



Welcome to
ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM
DISCUSSING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED
June 13, 2024 Forum: Fr. Ricardo DaSilva, sj—"Laudate Deum"



Introduction

Hello everybody. It's wonderful to be with you. Because you don't know who I am, or where I'm from, I think it's helpful to give you a brief introduction of myself; if nothing, you'd be fascinated by my accent, and then, you won't listen to anything I have to say (laughter). My name is Ricardo da Silva. I was born in Portugal, and I moved to South Africa at the age of six. I lived in Johannesburg all my life; and so, to my surprise today, I walked in, and as I'm sitting here, this Sr. Judy Coyle, sitting in the congregation, greets me, and of course, she's from my first parish in Africa, and actually interviewed me to enter into the Society of Jesus. If this doesn't work out, it's her fault (laughter).



And so, I've lived in South Africa All my life up to the age of forty-three. I was just about twenty-four when I joined the Jesuits and was sent to the UK. South Africa was a region, not a province, and belongs to the British Province because of colonial rules And so, I lived in Birmingham in the UK, where I did my novitiate, and did my philosophy in London at the Heathrow College, which doesn't exist anymore, after 400years. where I spent four years. We were forced to close and move back to South Africa. I worked induction ministry at Cross Catholic in the center of Johannesburg with Sr. Judy Coyle. And then, I was sent to Brazil. I did my theology studies. I lived there for three years. Then, back to South Africa for the Jesuit Institute, which is a center that would approve very much the kind of work: theological reflection and pastoral analysis. And so, that's what I did there.

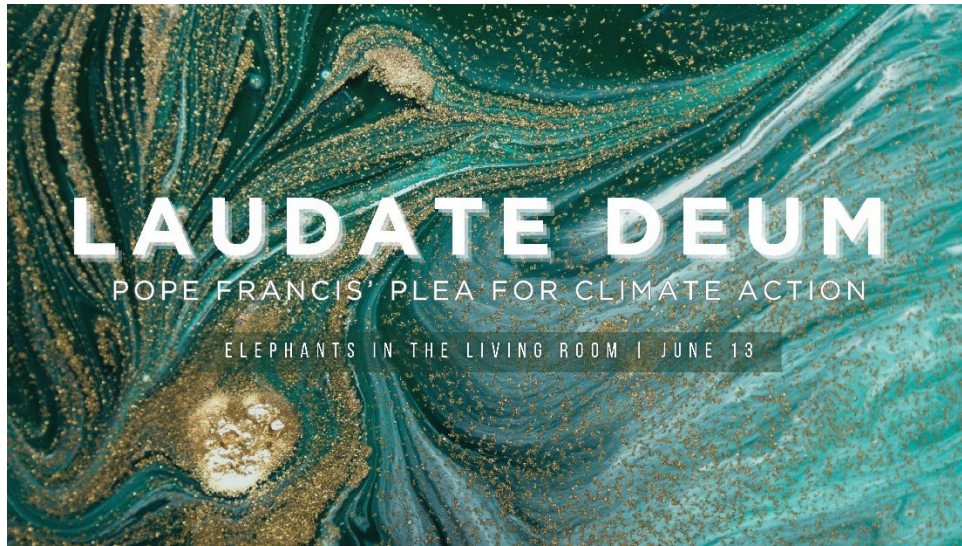
I spent some time there working on a project called 'Spotlight South Africa,.' Which for those who know America Magazine, we were trying to be a kind od America Magazine for the South African part of the continent.

And after a time there, my provincial said, “You know, you’re doing well and you’re enjoying this,” I was working as an editor and as a reporter, “why don’t you try taking this more seriously.” And so, I said, “OK.”

And so, I was very fortunate to get a Fulbright scholarship at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism for ten months from August 2019 through the pandemic. So, you can imagine how that was. And after which, I couldn’t get back to South Africa. And so, what did I do? I started working at America Magazine, where I am now. I am an associate editor at America Magazine.

I’m a journalist, which has nothing to do with ecology or ecological issues. On the one hand, it connects with this talk because I’m a producer of a weekly podcast – for those of you who listen to podcasts—called *Inside the Vatican*, which is hosted by Coll Daly and Gerado Connell. Jerry is in Rome; Colleen is in New Orleans; I’m in New York City; and we produce this show weekly that tries to make sense of the Vatican for common folk. And then, I host and produce my own podcast called *Preach the Catholic Homilies Podcast*. And there, I interview preachers, mainly priests, but deacons and laypeople, as well as women and men about what they think they’re doing when they get up in front of a congregation and so, we try to dissect their homilies.

That’s a very long introduction, but it sort of gives you a sense of where I am and where the accent sits (laughter).



So, let's talk about *Laudate Deum*. This title is given for this talk; but for you, it really is Pope Francis's plea for climate action, or as I put, Francis' plea for climate action.

And just to get us into this, I do ask you to humor me for a few seconds or a few minutes or two:

Song of the Polar Bear (Tom Kane and Daniel Zatz)

I'm a polar bear and my name is Beond, and I've been a polar bear since the day I was born. Welcome to my kingdom and the world that I roam, a place I call home. They call me Nanuk and Ursu Maretanus, 200,000 years of evolution helped design us, with small ears, a big coat, predator jaws, and a layer of fat just to keep us warm. Is it only me, or do you get the feeling, while we're watching the sun go down, someone's turning up the central heating? Well, I'm just a polar bear, so what do I know about Milankovich cycles and CO₂, just 1200 pounds of hi-tech fur with twelve-inch paws and two-inch claws, from Hudson Bay to Greenland, Russia to Alaska, Svalbard out to Baffin Island, and round and back again, just waiting on the coastline for the waves to freeze, with seals to hunt and cubs to feed. Is it me, or do you get the feeling? While we swim beneath the Northern Lights, the ice pack is retreating.

One of the more bizarre things that happened when I moved to the UK is we were sent as novices to a day for religion on climate change; and I recall that the presenter on that day played a song not unlike this song, sort of gets us in the mood; and it went something like: “Climate change is affecting everyone, though we are dying.” But those words stuck in my head since then, which was sometime in 2008.

I was thinking about as I was preparing for this talk, thinking about climate change, and I’m afraid to say, it was a joke in some ways, it certainly provoked thought. And so, I thought we’d begin just to mind for each of us, What is your earliest memory of climate change, or talk of climate change? I think we’ll take three or four people, we can’t take many.

First guest: I went to a conference in Kenya in 1995, where the keynote speaker talked about the problem of climate change. It was an organization called, *World Future Studies Organization*, which was focused on w should pay attention to the future and so this idea: we have a responsibility to the future.

Second guest: They started calling it global warning; and they tried explaining, and only a few of us listened.

Third guest: I remember in the 1970s, it was acid rain that made us very conscious of what was going on in the environment; and prior to that, Rachael Carson’s book, *Silent Spring*. It’s been around for a long time.

Well, It sounds like you all have more worthy than mine of the Bear Song.

Since that time, I’ve thought a lot, to get more serious, there’s probably been three experiences that have marked me in terms of climate control:

- The first was when I went to the Amazon on an experiment—what we called experiments, an Apostolic Placement for a couple of weeks; and I became aware in this particular area where beef farming had devastated the land. You don’t think of the Amazon for beef farming. It was incredible the amount of what was happening to the topography in terms of crop rotation because the soil was completely devastated.

- The other time I went to Louisiana, and for those of you follow American Media, you probably would have seen our documentary film about how Parish life is changed in the United States; and I went to Louisiana—I was part of a filming team —and of course, we saw the terrible devastation had brought, how people lost their lives and livelihood, how they had become a little more complicated, because I saw people who cared about what was happening to the environment, about what was happening in terms of their bank accounts, and where it pinched in that regard in terms of business interests, oil particularly. They were seeing that their natural environment disappears before them. And many of them were working in the oil fields and oil refineries, and that sort of things; and finding: “And how do I create a livelihood, a future for my children, and to be able to pay for them to go to college without ending what is also devastating the environment?”
- And then, more recently, I haven’t been involved in my parish, to be honest with you, but also as an associate pastor in the church of St. Francis Xavier in New York City; and we’re thinking along the lines and becoming much more pronounced along the lines of our own environment, as you heard today, you don’t have water bottles, you have paper cups or some sort of recyclable material.

So, I’ve told you about bizarre incidents; I’ve told you about it, about getting a little more serious. Perhaps the reason I came here today was because of this article I published about what happened at the Vatican in terms of climate change; and then, I want to talk a little bit; and then, I published a follow-up article about *Laudate Deum* when *Laudate Deum* came out.

The interesting thing was that those two articles got a lot of; and certainly, of what I've heard of my story now, I don't consider myself someone who is an expert on matter—far, far, far from it— but I think it is illustrative of just how scarce resources are, and how hungry we are for someone who can communicate with a certain amount of coherence, and hopefully some competence the ideas that are being thrown out. So, I just want to mention that there's the video that the Vatican put out to promote *Laudate Deum*.

So, think about this: this was November 2023. This was the first video that I saw:

[\[Vatican video on Laudate Deum\]](#)

What do you think? Who loved it? Who thought, no, it missed the mark? I must say, when I first saw it, it really did seem to me as far as it went, as though it was going too far. It was trying to become sort of a Hollywood trailer; and the images, for me, didn't encourage me to think about the situation so much as just being completely overwhelmed by it. It's a strategy. I don't think it's the most effective strategy. I think it's part of the strategy that Pope Francis used at the beginning of *Laudate Deum*, which I think is incredibly effective; but I think if you stayed there, we would probably lose our way very quickly.

Let's talk a little bit about *Laudate Deum*, which is what you're here for, for a little while, and then I'm going to turn it over to *Laudato Si* for a second, then I'll come back to *Laudate Deum*.

Laudate Deum is a very brief document. You can read it very quickly. For those of you who haven't read it, it's only eight pages; and really, it's five pages. It's probably, I think, two and a half pages of footnotes, and those are just footnotes referencing *Laudato Si* for the most part. It is an incredibly easy, accessible document, which was Pope Francis's intention with this document. It came eight years after *Laudato Si* was published, but also just before the Conference of Parties (COP), which was the big climate change conference, of course, that you probably remember. The Paris Accords, which happened in Dubai at the end of last year. It's significant, of course, because Dubai is the tenth largest producer of oil globally; and Francis was planning to go for that, but unfortunately, he got sick.

But this document is very clearly his narrative for the conference; and you can see in everything that he says, how that is the point.

PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015.

Urgent Call to Action

Hard on the U.S.

Stark Tone

Shout-out to Bishops worldwide

Critique of Global Response

The key target or key aim of the Conference of Parties, and especially at COP28, was to limit the long-term global temperature rises to one and a half degrees centigrade, apparently—I'm not a climate scientist— I should say just like Francis says in the document, anything above that, or at least nearing to that and we're in certain devastation; and there's really no plan left for us. And so, this is why it has been such an insistent goal of the Conference of Parties.

Donna Harawa, some of you may know her book, and a series of books she has written; but this particular one, *When Species Meet*, she is the only woman cited in *Laudate Deum*, which is perhaps not surprising, given that most of it is quoting *Laudato Si*. But I did want to go and look at who Donna is, because I thought it was important to point this out, not least because a friend of mine, a faithful Companion of Jesus is, who is studying climate concerns in Canada, told me this a couple of weeks ago.



She said I was telling her I was coming here; and she said, “Do you know Donna Haraway is the only person quoted in *Laudate Deum*?” And so, I went to find out. She’s an American professor emerita in the history of Consciousness and Feminine Studies Department at the university of California in Santa Cruz; and she’s a prominent scholar in the field of science and technology studies; and she was taught by nuns, but she claims not to be religious.

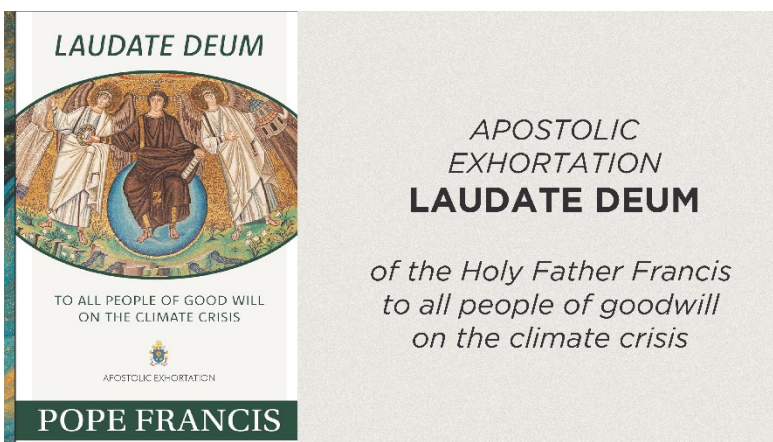
I went to find one of her quotes from this book, *When Species Meet*, and I wanted to just read it to you very briefly, because I think there’s something there that might be good for our reflection.

I thought it was a very charming way of writing about these issues. Back to *Laudate Deum*. I did a word cloud of what comes up when we look at *Laudate Deum*; and there are really big issues: climate change, human technocratic paradigms, one world, global power increase. So, these are just some of the words that we hear, over and over especially that one: technocratic paradigm, climate change, climate crisis; and we’ll get to some of that.

Laudate Deum is an **apostolic exhortation**. What does that mean?

For those of you who don’t know, an apostolic exhortation is not like an apostolic constitution; these are far, far, far more important; and it is also not an encyclical.

So, it’s of lesser understanding, or at least, rather of lesser value in terms of Church teaching than in the encyclical.



Here's how one of my colleagues wrote about it recently. He said, “An apostolic exhortation does not explicitly attempt to define doctrine, but instead, serves as an encouragement a specific community toward a certain goal or practice.” Probably the most influential in the post-Vatican II era was *Evangelii*

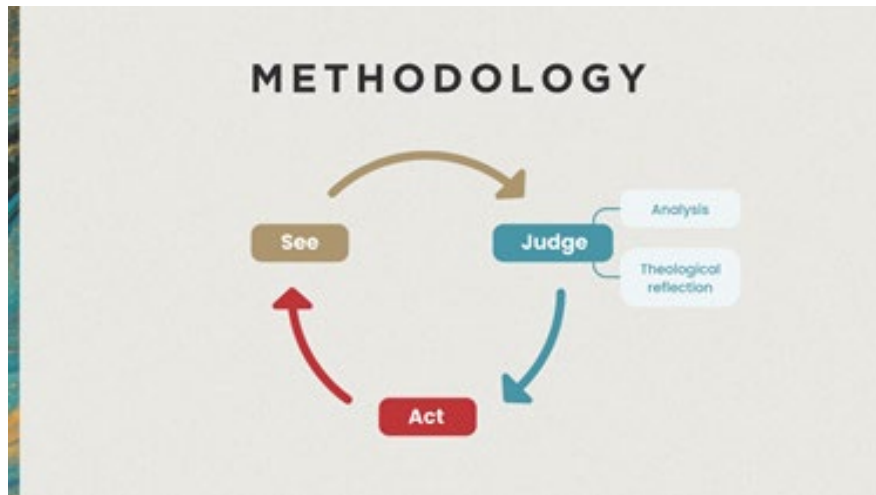
Nuntiandi, the exhortation on evangelization; but the important thing, I think, for us is that it is a very common way in which Pope Francis speaks.

He often uses apostolic exhortations: *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Laetitia*; then there was the post-synodal exhortation for young people, *Christus Vivat*, and obviously now, *Laudate Deum*. Here are, it is his way of trying to encourage; and it appears from what he has been saying more and more that he does want to be producing much shorter and accessible papal documents. And so, the apostolic exhortation seems to be his mode of choice for communicating.

But while most exhortations are about encouraging, this one is really not, at least not at the beginning. And I think this is what got me all the attention in the article. *Laudate Deum* is surprisingly brief; but it is also his most despairing. I said in the article; and so, I'd just like to read two paragraphs from the introduction to that article—words like hopelessness, desperation, pessimism, direct attack and alarm are not words most used to describe anything said by the pope. He is typically known for his encouragement and hopeful messages; but *Laudate Deum* has an uncharacteristic tone and hits hard. It is a devastating account of the present state of human action on climate change on the global level and highlights how we are failing on almost every benchmark. Notably, Francis takes direct aim at the irresponsible lifestyle of many in the United States, noting that emissions per individual are, he says, about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest nations. It's a pretty damning and devastating introduction as we begin.

Pope Francis has said this a few times. He said this in evangelistic audios. He said this in *Laudato Si*. And he says this frequently when he is addressing groups: "Realities are more important than ideas." He's very concerned with reality and how things are in the concrete, not how they are in the abstract world of ideas. And so, it is not surprising that as he did for *Laudato Si*, in some ways he is doing the same now for *Laudate Deum*. He is using a particular methodology here, or at least we can infer a particular methodology.

And I want to give credit to Peter Knox, a South African Jesuit, who is more of a climate scientist than I am and has been on committees; and he has been the one who sort of brought me to this particular insight.



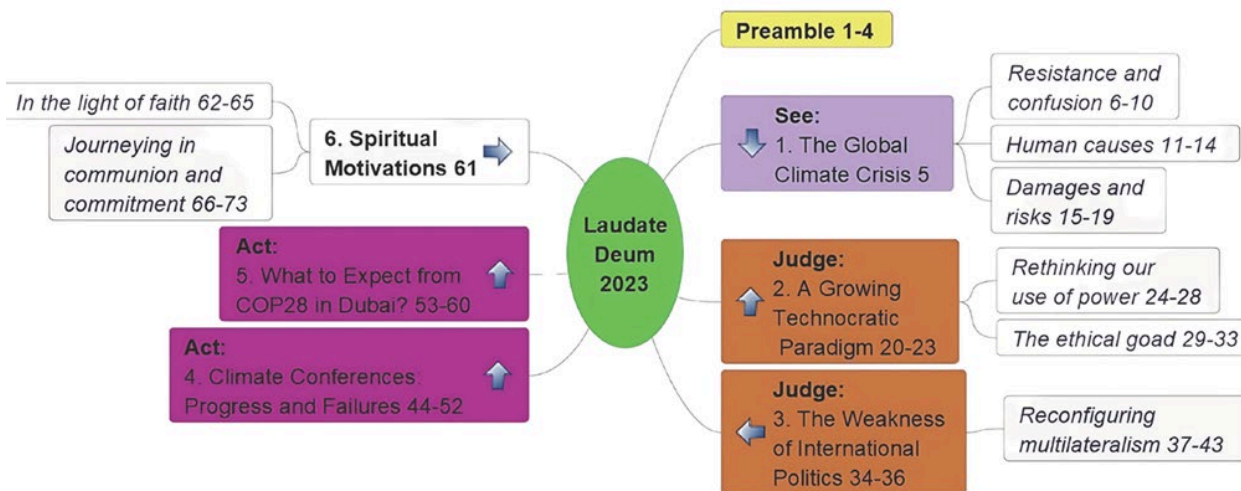
He's using the **see, judge, act** methodology, which I'm sure many of you know and/or have heard of. Sometimes it is also referred to as the pastoral cycle. This particular cycle is slightly different; but the see, judge, act methodology was created by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, even though its roots, I am told, can be found in Thomas Aquinas's description of the intellectual virtue of prudence. For those of you who know that I hope it's true.

In *Laudato Si* Francis describes this methodology that he uses to construct his theological argument.

He says that it's—*see*— he begins by reviewing *Laudato Si*, the best scientific research today from the Judeo-Christian tradition; and then, in light of this theological reflection— *judge*— he advances proposals for dialogue and action— *act*— both on an individual and on global levels. And this three-step process presents what we might call a practice-oriented methodology.

So now, let's look at the structure of *Laudato Deum*, just chapter by chapter. Here, this is Peter Knox's schema; and so, he's outlined the see, judge, act parts of this particular exhortation.

OUTLINE



Schema by Peter Knox, S.J.

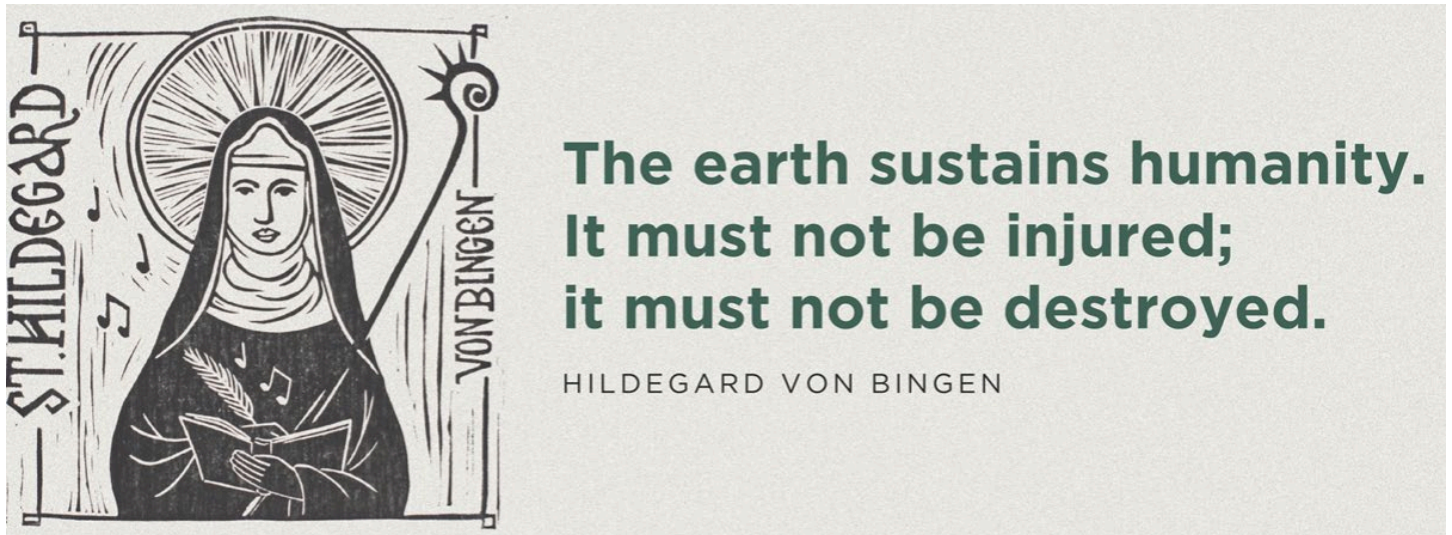
Chapter One is that alarming piece, the global climate crisis; and Pope Francis goes into some detail, gives us some alarming statistics, etc. Then it's the growing technocratic paradigm, which he had gone to length, which he had developed at some length, or at length in *Laudato Si*. He comes back to it; he often talks about this, how technology is often being put in place of people, and that we need to be very attentive to that when it comes to climate dynamics.

Then, he talks about the weaknesses of international politics; and he looks at the UN, particularly and because this was obviously looking toward COP28; and only at the end does he give us something that seems a little theological and spiritual; and it's really only three or four paragraphs, which he calls spiritual motivations, which is why I said this is really not the focus of what he is doing. The focus here is for those gathered at COP28, the leaders. What he is giving us at the end is maybe to help us people of faith a little.

I'm going to leave *Laudate Deum* for a second, because to understand *Laudate Deum*, people have called *Laudate Deum* part two of *Laudato Si*.

Peter Knox, my friend in South Africa, doesn't think it's a call to us to attention to read *Laudato Si*; but it is a very different kind of document; and it's a much more programmatic document. It's a more concrete document. So, let's not think about it as *Laudato Si, Part Two*.

But have you read a thing called *Laudato Si* that I wrote eight years ago. If we think about it, I started with our earliest memories of climate change. It's there already in the Scripture, right? We are asked, we are invited, through the Scriptures in the Psalms, particularly to praise God and God's creation. So, this is something that Pope Francis goes into in greater detail in *Laudato Si*; but it's really important for us to find our inspiration, first and foremost, to care for creation stewardship for the environment in the psalms and in other reading of our Scriptures.



I was very happy that we were just praying with the *Canticle of the Sun*, because I want to pick up a little bit on Francis again, but Hildegard von Bingen, the great Christian mystic. Here's what she said, "The Earth sustains humanity, but it must not be injured. It must not be destroyed." That was in the 12th Century. So, these ideas of ours are not new by any means; and we've just sung this – *Canticle of the Sun* – and prayed this: "be praised my Lord through our sister mother earth, who feeds us, and rules us, and produces various fruits, with colored flowers and herbs."



So, fast forward. Let's look at the papal responses to this subject. We do like to say that Pope Francis is the one who has really picked up in these issues; and, I think, that's true. Obviously, he has given a whole encyclical and several documents to this. It has also become much more urgent in our dialogue globally; but it is actually Benedict XVI who, known as the green pope, and before him, Pope John Paul II.

So, I wanted, and I did this very briefly in my article, very briefly, but I want to do this; I want to make sure that I not remiss to say this Pope John Paul II appealed for international cooperation in fighting climate change in his World Day of Peace messages, over and over, and some of those are good to go; and read, just to be sure, of what he said, if you want this to be backed up for you. And he really recognized the rapid environmental decline facing the planet.

Pope Benedict XVI was the one to start to call for climate change action in his public speeches and he inspired deeper theological reflections on the natural environment; but he also started to introduce some very practical changes in Vatican City, including solar panels for the Paul VI Hall, a reforestation project in Hungary to offset Vatican's carbon emissions, because there's not much forest in Vatican City. It was he who ordered the first hybrid pope mobile. So, he also started to think about those sorts of things.

But Pope Francis, and this is and must be said, of course, was the first to offer a papal teaching document that was entirely focused on climate change; and that was *Laudato Si*. And I'm not going to go through everything in *Laudato Si*. I believe you actually just had a day on *Laudato Si* (symposium at Madonna University on June 12); so, I'm going to go through this very quickly. But for those who haven't been, or don't remember, or haven't read it, because it is a very long document, I'm just going to give you a few highlights here.

One of the key ideas behind it is integral ecology. It integrates ecology into Catholic Social teaching, emphasizing the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues; so, where the environmental impact on our living on our societies, as part of that, of course, is the impact on the most impoverished, the impact on the poor; and *Laudato Si* highlights the disproportionate impact on climate change on the poor and the vulnerable, emphasizing a need for social perspective in ecological approaches; and pope Francis says they are the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone. It picks up an idea that is old in Catholic Social teaching; and, you know, is really old when *Populum Progresso* and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that the Earth's resources belong to everyone, and should be shared equitably, which is what we call, of course, the universal destination of goods. But it also calls us to conversion because of all of this, and that crisis leads us to conversion, which, of course, we've heard over and over, and it's trying to make this crisis present to us.

And so, the document emphasizes the need for profound interior conversion. Pope Francis says in response to the ecological crisis; he talks about a network of injustices, reveals how the ecological crisis is linked to other social injustices, such as shortsighted economic and production systems. The Earth's resources, he says, are also being plundered because of shortsighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production, and then, of course, the critique that he has made throughout his papacy of unsustainable economic systems that we are in need of a new financial system, financial instrument need for a new economy.

In Thomas Piketty's book, *Capital*, he cited that often pope Francis critiques the pursuit of production and growth at the expense of future resources and environmental health; and he says that as long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment

Laudato Si has this impact also on COP (Conference of the Parties) at the time, COP21, which was of the Paris Accords; but I don't think that that was its primary focus, even though it was written just before that the primary focus was really to give us something in our Catholic Social teaching that we could build into Catholic Social teaching; and then it was tacked on , or at least, there was a section tacked on for COP20; but it must be said that it is the document that is most often cited by the greatest number of politicians; and any number of policy leaders quote Pope Francis. And so, he's become really known for this document, because he has given a narrative to the world for a problem he didn't understand as something which was a soul problem—my friend Brian Mingle talks about: racism being an infection of the soul. Well, this is much the same thing, I think, that we have to understand the climate crisis as something which is a soul problem; and, I think, this is my own inference *Laudato Si* gives us.

PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

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- Influence of "Laudato Si"
- Network of injustices
- Vatican Delegation at COP21
- Critique of Economy
- Commitment to Zero Emissions
- Call to Collective Action
- Moral Imperative for Climate Action

So, let's look at the Paris Accords very briefly, because this is important. Of course, when understanding what is happening behind *Laudate Deum*, we've spoken about the influence of *Laudato Si*, that there was a Vatican delegation sent to COP21, and so was Cardinal Peter Turkson. For those of you who wanted to know , he was really to support international cooperation on climate justice.

Here's what Cardinal Turkson said. He said, "We cannot remain blind to the grave danger done to the planet; nor can we remain indifferent to the plight of millions of people who most bear the burden of such destruction. A great deal is at stake for every country. Progress has too long been based on fossil energy to the detriment of the environment. This is the moment to take action." That was December 2015. We're still calling, of course, for it. Pope Francis first spoke to the UN, if I'm not mistaken, in December 2012 on climate issues, and he'd certainly spoken on other things, but spoke in December 2020 at the UN Climate Ambition Summit; and there he spoke about those things, commitment to zero emissions, a moral imperative for climate action, and came back to this idea of the network of injustices.

So, the idea to reduce net emissions to zero before 2050, this is when Pope Francis commits the Vatican to doing the same thing that global leaders were being asked to do; and, of course, many of them have failed at it; and the U.S. was particularly failing at under previous administration. It was changed under the current administration but is still far from where it needs to be. He emphasized the moral imperative for climate action, framing it as a matter, again, in terms of Catholic Social teaching of human dignity and of the common good.

And he made this call to collective action, stressing the importance of collective responsibility and international cooperation. I thought this quote was particularly poignant: "Let us not rob the new generations of their hope for a better future. Let us not deprive them of the joy of life and the beauty of nature. Let us work together to build a future that is more just, more peaceful, and more fraternal, that takes us through *Laudato Si*."

I mentioned already some of the Vatican green initiatives under Pope Francis and so, among these energy efficient upgrades, more solar panels, heat, production and exchange systems within the Vatican energy efficient refrigeration units, electric vehicles, and now the pope actually received a zero emission mobile from the Japanese bishops; and there's plans to increase the fleet of electric vehicles and expand charging stations throughout the Vatican City State; and there's this practice of a circular economy, i.e., recycling systems to recycle reuse products and so, banning of single use plastics in the Vatican City State. I'm about to go there for the synod, so I will report back if this is true. (applause)

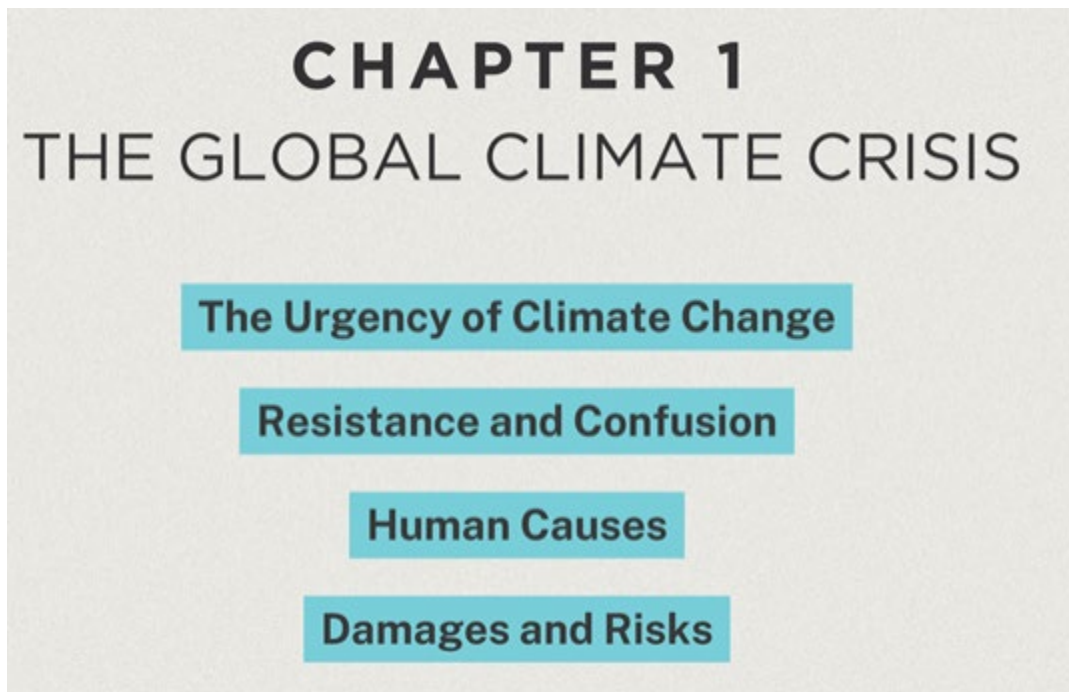
So, if you want to read more about Vatican initiatives that are what Pope Francis and the Vatican are doing to fight climate change, you can read it at Americamagazine.org. So, there's an urgent call to action. It's a start tone, a critique of global response. It's particularly hard on the U.S.; but the interesting thing here—and this I thought was an interesting strategy—and I'll tell you what I think about it once I tell you what happened. Pope Francis used this as an opportunity to tell bishops worldwide how well they're doing, sort of to pat them on the back; and he starts with a U.S. bishop. Surprisingly, he says the U.S. bishops have expressed very well the social meaning of our concern about climate concern, which goes beyond a merely ecological approach, because "Our care for one another and our care for the Earth are intimately bound together. Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community, the effects of climate change are born by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world." Those were the U.S. bishops in 2019. Bear in mind, this is now coming out in 2023. In a few words, he also said of the bishops of the Synod for Amazonia of what they've said that attacks on nature have consequences for people's lives and he gave a nod to the African bishops who in one of their documents said that climate change is a tragic and striking example of structural sin in 2022.

So, three things where he's doing something; and I wonder if this is just an encouragement right at the beginning, because if he had given that devastating critique of the U.S. and not said anything about the bishops or about the Church, people might not have been encouraged to read on; and so, this might have given them something to read about we know, of course, that as a conference here in the U.S., throughout the world, really our performance has not been great on this. We are beginning to think about *Laudato Si* parishes and *Laudato Deum*, the action platform, thanks to the push from the Vatican to do this.

But it is still far from what we are thinking about doing, and how we are going about doing it, partly also because just the infrastructure in the U.S. is not adapted for it, right?

In so many cities, including where I live in New York City, there just isn't an organized simple reacting program; and so, it's almost impossible to actually meet some of these things, because you have to drive a long way to get to a place where you can reduce, reuse, recycle, and the system is against us quite literally.

What I am going to do now is go through the document for those of you who have read it. You might find this an exercise in repetition, but I thought that I would go through it carefully, because it's such a short document. It's probably good for us to just walk through each of the chapters.



This first chapter, The Urgency of Climate Change, Pope Francis says climate change is real and evident, to which some of us might say, "Yes, obviously," but others might not take it as a self-evident fact; and so, it's probably important for us to hear that. He, of course, goes into this idea of extreme weather phenomena: heat waves, droughts, and floods that are increasing at an ever-rapid pace; and global temperature increases that will lead to more frequent and intense heat waves and droughts. He says if the global temperature increases by a half of a degree centigrade, the intensity and frequency of great rains and floods increase in some areas and severe droughts take place in others. I think we all know this; we've seen this. Then he talks about this resistance and confusion; and this is really his nod to climate change deniers, or to those who don't want to do much about it. And he says some have chosen to derive these facts, the facts I've just presented to you very briefly.

Local weather events are confused with global climate patterns. He says one fails to mention that this and other extraordinary symptoms are nothing but diverse alternative expressions of the same cause: the global imbalance that is provoking the warming of the planet, right?

So, some people say, "Oh, it's what it's only happening here; it's not really a world thing; it's not really a world thing; it's just what's happening here." And then, of course, just a global crisis of our age, lack of information that leads to confusion and disinformation. And we've seen that. We've seen that in the political runup for elections. We see that when it comes to a talk around climate change. We see that in so many different spheres of our lives, how misinformation and disinformation really rule the roost and how easy it is to believe something if it looks good, and if there's a video and a picture, even better; and then, it gets real again; and it talks about, but actually what we do, need to do is: this is on us. There are human impacts here; there are human causes. We are responsible, especially industrial development that is increasing climate change talks about, obviously, the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and how emissions began to increase at an alarming rate ever since the Industrial Revolution.

He talks about the correlation between greenhouse gas emissions and the global climate phenomena; and he says that clear it's not possible to conceal the correlation of these global climate phenomena and the accelerated increase in greenhouse gas emissions, particularly since the mid-twentieth century. And this is where people started accusing Pope Francis of being a climate scientist and really batting outside of his court and one does not bat outside of his field, and he admits this, right? He admits this in the document; but he also says he ought some of the greatest minds on this. And so, we know that this document was not produced simply by Pope Francis, but that he had *periti*, he had people around him who were able to help him think through this problem; and then, he was able to take those words and rework them into something he wanted to say, again things that we all know.

Some effects of climate change are already irreversible. He says we're not going to go back to a time where we can reverse what is already happening.

We might be able to ameliorate some of it; but we certainly can't reverse it, especially because of the acidification of the ocean, temperature increases, and oxygen decreases—that's harming marine life, ice sheets that are melting. Climate change is reaching a critical point with unforeseen circumstances; but he says, it is certain that it continues to be a possibility that we can indeed bring some change.

So that when I finished reading that, I felt there was really no hope; it was a sort of devastating chapter. So, he says that a broader perspective is needed to address climate change, one that can enable us to esteem the marvels of progress, but also to pay serious attention to other effects that were probably unimaginable a century ago. And so, we must take responsibility for the legacy we leave behind once we pass from this world. He uses a wonderful phrase that people have quoted a lot; and that almost doesn't seem like a Pope Francis phrase, probably borrowing it from any number of sources: "Everything is connected and no one is saved alone." That takes us through Chapter I.

CHAPTER 2

A GROWING TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

Rethinking Our Use of Power

The Ethical Goad

Chapter II is a little briefer, but it is this growing technocratic paradigm that he goes into, rethinking our use of power is really what it's all about. This paradigm assumes unlimited growth and dominance over nature, rather than recognizing our human limits and interdependence within the natural world. The increase in human power through technology has not been accompanied by a corresponding development in human responsibility, value and conscience.

He develops what he calls ethical go, ethical decadence is masked by marketing and false information which prioritizes economic growth over environmental and social well-being. So, the crisis of: “..it’s shiny; it looks new, it has a great marketing behind it, wonderful social media, videos I must have, it is the newest and the best, it has a feature that others didn’t have, look at the technology I have around me.” I’m as guilty as the next, but also that there are projects that harm the environment and local communities that are justified through false promises of progress and economic benefit. We see this again and again, especially when somebody’s trying to get elected. We see all sorts of promises being made and those are not helping us. Either the economy must be reconceived to prioritize human dignity, social justice, environmental sustainability and this is one of the strongest quotes in the document— “The mentality of maximum gain at minimal cost makes impossible a sincere concern for our common home, and anreal preoccupation about assisting the poor and the needy discarded by our society” So, we have to prioritize the ethics behind how we are dealing with our environment, how we are stewarding the resources given to us.

This is the second section that is really geared. We can almost switch it off and say, “This we do need to pay attention to; but this is really for policy makers; this was for COP28.” And so, he starts talking about the weaknesses of international policy makers, and also goes into all that is happening at particularly COP28. He talks about multilateralism. Multilateral agreements between states are essential for solid and lasting advances in global cooperation; and global crises should be opportunities for beneficial changes, but often result in increased individualism and freedom for the powerful.

I have just read the document, and I should remember this, but I think he does make reference here to the crisis of the pandemic, *e.g.*, and how so much of that was used for individual gain, and where the powerful were able to be, to win for themselves security and health, while those most impoverished struggled, even more so. He calls for new pathways for multilateralism; and he says basically the way that we’re going to do this is through civil society. Organizations, politicians and the powers have failed us, and we need civil society to be engaged. So maybe, it is directed at us, and that they can compensate for the shortcomings of international committees and promote more effective dynamics.

It is interesting though that again he keeps putting a few notes of hope here and there to sustain us; and he says postmodern culture has generated a new sensitivity toward the vulnerable and less powerful connected to the primacy of the human person and defense of dignity, that there is this sense that given globalism, given the fact that we can see what is happening across the world, that we are a little more sensitive perhaps, at least in some quarters, to what is going on around us, even if we're not able to respond. We are a little more sensitive. Hence, this idea of democratization in that global context.

CHAPTER 3

THE WEAKNESSES OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Reconfiguring Multilateralism

New Pathways for Multilateralism

Towards a New Multilateralism

Democratization in the Global Context

This chapter was specifically for COP28, around climate change negotiations, but speaking about going into the UN framework convention on climate change, which came into effect in 1994, the Kyoto Protocol, many of you might remember, in 1997, and then, of course, the Paris agreement, which got nations to agree to keep global temperature increases under two degrees centigrade and pursue efforts to limit to one

and a half degree centigrade; but, of course, because we were not able to do that by the time you get to COP28. You're now being asked to keep it to one and a half, because the deficit of the effects is so devastating.

This despite this agreement, Pope Francis says despite these agreements there are still no provisions for sanctions in the case of unfulfilled commitments, nor effective instruments to ensure their fulfillment. So, effectively, what he is trying to say is: we can all agree to these things, but who's holding us to them? Where's the accountability for nations who are not meeting his titles; and, of course, as I said earlier, we know that under President Donald Trump's administration, this particular agreement was not, you know, he did not sign to it; and so, it is signed by President Biden now. But it was not signed before COP28; and so, that has set the course of the U.S. Of course, on the back foot here, when it comes to developments that needed to take place, perhaps also Europe, especially smaller countries in Europe are benefited by the EU, where there is something which forces them to keep their membership. They have to meet certain targets; and so, I certainly see that when I am traveling through Europe, and when I go to Portugal, most of the time that I see some of these changes taking place in some of these initiatives, I don't know how effective they are; I'm simply making anecdotal observances here. And the conferences that have happened. What you observed in terms of looking at recycling, looking at electric vehicles, here and there and everywhere. So, just seeing technological advances, which, of course, may be masking the problem as well.

So, since Paris, Pope Francis says not much has happened; and so, he was obviously looking to do something more serious, because of this lack of suitable mechanisms to oversight, periodic review and penalties in cases of non-compliance; and we know that at least out of COP28, some of that came. How well that will be enforced we'll wait to see. And he talks about financing for loss and damage in vulnerable countries. How do we do that? Right now, we know that Africa, or many parts of Africa, in many ways have become a landfill for the U.S. If you've seen some of those technology heaps in deepest Africa, where you know sewage is being sent over there, think about it; we're putting it onto ships to take it to another country to devastate another land, so that it's not our problem anymore.

It's pretty striking; and so, Pope Francis is obviously saying again, the poor come out last.

CHAPTER 4

CLIMATE CONFERENCES: *PROGRESSES AND FAILURES*

Climate Change Negotiations

Challenges and Limitations

CHAPTER 5

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COP28 IN DUBAI

Climate Change Negotiations

Challenges and Limitations

CHAPTER 6

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COP28 IN DUBAI

Climate Change Negotiations

Challenges and Limitations

Call to Action

CHAPTER 7

SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS

Faith and Environmental Stewardship

Communion and Commitment

Cultural and Personal Change

Hopefully, this is why we're here, to find a little hope, faith and environmental stewardship.

“Authentic faith,” Pope Francis says, “not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life, transforms our goals, and sheds light on our relationships to others, and with creation as a whole.” So, again, this insistence that we cannot separate this question of climate change from our spiritual life, that it can’t be apart, that it can’t be, “Oh well, we’ll get to it,” that it is essential, because it is part of what God has given us; it is part of God’s creation for us. And he cites Genesis, “God saw everything he had made, and it was very good.” And then, he jumps to the New Testament. Jesus was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world, because he was in constant with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder.

And if I remember correctly, in *Laudato Si* he took quite a bit of time talking about how in the gospels so much agricultural imagery, talk of plants, and how it was so important to Jesus to use the things of the earth. In his teaching, Jesus contemplated that beauty of nature, the universe unfolds in God. Pope Francis says, “Who fills it completely.” There is a mystical meaning to be found I am leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dew drop, in a poor person’s face. So, it’s not just in people’s faces, but also in the things we see around us.

And isn’t it interesting, as I was reading, that I was thinking to myself, when I’m on retreat and I slow things down, Ignatius would say, “Take the length of our Father to do everything.” That’s what he would say, “Before you go to pray at length to Our Father, contemplate the place you’re going to pray.” You are told when you arrive at a retreat house, a Joseph Retrea–Retreat House, especially, to slow down, to speak slower. To savor your food; and when we do that, we really have an incredible experience, don’t we? I mean, I certainly do. I become so much more aware of everything around me. But we can’t live at that pace, we have to live in the world as it is now; and so, it moves at a rapid pace, but we need to find those places for reflection and rejuvenation; and our retreats, our annual retreats, particularly, might be that place to do that, but also in your daily prayer, communion and commitment. Again, it just develops something for us to pray with. We are united with all creatures, and our life is incomprehensible without them, that we can’t actually imagine the things of the earth without imagining the things of the earth; we can’t imagine our lives without everything that is contained in our lives.

This is an old critique, an anthropocentrism, right? How we center everything on ourselves, that we forget that we are dependent on the other creatures; and if we think about what Donna Haraway said earlier, how important that is; and then this is something that this pope speaks about all the time: reconciliation; and how important are mercy and compassion, in other words of his. And so, he asks us to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home, and help to make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values. Isn't that interesting? So, thinking about – and I'm just using my Ignatian lens—doing an examination, some sort of evaluation of the way I relate to nature in gratitude, but also, at the world; and saying, “Okay, where have I failed the world? Where do I need forgiveness of the world?” And so, we're being invited there to take some time to really take this in, and I confess, I read this, and it was so heartwarming, like I can sort of feel in the room; but did I really take it into my retreat? Probably not. Or into my prayer? And so, this is an invitation to just go into that place of prayer and do this. How can I reconcile with nature and with myself in relation to the creation that God gives me?

And then, Pope Francis throws it back on the people of power: “Individual efforts are important, but major political decisions are necessary for effective solutions, that we can only go so far in terms of our personal conversation, but that systems need to follow.” With that, he really is showing how this is a document, not for us especially, but really much more for those very powerful leaders. Lasting changes require cultural changes and personal transformations; and so, he talks about this societal sweep. He's often spoken about how we're in—how does he put it—we're in a epoch of change, not a change of epoch. We often think that it's yet another time of evolution; no, this is the time to change; this is an epoch of change. He says, “I think it is an epoch of change.” It might be another word other than epoch, (applause) but he does say it starts at home, and it starts with our personal changes that contribute to greater concern and indignation, leading to large processes of transformation; that if we begin to make these changes at home, and if parents begin to make these changes with their children, it's that whole multiplying effect again. When their children grow up and become the policy leaders, and become the next presidents, hopefully, they will have that mentality for change.

And so, it does begin, as we so often hear, at home, and especially in the West, right? He says, “If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries, we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact.

As he’s talking about the U.S., he’s talking about Europe; he’s talking about every developed nation, and how important it is for us to advocate for change. We’re not a nation of advocacy or nations of advocacy anymore; but how important it is, maybe, to follow something of what young people are doing more and more, like Fridays for the Future, and climate matches, and all kinds of things that are going on around the world.

So, he does leave us with some hope, but that we have to create that hope. We have to obviously pray for our own change and pray for conversion; and that there is hope when we pray for conversion. But there is also action. And so, that brings us to that conclusion of that pastoral cycle: judge, and how important that is to do.

Thank you for your time; you’ve been very attentive. I hope that you’ve captured most of what I had to say. We’re going to have time for questions now for anybody who would like to ask some questions. (Applause)

Transcribed by *Tom Kyle*

So much of what I've said is that he diagnosed as the problem is what he was asking for at COP28, that there be progress on these matters, that we move beyond appearances and take substantial action to address climate changes. He says we must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned, but not having the courage needed to produce substantial change. Technical remedies alone are not enough. We need to address deeper problems of the global system and so, he talks about climate change, being a human, and a social problem that requires the involvement of all.

Let us finally admit, he says, that it is a human and social problem on any number of levels. For this reason, it calls for our involvement on the part of all; and so, COP28 must result in binding and efficient commitments to energy transition with monitoring enforcement.

Now, we've gotten through all the technical parts of the document; we can attend to our soul again; but before we move to our soul are there any questions that stay with you from what you've just heard that we might address now; and then, we'll go back to spiritual motivations.

Guest's question: I just wondered what COP28 means; and does that mean another conference is coming?

That's a good question. Thank you. The conference of Parties (COP), which is all the parties signed to that accord, 28, the 28th that's taken place, and that's the one that took place in Dubai at the end of last year; xo, there will be a COP29 coming up.

Are there any more questions for clarity?

Guest's question: I read some place that it seems that the fossil fuel industry is co-opting the COP conferences. Is the one in Dubai the head of the national oil company was the president and next year's is going to be in Iran, another oil producing country. So, any thoughts on that?

I think Pope Francis was aware of that because he starts that at the top of that section of the document. He talks about "You're the tenth largest oil producing nation, and I want you to pay attention." So, he definitely draws attention to that. To host these huge conferences, no doubt, they need corporate sponsors; and I'm sure these people

are only too willing as corporate social investment and responsibility programs to respond with sponsorships.