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## ***Laudato si' from Silicon Valley to Paris***

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson

Thank you, in the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, for your warm welcome. Santa Clara University has set itself the task of exploring the implications of Pope Francis's recent encyclical on integral ecology. It seems especially fitting to talk about the encyclical of the first Jesuit pope at a leading Jesuit university.

I will begin with a reflection on "common home". Next I will set the views of Pope Francis on climate change and the environment within our Catholic tradition and explore how the encyclical is being received and how it can 'make a difference' in current environmental discussions. I will commend six key realizations and commitments for you to consider. Then I will turn to practical action by Catholics and their institutions, including in this country. Simply put, how can America, your university and Silicon Valley respond to the Pope's call to action? How can *Laudato si'* guide and even influence the road to the important 2015 Climate Conference (COP21) in Paris this December?

### **PART 1: "Our Common Home" Globally and in the Silicon Valley**

You are probably aware of the broad vision of *Laudato si'*. Here are some of the main points:

- humanity is not separate from the environment in which we live; rather humanity and the natural environment are one;
- the accelerating change in climate is undeniable, catastrophic, and worsened by human activities, but it is also amenable to human intervention;
- the grave errors that underlie our disastrous indifference to the environment include a throwaway culture of consumerism, and the marginalization and trivialization of ethics;
- the two-fold crisis can be overcome, not by more of the same, but through changes arising from generous dialogue and fundamental ethical and indeed spiritual decision-making at every level.

Even this brief summary makes clear that *Laudato si'* is not a 'green', ecological or climate-change document, but a full social encyclical in the Church's tradition going back to Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of 1892. Social encyclicals apply the basic principles of the Church's social teaching to the changing challenges of humanity. *Laudato si'* is solidly

within this tradition. And its sub-title, “On Care for our Common Home”, conveys an important conviction. Homes are not isolated, each on its own planet. They are located in neighborhoods and communities, and finally in a single home called “Earth”. The encyclical is about the implications of living together in a *common home*.

The word “common” brings to mind the so-called tragedy of the commons.<sup>1</sup> This expression can apply to all situations where the self-interested actions of one or more agents deplete a common resource. For instance, in *Laudato si’* the Pope declares the climate and the atmosphere to be common goods “belonging to all and meant for all” (§23). The oceans and other natural resources should likewise be considered as a global commons and protected by an appropriate system of governance (§174).<sup>2</sup> “The principle of the universal destination of the goods of creation is also applied to the global carbon sinks of the atmosphere, oceans and forests. In order to protect the poorest and to avoid dangerous climate change, these sinks must be prevented from overuse.”<sup>3</sup> So who is going to decide, fairly and squarely, about preserving our common home? And are the decisions really going to be carried out?

Among its main points, *Laudato si’* critiques a naïve confidence that technological advances and undirected commercial markets will inevitably and automatically solve our environmental problems. Let me pause here to dwell on “technological advances.” There are few places in the world that take such words more seriously than right here! Silicon Valley is the center of the major technological revolution of our times,<sup>4</sup> the revolution that has taken the world beyond the industrial age and into the digital age. And speaking of ‘age’, next year will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the World Wide Web. Opinions on this ubiquitous and overpowering phenomenon range from utter condemnation<sup>5</sup> to glorious celebration.<sup>6</sup>

The digital revolution does more than provide highly effective new means, tools or techniques. It also constitutes a world, an environment that is no longer alongside the real world but is part of it. Probably its deepest impact and challenge is that the digital world engages the imagination, the most sensitive of the human faculties.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy\\_of\\_the\\_commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_of_the_commons)

<sup>2</sup> *Global commons* include the earth's shared natural resources, such as the high oceans, the atmosphere, outer space and the Antarctic in particular. Global commons could also be considered the common capital of the planet.

<sup>3</sup> Ottmar Edenhofer and Christian Flachsland, "Laudato Si': Concern for Our Global Commons", 23.09.2015, <http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/laudato-si%E2%80%99-concern-our-global-commons>

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age)

<sup>5</sup> See Nicolas Carr's famous 2008 article "Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet is doing to our brains", <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/>

<sup>6</sup> See Howard Reingold *Perché la rete ci rende intelligenti*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2013. Reingold, Howard (2012). *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*. The MIT Press. ISBN 0-262-01745-8.

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Cucci S.J., "Paradiso Virtuale of Infer.Net? Rischi e opportunità della rivoluzione digitale," *Civiltà Cattolica* 3967, 89.

The digital revolution also brought environmental and social challenges. For example, local communities have come into intense conflict with mining companies that are exploiting resources to make computer and mobile devices; and the overconsumption of electronic devices is also causing widespread environmental and public health harm.

Pope Francis is deeply concerned with technology in *Laudato si'*. Let us briefly explore the technology-focused sections of the encyclical. In his nuanced treatment, the Holy Father takes two complementary approaches.

First, the long paragraph 47 examines the impact on persons and personal relationships. Undoubtedly we benefit from increased capacity to communicate and from easy access to vast storehouses of information. However, the more that people live through their digital tools, the less they may learn “how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously.” How can new media bring attention to what is worthwhile rather than obscure it? Can it engender “true wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons...”? We must be wary of the “mere accumulation of data” and “contrived emotion” that can “shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences” (§47).

Second, Pope Francis devotes four paragraphs (102-5) to the promise and dangers of technological progress in all areas, not just personal computing and communications. He begins with homage to “two centuries of enormous waves of change” that have benefitted humanity, from steam engines to robotics, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. “Technology has remedied countless evils which used to harm and limit human beings” (§102). Properly directed techno-science “can produce important means of improving the quality of human life” in all practical areas and also our aesthetic dimension (§103).

But what about the wise use of technologies? What about the “tremendous power” they provide to “those with the knowledge and especially the economic resources to use them”? Thinking of constantly improved technologies to torture and kill on a massive scale, the Pope asks, “In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it” (§104). He could also ask about drones, which are proliferating. Who considers the grave moral questions about techno-warfare, human rights, and international humanitarian law?

The underlying error is the naïve confidence that “goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such.” We lag in “development in human responsibility, values and conscience,” so we advance in technical power without understanding its consequences and limitations. Ultimately this diminishes human autonomy: “Our freedom fades when it is handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest, and of violence” (§105). In the succinct words of Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga: “Man finds himself to be a technical giant and an

ethical child.”<sup>8</sup> We have succumbed to the technological paradigm – an attitude of efficiency devoid of morality, with profit as the unquestioned goal and the uncritical use of power.

As the Holy Father pointed out: “The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic.” In fact, “it has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same”. In *Laudato si'*, the Pope deplores that “technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic”, so “our capacity to make decisions, a more genuine freedom and the space for each one’s alternative creativity are diminished.” (§108)

Moreover, “all of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution” because “science and technology are not neutral; from the beginning to the end of a process, various intentions and possibilities are in play and can take on distinct shapes. Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur” (§114).

The Pope’s approach is a balanced one. He does not call for a nostalgic reversal of history. He does not bemoan technological advance. He does decry the enormous but largely hidden power which technology bestows on those who control it along with the economy and finance. Here in Silicon Valley, more specifically, I think he might say that, in the midst of so much creative *technological thinking*, there is far too little critical *thinking about technology*.

Your challenge is to think in this thoroughly balanced way. The world is expecting you, in this unique place of the Planet, to ask bold and avant-garde questions about the future: How will the “digital ecology” keep the web open in order to democratize knowledge for everyone? How will the digital divide and the data gap be closed, to give all people access to information for a better quality of life? How will the Internet get beyond rampant consumerism and become a space of discussion, production and solidarity? Moreover, how will Silicon Valley spearhead the right cultural, technological and economic environment for a carbon-free civilization?

In sum, to Santa Clara may I suggest to help the Silicon Valley community to focus the critical and prophetic light of *Laudato si'* on all new micro-technology as it is created and applied.

## **PART 2: The Influence of Pope Francis and the Church**

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2014/high-tech-world-is-plagued-by-ethical-economic-misery-says-cardinal.cfm>

Pope Francis's concern for climate change as an integrally human, ethical and spiritual issue, and his call for effective policies to reverse environmental degradation, are both firmly rooted in traditional Catholic teaching.

The Christian commitment to care for our common home goes back to Genesis itself. There, we learn that all Creation is good (Genesis 1). Moreover, we are told that humanity is formed out of the "dust of the earth" and mandated by the loving Creator "to till and to keep" the earth, the garden given as a gift to the human family" (Genesis 2).

Catholic Social Teaching since the Second Vatican Council has increasingly recognized that the care of creation is intimately connected to other Christian commitments. In particular, environmental harm compromises the commitments to promote the common good and protect the human life and dignity of individuals—especially of the poor and vulnerable. Human-forced climate change is unequivocally a moral issue. Therefore the Church has called for public policies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and assist those most affected by the adverse effects of climate change. Blessed Paul VI first articulated such teaching in 1971; Saint John Paul II elaborated it greatly in the 1990s, and it was further developed by Pope Benedict XVI. Throughout these years, individual bishops and episcopal conferences including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, have spoken out powerfully.<sup>9</sup>

Internationally, Bishops and Catholic development organizations continue to press nations for a just, science-based international climate agreement in Paris. Just over a week ago (26.10), nine leaders of the Church's regions worldwide – bishops and cardinals and one patriarch – signed an Appeal to the COP21 Negotiating Parties, calling on everyone at COP21 to heed the call of *Laudato si'*. The declaration makes ten specific points. For example, it asserts "that climate and atmosphere are global common goods that are belonging to all and meant for all", and then calls for "a fair, transformational and legally binding global agreement based on our vision of the world that recognises the need to live in harmony with nature, and to guarantee the fulfilment of human rights for all, including those of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and workers."<sup>10</sup> Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, President of the USCCB, was one of the co-signatories of the Appeal.

I am happy to note that these perspectives are shared more widely in Christianity and by other faiths. For example, here in the United States on 20 October, the National Association of Evangelicals called for action on the care of creation. The NAE's concern for ecology dates back to the 1970.<sup>11</sup> Muslims<sup>12</sup> and Buddhists have issued climate statements in recent

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<sup>9</sup> Catholic Climate Covenant, "Climate Change Teaching & Resources," Catholic Climate Covenant, [http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/catholic\\_teaching](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/catholic_teaching) (accessed September 21, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2015/10/26/0824/01831.html#in> (items 2 and 3).

<sup>11</sup> <http://nae.net/tag/creation-care/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/islamic-declaration-climate-change>

months. On the multi-faith front, the Religions For Peace organization has mounted a campaign called Faiths for Earth.<sup>13</sup>

What has Pope Francis contributed? Beginning with his choice of a name, he has made concern for the poor and the planet a signature of his papacy. Nature and the human family are both works of God, and they are fragile. Moreover, Pope Francis has deliberately inserted his teaching and indeed leadership into the international political process that is trying to respond to climate change.

People trust Pope Francis as a deeply caring person; during his visit to the United States, they were calling him “the people’s Pope”. For the sake of all, he calls for care, so that the marginalized can participate more fully in society, so that youth may find purpose in their lives and the elderly can end their days in dignity, so that the desperate victims of violence may reach a better life and not drown in their frantic flight.

The Pope speaks to the longing of people to be cared for and in turn to exercise caring. The Encyclical repeats *care* dozens of times, while the more usual word “stewardship” is mentioned just twice in the English version. Stewards take responsibility and fulfil their obligations to manage and to render an account. But one can be a competent or professional steward without feeling connected, without caring. Pope Francis brings the basic message of Jesus— “love one another, as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34, 15:12) —into the very heart of the world’s greatest challenges: to care for the poor and to care for the planet.

### **PART 3: Specific Impact on the Negotiation of International Environment Agreements**

Parts of *Laudato si’* reiterate information and positions that are already widely known. But overall, the encyclical provides a unique blend of perspectives. Consider these six perspectives.

First, *it affects everyone*. Climate, pollution and weather events do not respect borders, nor wealth and privilege. No walls, no gated community, can keep the environment at bay. Some are more affected than others, because of geographical location or lack of power to protect themselves or to “escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us” (§163). What is at stake is justice between people and generations, the dignity of those who inhabit the planet now and those who will inhabit it in the future – at stake is the very possibility of human life on earth. The Pope gives voice to those who are crying out -- the earth which is our mother and sister, and the millions of poor people who live on earth -- but who struggle to be heard. The world's poor are especially affected by climate change even though they play almost no role in it – the bottom 3 billion account for a mere 6 percent of cumulative carbon emissions. So while environmental deterioration affects everyone, the obligation of justice is

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<sup>13</sup> <http://faithsforearth.org/>

weighted towards helping the poor to develop and avoid the fallout from climate change. This is a matter of "ecological debt" (§51-2).

Second, *everyone must act*. We think automatically about the rulers, and several times the encyclical addresses those who have the power to decide, urging them to take responsibility for the common good, even if they have to go against “the mindset of short-term gain which dominates present-day economics and politics” (§181). But Pope Francis makes it evident that this is not a topic for experts and technicians and officials alone. Everyone must act, even the child who turns off lights so as to reduce electricity consumption. And more broadly, there needs to be a popular movement of citizens to act communally and to demand courageous action by leaders and negotiators in favor of the poor and of the planet. On 29 November, this is what hundreds of thousands of men, women and children will do in the Global Climate March on the streets of Paris. And not just in Paris: also in London, Berlin, Madrid, Amsterdam, Bogotá, Johannesburg, Dhaka, Kampala, Omaha, Rome, São Paulo, Sydney, Seoul, Ottawa, Tokyo and some 3000 other cities.

Third, *be truthful*. We must have the courage to identify the problems before we devise solutions. Yes, we all need to dig in, but first let’s call a spade a spade. There are so many who still deny the evident facts of what we are doing to our planet and to each other, “masking the problems or concealing their symptoms” (§26). We gain nothing when we deny the impact of fossil fuels both for good and for ill. Indeed, they powered the technology of the industrial revolution, which paved the way for unprecedented living standards. But time marches on, and now they threaten to undermine all we have achieved. Further, we must stop pretending that “infinite or unlimited growth” is possible, as if there is an infinite supply of the earth’s resources (§106).

Fourth, *embrace integrated ecology*; that is, avoid silo thinking in favor of interconnection and holism. This expression recalls the ancient awareness that all living beings, human groups and systems as well as nonhuman ones -- that is, all of creation -- are fundamentally interconnected. Only with attentive care for these bonds will we come “to find adequate ways of solving the more complex problems of today’s world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor; these problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests” (§110). Reversing the degradation of both the natural planet and the human world requires the combined contribution of all; no branch of science, no form of wisdom including culture, religion and spirituality (cf §63), should be neglected.

Fifth, *practice dialogue*. Pope Francis insists on dialogue “as the only way to confront the problems of our world and to seek solutions that are truly effective”.<sup>14</sup> Authentic dialogue is honest and transparent. It insists on open negotiation based on the principles which the social teachings of the Church vigorously promote: solidarity, subsidiarity, working for the common good, universal destination of goods, and preferential option for the poor and for the earth.

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis, Address on Environmental Justice and Climate Change, 11.09.15.

Real dialogue would not allow particular interests of individual countries or specific groups to hijack the negotiations.

And sixth, the Pope tells us, *pray*. Prayer is not the general fashion today. It takes humility and daring, because it challenges the hubris of our supposedly advanced, highly secular civilization. Pray for the earth and humanity, pray for bold decisions now for the sake of future peoples and of the planet's future.

#### **PART 4: *Laudato Si'* and the American Road to Paris**

Consistent with the public nature of faith and the responsibility for Catholics to exercise what the U.S. bishops call “faithful citizenship”,<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis has sought through *Laudato si'* to shape the discourse and negotiations of COP21. The Holy Father timed the release of *Laudato si'* so as to contribute to Paris Summit, and throughout the encyclical he emphasizes the need for an international climate change agreement. Addressing the U.S. Congress (23.09), the Pope called “for a courageous and responsible effort to ‘redirect our steps’ (§61), and to avert the most serious effects of the environmental deterioration caused by human activity.” And to the United Nations General Assembly (25.09), he said: “We cannot permit ourselves to postpone ‘certain agendas’ for the future.”

Just how urgent is the situation? The global atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide today is nearly fifty parts per million higher—roughly 15% higher—than when Saint John Paul II first addressed climate change in 1990.<sup>16</sup> At over 400 parts per million, they are at the highest level in 3 million years.<sup>17</sup> And while some nations, communities and individuals are already committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, arresting global warming is a *global* challenge. So at COP21, nations will hopefully agree on binding enforceable plans to keep the global temperature from rising more than 1.5 or 2.0 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Even then, the South Pacific islands of Tuvalu might disappear, because no point of their land is higher than 4.5m above sea level. This is merely one dramatic example.

What about the role of the United States? Pope Francis encouraged American leadership on this issue—at the political level, in terms of supporting an agreement to stop climate change; and at a personal level, to develop those deep-rooted ecological virtues necessary for healing, protecting, and preserving our planet.

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<sup>15</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, "Trends in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide," National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/> (accessed September 21, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/06/global-carbon-dioxide-levels-break-400ppm-milestone>

In encouraging this *ecological conversion*<sup>18</sup>, the Pope is calling on America to honor its traditions and founding principles. There is a great stream of environmental reverence in American sensibility and thought, going back to the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, President Theodore Roosevelt championed the idea of “conservation”.

The U.S. is also founded on a strong tradition of natural rights, emphasizing the dignity of every human being. Deeply respectful of religious liberty, it does not seek to banish religion from the public square. Many of the great social justice movements in this country have religious roots: the abolition of slavery; Martin Luther King’s campaign against institutionalized racism; Dorothy Day’s “passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed”; or how Msgr. John A. Ryan used Catholic social teaching to influence President Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Today, American support for the United Nations and American international leadership are more needed than ever, specifically to help solve the crisis of climate change. This may well be the most important challenge of the 21st century. It calls for global dialogue and leadership. It is a moral issue of the highest order. No country can tackle this problem alone, nor can the poorer ones without much help. The threat to our common home requires common solutions. It requires strong international agreements to phase out harmful carbon emissions and move instead to renewable energy. This is a central message of *Laudato si’* in response, finally, to the core question, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (§160) This is a matter of both inter-generational and intra-generational solidarity (§162).

Pope Francis is critical of the “bondage of individualism” and a culture of instant gratification that gives the immediate individual wants higher priority than the longer-term needs of many. In some circles in the U.S., we can see traces of this excessive individualism, this belief in the liberating power of the market, this exaltation of technology and progress. We see evidence of short-term-ism—the politician subject to the electoral cycle, the business executive or investor putting short-term financial return over long-term sustainability. And internationally, negotiations leading up to Paris have at times been hampered by the “positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good”<sup>19</sup> that Pope Francis sees as contributing to the failure of previous international summits.

Yet I am confident that America can tap into the very best of its moral foundations and traditions, and play a strong leadership role in overcoming this crisis. I know there is a lot of good work going on already. The Environmental Protection Agency has announced the Clean

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<sup>18</sup> The expression of St John Paul II, treated in *LS* §§ 216-221.

<sup>19</sup> *LS* § 169. Pope John Paul II called them “forms of exaggerated nationalism and economic interests” in “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation” (Message for World Day of Peace, 1990), 9. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19891208\\_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html)

Power Plan that will reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants—and Pope Francis explicitly praised President Obama for his efforts to reduce air pollution.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the U.S. has pledged \$3 billion to the international Green Climate Fund that will enable lesser-developed nations to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Here in California, the American pioneer of innovative climate solutions, leaders are trying to mitigate the drought, reduce carbon emissions and build a more sustainable future. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops advocates for a national carbon pollution standard and, in the international appeal, called on the world community “to strongly limit a global temperature increase and to set a goal for complete decarbonisation by mid-century” (item 4).

I know that the Catholic Climate Covenant is doing great work in supporting the advocacy of the U.S. bishops on climate change both domestically and internationally. Specific efforts include writing letters, signing petitions and visiting lawmakers’ offices around a national carbon pollution standard, the Green Climate Fund, and COP21 in Paris.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Catholics are urged to form Creation Care Teams in their parish and work with their pastor to integrate *Laudato si’* deeper into parish life. In addition, please urge your lawmakers to act on a national carbon pollution standard, since the strength of an agreement at the Paris Climate Conference will partly depend on the commitments of the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This could be a focus for the “I Am Climate Change” campaign of Catholic Relief Services in the 2015-16 academic year. Its theme is *I am climate change. I am the cause. I am the solution.* The purpose of the campaign is to engage students in reflecting upon *Laudato Si’*, learning about how climate change is affecting poor and marginalized communities throughout the world, praying for people affected by climate change, and taking action in support of U.S. public policy changes as they relate to climate change and the developing world.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, I believe that America can marshal its best resources to solve the climate challenge and protect our common home—its creativity, its ingenuity, its willingness to tackle practical problems, its spirit of hard work. But also its core values like compassion, human rights, sense of solidarity, and commitment to the global common good. America has risen to such occasions before; it can do so again.

## CONCLUSION

I have challenged you with a great deal of material. I hope to have presented you with useful ideas based on the comprehensive and morally-grounded vision of Catholic Social Teaching; and on the ongoing experience and innovation of courageous leaders and activists who focus

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<sup>20</sup> “You are proposing an initiative for reducing air pollution. Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation.... To use a telling phrase of the Reverend Martin Luther King, we can say that we have defaulted on a promissory note and now is the time to honour it” (23.09.15)

<sup>21</sup> Catholic Climate Covenant, "Advocate," Catholic Climate Covenant, <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/act/advocate> (accessed June 30, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> See [iamclimatechange.org](http://iamclimatechange.org)

on the *common* destiny of all nations and peoples, and on a shared *engagement* instead of insistence on being an exception to worldwide conditions.

*Laudato si'* calls for action at every level. Remembering that “realities are more important than ideas,”<sup>23</sup> may all at COP21 be inspired to commit not just to words of agreement but also to concrete measures. For your part, I have suggested six perspectives from *Laudato si'* for addressing the environmental crisis in your research, teaching and outreach: ***it affects everyone; everyone must act; be truthful; embrace integral ecology; embrace dialogue; and pray.***

From Silicon Valley and Santa Clara through the U.S.A. and around the world, let us learn to exercise global ecological citizenship. Having received nature from God the Creator as a gift, let us bequeath it to those who come after us, not as a wilderness, but as a garden. Let us sustain humanity and care for our common home, the beautiful Planet Earth.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson  
President

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<sup>23</sup> LS §110, cf. *Evangeli Gaudium* §§ 231-33.