another at the watering holes, or at that sandwich table that we just had. I loved that lunch.

What I would like to visit with you this afternoon is not so much the content of *Laudato Si*, because I suspected, when I was invited to this illustrious group, that you probably have a pretty good sense of the document, don't you?

If I asked you what the title of chapter 4 is, for instance, I bet you could tell me (much laughter and comments). All right, maybe we won't have that test. But what I would really like to talk about this afternoon, and engage us in conversation with you is really what is the power of *Laudato Si*? What is its power?

Clearly the document is caroling almost everywhere for its content. But I would really like to reflect with you this afternoon on what the power of it is. And I have a couple of slides here that were really good.



I think we gather here this afternoon as elephants actually travelling in a herd, and have a pretty good sense of what we're hungry for and looking for. I'd like to offer for your consideration that there are a lot of elephants in this room. Not literally, of course. But there are political elephants, aren't there? There are political topics right now that are really hard to approach, even in assemblies like this. I would say too there are many economic elephants. There are

economic topics that just really cannot be talked about in many cultures; and some would say that even our own culture has become one of them, to really talk about why it is that in the richest country in the world, we have children going to bed hungry. There are economical elephants. I would offer that there are ecclesial elephants., ecclesial of all faiths, not just our own. There are conversations that want to happen about what it means to believe in someone beyond oneself, regardless of the name that you give to that divine being. But those conversations are hard to find. I will offer that there are also social elephants. There are cultural elephants. Anything from race, to ethnicity, to sexual orientation, and everything in between. There are social and cultural elephants. Mostly I would suggest to you, though, that those of us in our own faith tradition that we share in with many other people of different faiths, we have what I have come to call, in light of preparing to be with you this afternoon, we have our own elephant whisperer. (Laughter)

We have someone who has kind of surprisingly appeared on the horizon, and who in fact is inviting and creating a space for the conversations about the elephants that are in the room, to actually begin to happen. And he's doing it in a couple of different ways. I would suggest he is doing it first and foremost by who he is.

### ELEPHANT WHISPERER



And the picture on the left, I think, captures who many of us experience him to be: simple, humble, genuine, joyful, peaceful, relational, and present. He is who he is! Just as a side issue, I have had the privilege, in April of 2015, to be one of the four sisters of the leadership of the LCWR to meet with Pope Francis for almost

an hour. And those words that I just used to describe him in his arena was my experience of him when it was just the four of us in a room with him, with just a translator, for almost an hour.

The second picture there, I think, tells us how he is trying to approach these elephants in the room. This picture was

### PRESENCE OF GOD



taken right before the next photo that doesn't appear in this telepoint. But the next photo in the press was when the refugee families followed him up the steps and returned with him to the Vatican. And he offered six families housing in the Vatican.

So I think what we see here as elephant whisperer is translated as the presence of God, by who he is, and what he does.

In his writing in *Laudato Si*, I think he clearly is showing us how to be and do; when in paragraph 84, he says, "Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook that fact that each creature has its own purpose. Nothing in creation is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us, soil, water, mountains, creatures and humans: everything is as it were, a caress of God". I think we see that in Francis, by who he is, and by what he does.

And so, since I heard how wonderful your singing was a little while ago, when we sang that beautiful hymn, I would like to invite us to use a Lakota Sioux mantra this afternoon. When I was with my brothers, about which Bishop Gumbleton spoke (USACP), about a year ago, and we used this chant; and they liked it a lot. So I thought maybe you would too. It comes from the Lakota Sioux, indigenous brothers and sisters of ours, and it speaks of the elements of earth, fire, air, water and spirit. And it speaks that I am that, and you are that, and we are that. It goes like this, very easy:

## Lakota Sioux Mantra

- Earth I am; Fire I am; Air and Water and Spirit I am;
- Earth You are; Fire You are; Air and Water and Spirit You are;
- Earth We are; Fire We are, Air and Water and Spirit We are.



It's a really good mantra, I think, to get at the truth that is presented to us in *Laudato Si*, which of course, is presented to us at a deeper level in our Scriptures and in our loving God: that earth, in fact, is living. It is living! It's not a thing!

And the power of *Laudato Si* tells us something simple: that when you put the word "the" in front of earth, you turn it into a thing. We don't speak about the Tom. We do not speak about the Mary. We speak about the tree just as a statement. Earth herself, earth itself, is a self. It is a living being. We also know that fire is a living being created, because we can't make it ourselves. We know too that air is a living being; it's not a thing.

And *Laudato Si* tells us that it actually has a self, if you will, if we could use language like Francis of Assisi used to talk about everything as if it were a person: brother, sister, water, and so forth. But what Francis tells us is that air is a self, it is a living being. We know the same thing about water. Fire and water have an interesting relationship capacity. They draw us to those elements, don't they? And at the same time we kinda just want to make sure we keep our distance—very interesting dynamic. If you want to know about the power of water, just talk to somebody who was in New Orleans, or in New York after super storm Sandy. And, of course, we know that spirit is living: it is a living being: it has a self. In *Laudato Si* one of the things that Francis writes about is this: in Paragraph 86, he says, "The universe as a whole, all of the elements, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God. God wills the interdependence of everything that lives: the sun and the moon: the cedar and the little flower: the eagle and the sparrow; the spectacle of their countless diversities, and the inequalities among them, tells us that no creature is self sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, and to be in service of each other."

Part of the power, I think, of even that one paragraph, which is paragraph 86, is the elephant whisperer at its best. What he's telling us there, is there is no such thing as self sufficiency. There is no such thing as building something around yourself, as if you in fact are the center of the universe. There is no such thing. And so, I think, one of the powers in *Laudato Si* is this reminder of our position on earth; and how we, in fact, need absolutely everything that lives and everyone that lives. We need that. I think the power of *Laudato Si* is an invitation for us to kind of visit the power of what I like to call humility, and get us away from the whole of what scientists refer to as arrogance, because the truth is: that we are earth, we are fire, we are air, we are water, we are spirit, we are one. And the task is: to be in relationship.

[ They sing the song again.]

So, I think another piece of the power of *Laudato Si* has to do with parochial. You know, the world can be a very complicated political and sociological kind of endeavor to try and identify how we all feel.

I can't get my head wrapped around all that kind of stuff; but I can understand how it feels to have glasses and those of you who have glasses. And all you people who have glasses can understand how I feel that when I take my glasses off. You have not changed at all in you; but you have changed significantly in my view. You would not want to know what you look like. (Laughter) So, out of all kindness and compassion, I will put my glasses back on. World views function like glasses.



And, I think, part of the power of *Laudato Si* is that Francis is kind of asking us to take a careful look, not just at the power of humility rather than arrogance, but that you really take a good look in the mirror, and see if we might need a new prescription for the glasses through which we are seeing the world. That's all the world view is. It is the lens through which we see the world.

And the lens that most of us in this part of the world, and I would say almost all of us in this room, the lens through which we see the world, is a first world privileged, people of no color, kind of middle social economic stratification, Catholic, or at least Christian perhaps, maybe some other religions, I don't know, a pretty much good mix of both male and female. But it's a pretty small world. Because the truth of the matter is just in terms of the human population is that 7 out of 10 people on the planet are people of color. Just take a look around this room ... 7 out of 10 people are people of color. The other 3 people are not white, the other 3 people are people of no color; because, after all, if you saw somebody coming at you with the color of this white piece of paper you would go running in the opposite direction. (Laughter) There is no such thing as the white race. Race is defined as, in humans, people of color or no color. So, 7 out of 10 people on the real planet are people of color. 8 out of 10 people on the real planet do not have access to health care, education, nutrition, shelter. The other 2 people on the planet, of those 10, are over educated, over health-cared, over sheltered, and, I submit, specimen 1 standing here in front of you for observation, of whether I belong to the 8 or to the 2. Yes, you can laugh, because it is pretty funny. The point is, that our world view is shaped by where we live, and how we've been taught, and what we've been taught. The beauty of world views, as Francis points out in *Laudato Si*, is not about one being right or wrong, about one being good or bad, it simply is the power of it. And when we don't know our world view, then we are left with being dominated by this power over us.

I just want to do a quick, little view of world peace here. When you think about the planet, or life on this planet, the scientists tell us there are millions and millions of species, right? I can't get my head around those numbers; maybe some of you can. But let's just imagine for a moment that all of us in this room are all the species on the planet. All right? All the way over there by the windows and the next row all the way over to the camera, that whole other side of the chapel, would you just raise your hand so we know who you are? And then, would this row, right here on this side, would you raise your hand also. Okay? Everybody raise your hand. All those people: you are all insects. Okay? Now you can put your hands down. You can be whatever kind of insect you want to be. You're all insects. All right? Let's come to this row right here, way in the back. And the next pew in the back raise your hand. Now I can't even see you; so don't hold this against me, I have no idea who you are; so don't take it personally. You are all the bacteria, all the viruses, and all the fungus (laughter) on the planet. The last part of the crowd, the front part, would you raise your hands? Now I can see you a little better; but don't take it personally, I don't even know you. You are all the flora and the fauna. (They all go Awwww). (Laughter) Okay!



All you flora and fauna, would you stand up for just a second. Insects: would you raise your hands? All right insects, the species that are standing, that's your next meal. (Loud laughter) Okay! All you sit down.

Okay! This whole row here we are just going to pull you, except for Tom (Gumbleton). I'm sorry about this; but this is very scientific language: you are other. You are other, meaning all of the other species that are not the basic insects, bacteria, virus, fungus, flora and fauna. So, you are the other. So, thank you for being other. And Tom (Gumbleton), could you come here please—oh, he looks very nervous; don't be nervous. We'd just like to have, kind of the top knuckle of his pinkie. Does everybody see that? Okay? Don't worry! Just metaphorically, we are going to just remove this. Now Tom is part of other also except for this. This is us, as the human species. When Francis says in *Laudato Si* that we are one among many in the splendor of God's creation, he's not kidding. We are one among many, 7.9 billion humans, all, if you will, in one chair in the circle of life. If we could put all the species in a circle, all the insects and butterflies, everything in its own chair, all 7.9 billion humans would all be in the same chair.

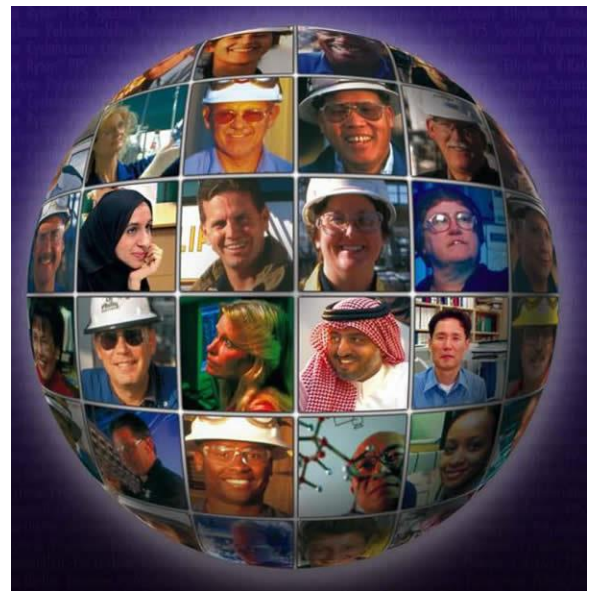
Point: When we are talking about world view, we have to understand that the way we see the diversity of species, the way we see the presence of the fish, for instance, the



way we see our friends over there, the other half of the chapel, plus another row of only insects, the way we see all the animals, all of them, and the way we see humans, is all out of our particular world view. And so, in *Laudato Si*, when Francis says that all of this environmental reality is all connected to the human realities; and when he says that he wants a Church, for instance, that is, like a hospital, a

field hospital, and you can't ask someone who is dying what their diabetes level is, you have to first take care of their need, their real need. What he's saying there is, basically, that the way we are with each other, as humans, all of us in this one chair, is, in fact, the world view we have with everything else that lives.

Let me just give you an example of how that world view is a tug for many of us. I can be the human being that is very concerned about right to life, which of course we are. Of course, we were concerned about the dignity of each life; but, at the same time in our culture, some of those same human beings can also be pro capital punishment. And some of those same human beings can have a passion about trees; and those same human beings can see a mosquito in their room, or in their house, and swat it.



Point: It is not possible to function out of multiple world views. In fact, part of the incite in *Laudato Si*, Francis doesn't say this—this is Carol Zinn—but he leaves such a seamless garment about caring for our common home that has way more to do with the environment, and has much more to do with relationships, which means we have to look about world views. World views are about relationships.

And for Francis in *Laudato Si*, he's basically putting something in front of us that is so profound, that when we read it, and try and get a sense of what he is really saying, he is saying this is an all or nothing kind of commitment.

You can't pick and choose. I'm going to care about the whales, and not care about humans who are being trafficked; or, that I care about poor people, and I'm not going to care about the water.



It's as silly as asking someone if they are pregnant, and the person says, "A little bit." (Laughter) There is no such thing as a little bit pregnant. In *Laudato Si* there is no such thing as cafeteria style: "I will care for this aspect of the created world, and not care about that one, something else will care about that one." Do you see that difference? That is all the function of world view. So, I know it is kind of humorous to do that little presentation of the species; but I don't know about you, but every time I have that experience, you know, of taking somebody's top knuckle off their pinkie, and I hear myself say all of the human brothers and sisters of my planet, we're all sitting in the same chair.

I did not know what that meant, really, at a heart level. I get it in my head level. I didn't know what it meant at a heart level until that horrific day in Connecticut, when that school in Sandy Hook had that horrible violence, where those first graders were killed and some teachers. When I saw that on TV, we had just celebrated the 4th birthday of the queen in our family, who is Mackenzie, my grand niece. When I tell you that I cried watching that news coverage, as if Mackenzie was one of those students.

Point: Our world views, the only way they change is, when they get turned upside down. Part of the power of *Laudato Si*, it seems to me, is that Francis, not by what he wrote, but by who he is. He is turning our world view upside down. He is showing us another way to be in relationship with everything in the universe. He is showing us another way to treat others, humans, and everything else that lives.

One of the things that we know about, in terms of the natural world, which is why it is such a good example for human relationships, is what I like to refer to as the 3 Ds. And I want to just spend a little time on each of these, because in terms of world view, I think these 3 Ds are probably the biggest way to kind of get a good glance of prescriptions for our glasses. What we know from the natural world, and what Francis lays out beautifully, is that diversity—diversity is the only thing that there is. We just demonstrated that at a very easy level. But the science really drills down into the need for diversity on the planet, when they remind us that we humans, all on this one little chair; we are the only species on the planet who needs every other species on the planet. None of the rest of you in this chapel needs the 7.9 billion of us at all. In fact, what science says is that if humans went away tomorrow every other species would benefit 7 times.

Point: **Diversity**—diversity is the key to life. The Scriptures even have in the New Testament, we are minded that if the whole body of Christ was an eye, if the whole body of Christ was an ear,, and so on if we are many parts, we are all one body. This idea of diversity is the key to any kind of human being. It is a clip of the world view. But here is what diversity isn't.

Diversity says that everything belongs—everything belongs. So, absolutely, everything that is on this gorgeous planet belongs. Every human being that comes into existence on this planet belongs. It belongs.

Secondly. Diversity reminds us that everything is in relationship. Anybody here ever have a toothache? You bet! When you have a toothache, is it just your tooth that hurts? No! Your whole body hurts. Anybody here ever have a corn on their toe? Is it just your toe that hurts? No! Everything belongs. When you have a toothache, your whole body belongs to that pain. You can't isolate. Diversity functions in a way that reminds us that everything belongs; and everything is in relationship; and everything is needed; everything is alive; everything reflects the divine; and everything matters. Every living being belongs, is in relationship, is needed, lives, reflects the divine, and matters. Now how many of you would say, "I agree?" How many of you would say, "That's the way we do it?" Yeah! even in the chair we aren't doing such a good job, are we? And you know, Thich Nhat Hanh's insight is really correct: "The way we are with each other is the way we are with the larger crowd." So, there is no way that we can have diversity respected in the natural world, and protecting all the trees, and the flowers, and the air, and care about climate change, and all that, and not be just as passionate about the kind of diversity in the human chair that is not respected, accepted and supported. Francis is very clear in *Laudato Si*. He basically said, "You can't speak out of both sides of your mouth." A world view, is a world view, is a world view.

Now I want to say something about the second D word. The second D word is

## DIFFERENCE

- Does not exist in Creation
- Exists only among Humans
- Begins in THOUGHT
- Develops into ATTITUDE
- Disrespects DIVERSITY
- Destroys DIVERSITY

## DIVERSITY

- Everything BELONGS
- Everything is in RELATIONSHIP
- Everything is NEEDED
- Everything LIVES
- Everything reflects the DIVINE
- Everything MATTERS

**difference**. And one of the first thing we have to recognize is that difference doesn't not exist in the natural world.

There's no such thing as difference in creation. There is only diversity. The only species that enjoys difference is the human species, because difference begins in our thought. Difference is a mental reality.

Like a rosebush, for instance, doesn't wake up in the morning and look out at the soil that it's in and say, "Oh, you're different than I am," and so on and on. It doesn't function like that. The only thing that functions in the natural world is diversity. Everything's got its place; everything's in relationship; and everything knows what it's supposed to do. Humans are a different story. In our minds, what some of us do is, we say that that diversity, Tom's diversity from Carol's diversity, in Carol's mind, I begin to make some judgments on that, like: he is male, he is ordained, he is a bishop, and we can do that in lots of other situations. That's fine as long as it stays between my ears.

I have a mental attitude about diversity that is not my diversity. Does that make sense? Okay? And that's okay, sort of. Francis says it's kind of a slippery slope when we start going there, because we very easily disrespect the person.

I can very easily, as soon as I see Tom is different than I am, I get a dangerous face, where my world view says that different is less than I am. And as soon as I think he is less than I am, I don't put myself out to allow the possibility for how I might act. So, difference does not exist in creation. It exists only in the human species. It begins in thinking. It begins in thought. And language is really important here, which is part of the power of *Laudato Si*. Francis knows, as many of us do, you can have no thoughts without words. You have to have language in order to have thoughts. So, the words we use matter, because it creates a way of thinking. So, difference begins in thought. It develops into an attitude. It disrespects diversity; and it eventually destroys a person. But even this D word is not so bad, as long as it stays between my ears. But you can see the trajectory that you are on, can't you? Just like going down that slide.

It gets pretty close to coming out of my mouth and coming out in my behavior, which then gives us the 3rd D word, which is **division**.

There is no such thing in the natural world as division. The only thing that is in the natural world is diversity. Division comes only among humans again. Division begins with difference. It begins with what I think about diversity. It begins in thinking and attitudes, and when I act upon that. When I act upon difference, I actually create division. So, let's think for a minute about the kind of divisions that many of us are concerned about in 2017, right here in this part of Michigan, or in this part of the United States. So many divisions I think we are concerned about, right? If you back those up, because you can't attack division, because division is a consequence of an attitude, which is a consequence of a thought process, which is a consequence of a world view. Does that make sense? So, the kind of divisions that we are worried about, where they all begin is a world view.

## DIVISION

- Does not exist in Creation
- Exists only among HUMANS
- Begins with DIFFERENCE
- Based on thoughts/attitudes
- DIFFERENCE acted upon
- Divisions are CREATED

And what Francis says in *Laudato Si* is that if we do not have the view of the planet as our common home, if we do not have that, he is very clear throughout *Laudato Si*, that where this is all going is not good. It's not able to be sustained the way we humans, some of us humans, are made.

Let me say just a couple of things about it. This science is clear. That if all 7.9 billion humans, all in one chair, if they all lived the way that 2 out of 10 of us lived, which is people who lived like we do, we would need anywhere from 7 to 9 planets. We would need anywhere from 7 to 9 planets. Now here's what that translates into for me is a really hard thing for me to get my head and heart around, because it basically says that the way I am living is not sustainable. And because I am living that way on this planet, the way I live, makes someone's life even less sustainable than my own. Now, usually, the response that comes in me, and maybe in you, when some little thought like that or somebody says it out loud, the first place I go is: guilty. Anybody else? In *Laudato Si* there is no guilt at all. There is a lot of responsibility, a lot of responsibility.

Remember the Monopoly game? Remember when you passed Go and you could collect \$200, something like that? That's the sense I have when I read *Laudato Si*.

What Francis is saying to us, the power of this as you think about this whole *Care for Our Common Home*, and your world view, and your role in it, it may in fact feel a little guilt like; but he very quickly says, like anomaly, you may have to pass through them, but the end goal is not guilt. The end goal is to be able to respond. The end goal is to be able to open our world view. The end goal is to be able to examine what kind of glasses we're wearing, and see where we got them. I got them from the East Coast of the United States, you know, that other country called Pennsylvania. I got them from Irish. Anybody here Irish? I got them from German. Anybody here German? I got it from Catholic. Anybody here Catholic? I got it from first born responsible child. All of that shapes our world view.

When I went to school, Catholic school of course, across the street was the public school. We were not allowed to walk on the other side of the street. Now, let me tell you, the reason why we weren't, was because it was a safety issue, you know, because we had 70 in each grade and the public school on the other side was just as large. So, we had to stay on our own side of the street for safety. Guess what most of us learned? Nobody taught it to us, but we learned it.

You don't go over there, because they are not Catholic. I was 19 years of age before I saw my first person of color. Everybody in my neighborhood looked like me.

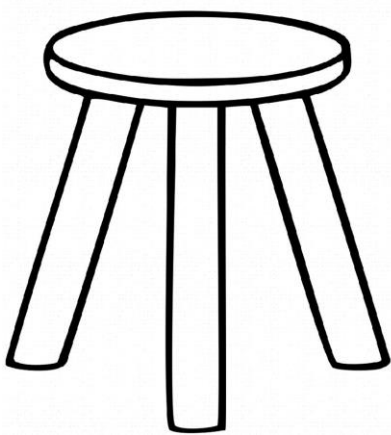
Point: World views are, we grow up in them and with them. But the beauty of world views, as Francis says in *Laudato Si*, is that they are learned; and guess what? They can be unlearned; and they can be reworked. I would offer to you, my brothers and sisters, that the biggest power of *Laudato Si* is when you really read it, and really pay careful attention to it.

It's really like going to the eye doctor and the eye doctor saying, "You know what, those lenses you have been wearing, they're no longer helpful for you." And, I think, for those of us that live in this part of the world, and live the way we live, without feeling guilty about it, but responsible, I think *Laudato Si*, for many of us, is like a visit to the eye doctor, and being told that the lenses that we are wearing are no longer appropriate.

Another power of *Laudato Si*, besides the world view piece, the diversity piece, and difference and division, are human constructs. And guess what, if we create them we can uncreate them. But we can't do it, unless we know where they come from. Division and Difference comes from not understanding the power and the need for diversity, which comes from our world view. Let me just say on that point, I am currently reading Thomas Friedman's new book, *Thank You for Being Late*, you know, the New York columnist. And one of the things that he says in that book is that there are three movements now on the planet. One that is technology, the other one is globalization and the other one is environment, especially climate change. He said all three of those movements, which are all human activity, all three of those are now, what he calls, on the second half of the chessboard. Anybody play chess? The second half on the chessboard, where all the moves begin to pick up speed exponential, if you get to the second half of the chessboard.

His theory is that all three of those realities: technology, globalization and environment, they are all on the other half of the chessboard; and they are all moving at a pace that human consciousness cannot comprehend. It cannot continue.

Francis said the same thing in *Laudato Si*. He said that the human activity on the planet, which is wonderful, and so on, and so forth, and all the progress and all that it's all okay; you know, don't stop any of it, but it's all out of balance. And the pace of the imbalance is moving at such a speed that the human consciousness cannot keep up with it. What he's talking about here is this three-legged stool.



Anybody here ever milk a cow? It's always interesting today that people who milk cows, not machines but real people they sit on three-legged stools. It's referred to as a milking stool. You know why that is? Because mathematically and in terms of physics, the most solid structure on a plane is a three-point construction. Why we have four-legged chairs I have no idea. (Laughter) This is the most solid, stable entity that there is: to put three points against a plane - flat surface.

This is a good image for what Francis talks about when he talks about sustainability. And sustainability consists of three legs; and each one of them has a word that goes with it. One of the legs is the leg of ecology. And I want to say here that *Laudato Si* is not about the environment; *Laudato Si* is about ecology. They are not the same.

Environment has to do with the natural surroundings, like the lighting in this room, the air in the room, and so forth. So, we all live in an environment. Our environment is the planet. But *Laudato Si* is not about the environment of the planet, although that is what he talks about. The power of it is about ecology. Ecology has to do with that function of understanding all of the relationships that are literally in a household. Notice the word *eco*, the Greek prefix that means house. So eco-ology is understanding ology. When you ology something—you have sociology, theology—you understand the relationships in a household.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- ECO-logy: UNDERSTANDING THE WHOLE/HOUSEHOLD
- ECO-nomy: MANAGING THE WHOLE/HOUSEHOLD
- ECO-aqus: BALANCING THE WHOLE/HOUSEHOLD

The second leg of sustainability is economy. Again, notice you got the Greek word *eco*, meaning household; but now you've got the Greek suffix *nomos*—*nomy*. When you know something, you manage it. So, economy has to do with managing all the relationships in the household. Now I would like to suggest to you that your calendar is a function of economy. It's how you manage all the relationships connected to your time. Your diet is a function of economy. It is how you manage all of the relationships in the household of your body about food. And so, economy is not just currency. In our culture, our economy, the way we manage our relationships, is with currency. In a lot of cultures, they barter. You mind the children and I'll make the bread. No money changes hands at all. That relationship of barter is the way the managing, of relationships in the villages, works.

And the third leg is the leg of equity or equality. Again, *eco* and *aqus* from the Latin. *Aqus* and equity have to do with balance. Now in order to kind of show you how hard that is to do, I'd like three people to come up here and help me.

And you don't have to do anything very special, except what I tell you. (Laughter) It won't be scary. I see one person and a second person and another woman. Yeh for the women. Ecology is about understanding and economy is about managing. Now every time I say equity I would like you to do something graceful. And so, when we are talking about sustainability, we are talking about ecology, that is, a way of understanding; economy, that is, a way of managing; and equity, that is, a way of balancing. Now could I put equity between these two people? This is what is referred to as the dance of sustainability. And don't worry I am going to ask you to dance. But every time we do something in ecology, where we are trying to understand who do we sit Uncle Harry next to at the wedding reception, okay? That is a function of ecology. We are trying to understand all the relationships in the household of both sides of the family at a wedding.

Have you ever had that challenge of trying to figure out where to sit everyone with Uncle Harry? Yes? You are doing ecology.

And then when you sit down and figure out if we sit him there, then we have to move Aunt Tilly; and if we move Aunt Tilly, then Uncle Frank is going to want to sit with Cousin Mary, you are doing ecology, you are managing the household of the families. Now when you do that in a way that goes back and forth, every time you try to understand where you put Uncle Harry, you are managing ecology; and you put him next to Aunt Mary, and then you go back and say the ecology when you sit next to Aunt Mary, then we are going to have to economy, because of Susan. And the economy, because of Susan, we are going to have to understand a new way what Mary Jones is going to do, right? When you do that relationship, you are doing equity. You are going from understanding to management, from ecology to economy. (The people are having to move back and forth because she says it 3 or 4 times and there is a lot of laughter going on and then applause) And with that silly little demonstration, the power of it is this: that for many of us, our world view is this: we actually understand something when we manage it. I'm going to say that again: we think our approach to understanding anything is to manage it.

Has anybody ever been on a committee at your church? (Laughter) You get something from parish council, and you understand what it is. Then, you go to your committee meeting; and you meet, and you meet, and you meet, and you meet, and you meet; and six months later at a meeting where you're managing, somebody finally says, "Does anybody know what we are supposed to be doing?" (Laughter) That's because you are out of balance, because you understood something, ecology, and then you kept doing economy, economy, economy, economy. You never went back after your first meeting to say, "What have we now understood more deeply;" and then from that say, "How do we need to manage next?" And then you try something; and then you say, "How do we now understand more deeply."

What Francis is saying is that this dance of sustainability, at this moment in time, is the dance we need to learn how to do. As humans, we need to learn that the way we are in relationship with everything that lives is the biggest chore that we have. We have to become ecologists, not environmentalists. *Laudato Si* is encouraging all of us to put on glasses of ecologists, whereby we work at understanding all of the relationships in that household. Now Robert Mueller, who was a person who was very connected to the United Nations, he tried to have a conference on sustainable development in the 1970s on the environment. And, in the 1970s, believe it or not, neither the word environment nor sustainability were even in the dictionary. We're only 40 plus years out from that time. We do not understand ecology.

When you look at any of the elephants in the room, they exist because there is no ecology. I'll say that again: any elephant in the room that you care about, the reason why it is in the room is because the people in the room do not understand all of the relationships in the household. And if they do, the way they are understanding them is that they manage them: "You can do this." "You cannot do this." "You can have a meeting here." "You cannot have a meeting there." "You can receive communion."

“You cannot receive communion.” “You can use this bathroom.” “You cannot use that bathroom.” Those are all functions of economy, how we manage all of these relationships. Francis says that what’s needed is an integral ecology. We need an understanding of relationships that is environmental, that is economic, and that has equity.

#### INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- ENVIRONMENT
- ECONOMICS
- EQUITY

And, if you don't have all three of those, then you don't have an integral ecology, which is why chapter four is probably the most profound part of *Laudato Si*, because he lays out very clearly what he means by this approach. Integral ecology has to do with the natural world; so, he has something to say in *Laudato Si* about the natural world. It has something to do with the human world; he

has a lot to say about the human world in *Laudato Si*. It has a lot to do with ecology, with the relationships. It has a lot to do with science. It has a lot to do with sociology. It has a lot to do with culture. It has a lot to do with religion. It has a lot to do with education, and health care, and water, and food, and women, and children.

Remember when I told you that 7 out of 10 people on the planet are people of color? Do you know that 7 out of 10 people on the planet cannot read? Yeh! I will say that again: 7 out of 10 people on the planet can not read. How many people here can read? How many people here have one diploma? How many people here have one degree from college? How many people here have certification in anything? How many people here have more than one degree? Anybody here, like me, have a terminal degree? (Laughter) That's what it's called: a terminal degree.

#### INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- NATURAL WORLD
- HUMAN WORLD
- ECOLOGY
- SCIENCE
- SOCIOLOGY
- CULTURE

#### INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- RELIGION
- EDUCATION
- HEALTHCARE
- WATER/FOOD
- WOMEN
- CHILDREN

Point: What Francis is saying in *Laudato Si*, he's saying to people like us. The glasses that you are wearing have got to go to the eye doctor. The world in which you live is not the larger world. And when he says to us that in this integral ecology that humans, and women especially, and children, are at the forefront of the environmental concerns, he’s absolutely right. You know those 7 out of 10 people that cannot read, 6 out of 10 people are women. 7 out of 10 people on this

planet cannot read; 6 of them are women. So, when Francis raises this up, it's not because he's a feminist; it's because we do not understand the ecology. When he raises up that 4 out of 5 people can't turn a faucet on and take a drink of water, 4 out of 5 people on the planet.



That there are villages where there is 1 water pump for 30,000 people. In my bathroom at home, I have 5 accesses to water, hot and cold in the sink, hot and cold in the bathtub and 1 in the toilet. There are villages where there is 1 access to water for 35,000 people.

Point: It is hard for people like you and me to have an ecology understanding. So, when Francis is talking about this issue of ecology it's his suggestion to us of how do we have a world view that is in fact sustainable. One of the ways is we have to ask ourselves, "When I think of the natural world what comes to mind? Skiing, my house in the mountains, my trip across Lake Michigan? And is there space in my world view for the 4 out of 5 people who don't have access to a glass of water?" Francis says in integral ecology, the human part, "Do I have that kind of empathy, that when I see something come across the television screen, that it's as if it is happening to my grandchild?"

And it's hard to do, especially when one sees coming across my screen as people yelling and screaming at each other, and then have a commercial for Burger King.

Point: Trying to hold on to a world view that is ecological is not easy to do. And he does the same thing with all of the ingredients of an integral ecology. So what I am offering us for our consideration is that if we want to pay attention to the common world view that we have, we've got to run through this little laundry list. How do I see the natural world? How do I see the human world? How do I see science? How do I see religion? And so forth. So, sustainable development. I'm sure you know that in the year 2001 development goals were promulgated by the international community EKOS.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Millennium Development Goals
  - 2000-2015 (8 Goals)
  - Poverty
  - Literacy
  - Environment
  - Women

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Sustainable Development Goals
  - 2015-2030 (17 Goals)
  - Poverty
  - Environment
  - Women and Children
  - Specific focus areas

They were mostly about poverty, mostly about literacy, mostly about environment, and mostly about men. And they mostly basked in success. The goals were – wait till you hear this– by the 3 poorest countries in the world. They were able to reduce poverty in their country by half. They made primary education available for free to everybody 6 years old and over. They were able to empower and were able to address some of their development concerns. The 3 poorest countries in the world did the best on the millenium development goals. But in 2015, you remember this I'm sure, this, the international community said, "You know what? We can't stop."

Nobody thought we were going to get where we wanted to go by 2015 with the millennial development goals. So now we now got these 2017 sustainable goals.” Francis talks about that in *Laudato Si*. He says that the world is thinking about, what we are thinking about still: poverty, environment, women and children, and then lots of specific focus areas, like health care and housing etc. and technology.

### HOW CAN I LIVE LAUDATO SI?

- Read It
- Study It
- Learn It
- Adopt It
- Spread It
- Become It

So, in closing, I want to invite you to consider how can you not just read *Laudato Si*, or know about it, but how can you live; how can you live this notion that we are one among many on this planet, that diversity is the only fact that there is. Now, I know that we have a challenge with facts these days. (Lots of laughter) But let me just remind you that absolutely everyone is entitled to their own opinion, no one is entitled to their own facts. (More

laughter) And so, part of the power of what *Laudato Si* is, in my view, is: Francis is putting before us a powerful invitation for us to really spend some time on our world view, our glasses, and what do we really think about diversity. Do we really think it is something to be tolerated? Do you know in our workshops in schools for diversity, do you know what they are called? How to tolerate diversity. Now what *Laudato Si* would do with that in some of the chapters, let's teach them how to tolerate trees, and how to tolerate butterflies, how to put up with anything that is not Carol Zinn. The invitation is to respect diversity, to look at our world view, and to be willing to change it.

So, my invitation to you is not how you can live with the document, first of all, read it. Have you read it? Anybody read it more than once? Twice? Four times? I would suggest that if you haven't read it at least 10 times, then you probably haven't read it. Study it. Anybody in a study group - *Laudato Si*? Not when it first came out, there was a lot of that; but now, 2 years later. Anybody in a study group? Not when it first came out, there was a lot of doubt. Now 2 years later, anybody in a study group. Learn it! Learn it! Adopt it! Has anybody adopted *Laudato Si*? Spread it! I think this is an effort to try to spread it, but are you spreading it? Spread it in your home. And I am not just talking, and please hear this, and not in a disrespectful way. I'm not talking about doing recycle. I mean, truthfully, we are not truly recycling now at this moment in time on our planet. Recycling is not about *Laudato Si*. Is *Laudato Si* about recycling? Absolutely! But it is not the core of it. And mostly, I would say: “Become it.” And here's the part of what it will take. It will take real care for the common good for most of us, because much like Francis' insight about *Laudato Si*, you know the subtitle of it is, what? *Care for our Common Home*. This is what he was going after. This is the power of *Laudato Si*.

First of all, it is to understand that this commonness is the sum total of all the conditions, everything that we need, humans in particular, to live a meaningful purposeful life, like housing and home and water, nutrition, and so forth, and so on. It's all of that.

### CARE OF THE COMMON GOOD

- Sum total of all social conditions needed in order for people to live meaningful and purposeful lives.
- Individual choices within a range of options.
- If the common good is not maintained, the group ceases to exist.

Secondly, it's trying to help us remember that individuals have choices. We're not talking about running everybody off a Xerox machine. So, there are choices, but they exist within limits. In other words, we can't do whatever we want to, to each other, or to the planet, not for the common good. The common good says, yes, there are choices; and they exist within parenthesis. You could go this far, and not beyond that one.

And I think the third piece probably is the most powerful point of *Laudato Si*, which is that if the common good is not maintained, the group that is trying to hold on to the common good will cease to exist.

Now, I don't know about you, but the way the conversation about common good often goes in groups where I spend some time, which is women religious, it's usually a conversation about housing, and where sisters need to choose to live. And for the common good, the congregation might say, "Sisters, we have x number of houses, and we are going to have to make choices within that." So, at the tables, the conversations are usually, "Yes!

Yes! We should maintain the common good; and we should think about where we are living," and so forth. And this is usually the way the conversation usually ends up. "And you sister, you should think about where you are living (Laughter) so that the common good can be maintained." Notice which way the finger goes. It never says, "And you, *moi*, should think about what you are doing: where you are living; where you are buying your clothing; where you are buying your food; what kind of language comes out of your mouth; what thoughts you have about any topic; who you engage with." The common good never comes this way. Francis is saying to us in *Laudato Si*, "Give praise to our Lord. Care for our common home in the human consciousness that has to begin with the care of each other." Which is why the chapters, as you know, simply, what is happening to our home, and he has a conversation: the Gospel of Creation, the human roots of the relationship crises. Integral ecology, the most important chapter in the book. How we can approach this reality; and what action can we take? And then, of course, he calls for an ecological, which is relationship, an ecological education, and a spirituality of relationship, spirituality of birth, an ecological spirituality.

### LAUDATO SI

- What is happening to our Home?
- The Gospel of Creation
- Human Roots of Ecological Crisis
- Integral Ecology
- Lines of Approach and Action
- Ecological education and Spirituality

Because, in fact, he reminds us , as the Sioux do all the time, that the truth is that I am and you are and we are earth, fire, air, water and spirit.

Earth we are.  
Fire we are.  
Air and water and spirit we are.

Earth we are.  
Fire we are.  
Air and water and spirit we are.

Earth we are.  
Fire we are.  
Air and water and spirit we are.

Earth we are.  
Fire we are.  
Air and water and spirit we are.

## I AM, YOU ARE, WE ARE



As I gather this, I thought of a true story of a sister who taught first grade in my congregation, and who has since gone on to God. And there is a story about the first graders not really having to go to Mass the first week of school because they really didn't know how to do that yet. And the pastor said, "Oh yes, they should go." So, they went. And you know how the pew next to sister was never quite long enough? Well, this one little guy got up to the front pew, and about 10 minutes into the homily, with no sign of stopping, this little guy starts to have his own homily. About 20 minutes into the homily, with no sign of stopping, he now is taking his plastic tie off and flipping it over his finger trying, to get it over the communion rail. (Laughter) And about 30 minutes into the homily, and no sign of stopping, he is standing up on the pew and looking back at the rest of the kids, looking for his older brothers and sisters; and finally sister can't stand it no more. She taps the little girl on the shoulder in the pew in front of her, and she says, "You go up there and you tell him, sister says he is to sit down and stop that right this minute." So, she walks up the middle aisle, walks right past the first pew (everybody is dying laughter) and walks right over to the pastor, and says, "Sister says you are to sit down and stop that right this minute." And, of course, this nun— now it's probably been more than 40 or 50 years ago— and the only answer to something like that back in that day was 2 words: "Yes, sister." Which is what he did. So, before I see anybody walking up the aisle, I am going to sit down and stop talking, right this minute. (Applause)

Transcribed by  
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