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Editorial |

The Call of *Laudato Si'* |

In a highly anticipated papal encyclical released Thursday, June 18, 2015 at 3:30 PM (IST), Pope Francis called on Catholics worldwide to make safeguarding the environment and battling climate change an urgent and top priority of the 21st century. The title, *Laudato Si'* is taken from St. Francis Assisi's famous The Canticle of the Sun, "*Laudato Si'*, mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord"

Pope Francis released an encyclical focused on ecology. The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the discussion of environmental questions, by lifting up the moral dimensions of these issues and the needs of the most vulnerable among us. This unique contribution is rooted in Catholic teaching calling us to care for creation and for "the least of these."

In the lengthy encyclical, addressed to "every person" who lives on Earth, the pope lays out a moral case for supporting sustainable economic and population growth as part of the church's mission and humanity's responsibility to protect God's creation for future generations. While saying that there were natural causes to climate change over the earth's history, the letter also says in strong words that human activity and production of greenhouse gases are to blame.

The Holy Father accepts the data from the sciences with regards to the ecological problems and tries to bring in religion to

handle the challenging situation. He is remarkably straightforward:

A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it....The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system. Another determining factor has been an increase in changed uses of the soil, principally deforestation for agricultural purposes (#23).

It is hoped that these collection of articles will help us to understand the original document better. Three of these articles – those of George Pattery, Aloysius Britto and Johncy SMI – came from a seminar organised by Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeth on August, 10, 2015. The readers, I am sure, will respond personally to the challenges offered by the Holy Father. Because of it, this issue of AJRS primarily devoted to this valuable encyclical.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ
Editor