



STATIONS OF THE CROSS IN THE LIGHT OF LAUDATO SÍ

The Way of the Cross on Care of Our Common Home

Borghese Park, Roma
Palm Sunday, March 20, 2016

Sponsored by the JPIC Commission
USG-UISG

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Introduction

Today we gather to participate in the Stations of the Cross, conscious of the fact that although we have much to celebrate in our lives of faith, we also have much to grieve. The commemoration of Christ's Passion is our opportunity each year to take stock of the many ways we have broken covenant with God and have acted selfishly, seeking to secure our own power and material advantage at the expense of the well-being, not just of our fellow humans, but of the whole of creation. It is our opportunity to own that we have neglected our responsibility as stewards, lovers, and nurturers of God's creation. Pope Francis reminds us that "when human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves" (Cf. LS 115). While commemorating Christ's journey to crucifixion, through Pope Francis' reflections taken from *Laudato Si*, each station will acknowledge a significant breaking of our covenant with the entire family of God's creation. Enable the trees, the plants, the rocks, the soil, the water, the birds, and the wind to teach us about these broken relationships. Each station offers prayer for the healing of the dreadful rifts in our covenant with God and all that God has made. May we find the courage and the power to become agents of healing and care of our common home.

(Let us walk in contemplative silence or sing as we move to the next Station: let us listen to the wind, let us listen to the wind, let us listen to birds, let us listen to God's Creation.)

FIRST STATION: Jesus is condemned to death

(The Bucharest Obelisk—symbolizing the abuse of power. As seen repeatedly in the city of Rome, the Roman empire took many obelisks from Egypt, simply because they could and had no one to stop them from pillaging.)

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

"Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"You have said so," Jesus replied.—Mark 15:1-2 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on OPPRESSION and ABUSE of POWER:

From *Laudato Si*—We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man "dominion" over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures (LS 67). A politics concerned with immediate results, supported by consumerist sectors of the population, is driven to produce short-term growth. In response to electoral interests, governments are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment. The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments. Thus we forget that time is greater than space, that we are always more effective when we generate processes rather than holding on to positions of power (LS 178).

(Let us contemplate in silence for 1 minute)

Leader: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." Pour out upon us the power of your love,

R. That we may protect life and beauty. Praise be to you!

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SECOND STATION: Jesus takes up the Cross

(Piazza di Martiri Bridge and below the bridge—symbol of humans covering the earth with concrete and asphalt. Human expansion such as this has contributed to the extinction of creatures.)

Pilate brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull.—John 19:13, 14b, 15-17 (Pause)

WE PRAY WITH LAUDATO SÍ on the EXTINCTION of CREATURES:

God of all Creation, change our hearts to make every effort to protect our world and its rich diversity. Give us the eyes to see glimpses of you in the great variety of creatures. We know this entails profound changes in our lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies. Change our hearts and give us the motivation and courage to curb bad conduct and embrace good habits of "ecological citizenship". Assist us in our personal transformation to becoming more and more in your image and likeness. Give us the good power to cultivate sound virtues to make a selfless ecological commitment through little daily actions that can bring about real changes in lifestyle. May all we do reflect a generous and worthy creativity that brings out the best in us as an act of love for you and your Creation. (Cf. LS 5, 21)

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THIRD STATION: Jesus falls the first time

(Fountain—symbol of extinction of biodiversity. With care, water can contain much biodiversity.)

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.—Is 53:4-5 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on the EXTINCTION of BIODIVERSITY:

From *Laudato Sí*—It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right (LS 33). These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness (LS 53).

(Let us contemplate in silence for 1 minute)

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FOURTH STATION: Jesus meets his Mother

(Victor Hugo statue—symbol of the cry of the poor. Hugo wrote Les Misérables, which articulates a deep understanding of the life of the poor.)

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”—Luke 2:34-35

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?

Look around and see.

Is any suffering like my suffering?—Lamentations 1:12 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH LAUDATO SI on the CRY of the EARTH, the CRY of the POOR:

God of all Creation, bring us closer to our Mother Mary. She, who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of your Son Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), and now understands the meaning of all things. So, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom. Give us ears to hear the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor. (Cf. LS 49, 241)

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FIFTH STATION: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross

(Lake—symbol of the web of creation. This clearly speaks for itself.)

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.—Mark 15:21 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on OUR DISCONNECTION from the WEB of CREATION:

From *Laudato Sí*—The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home (LS 13). We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference (LS 52).

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SIXTH STATION: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

(Tall grasses—symbol of Veronica’s veil. The grasses cover the earth.)

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”—Matt 25:40 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH *LAUDATO SÍ* on the IMPORTANCE of AWARENESS and PERSONAL SUFFERING:

God of all Creation, our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it. For all our limitations, through your boundless love for us, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love. (Cf. LS 19, 58)

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SEVENTH STATION: Jesus falls the second time

(Clock tower—symbol for climate change We have no more time to address climate change. We must act now.)

I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away.—Ps 38:6-8, 11 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on CLIMATE CHANGE:

From *Laudato Sí*—The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. 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 (LS 23). Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule (LS 56). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary (LS 65).

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EIGHTH STATION: Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

(Statues of soldier and war horse—symbols of war. Women suffer the most in any war—their children suffer and die. Rape is used as a weapon of war. After the war, the women must continue whether their men return or not.)

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"—Luke 23:27-31 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on CONFLICT and WAR:

From *Laudato Sí*—The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), to “till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17-19). It is significant that the harmony which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture (Ls 66). Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity. Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism (LS 92).

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THE NINTH STATION: Jesus falls the third time

(“GMO” [genetically modified organism] Fountain—symbol of pollution and water and human tampering. Is the base of the fountain a horse or a bird or a fish?)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.—Heb: 4:15-16 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on POLLUTION and WATER:

From *Laudato Sí*—The Psalms frequently exhort us to praise God the Creator, “who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever” (Ps 136:6). They also invite other creatures to join us in this praise: “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created” (Ps 148:3-5). We do not only exist by God’s mighty power; we also live with him and beside him. This is why we adore him (LS 72). If we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God’s expectations (LS 61). The Patriarch Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs (LS 9).

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TENTH STATION: Jesus is stripped of his garments

(The building, wall, statues and monuments—symbols of human use of natural extracted resources.)

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let us not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let us decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.”

So this is what the soldiers did.—John 19:23-24 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH *LAUDATO SÍ* on the DEPLETION of NATURAL RESOURCES:

God of all Creation, give us global vision to see the impact of our consumerism and economic structures. Then give us also a local vision to not overlook the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community. Help us respect local culture, local reality and give us the ears to hear the wisdom of local, especially our indigenous, peoples. We stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We are stripping the earth of natural resources and ignoring the immediate reality of poverty with no thought of future generations or recognition of your boundless generosity. God, help us! (Cf. LS 27, 105, 144)

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ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

(Headless statue—symbol of the dehumanization of another human being.)

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”—Lk 23:33-35 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH *LAUDATO SÍ* on ABUSE and HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

God of all Creation, this sister Earth now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which you have endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). Our disrespect of your creatures extends to a disrespect of each other. This is clearly seen in the trafficking of women, men, and children throughout the world.

These situations have caused sister Earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet we are called to be your instruments, so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness. (Cf. LS 2, 53)

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TWELFTH STATION: Jesus dies on the Cross

(Tree—symbol of the tree of life on which our Savior died.)

Knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.—John 19:28-30 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH LAUDATO SI on the DEATH of the EARTH:

You who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible. All it takes is one good person to restore hope! Thank you, God of all Creation, for incarnating in the person of Jesus and being the defining good person who restores hope! (Cf. LS 71, 74)

(Let us contemplate in silence for 2 minutes)

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THIRTEENTH STATION: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

(Umberto monument—pay attention to the images at the base and the grieving woman.)

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away.—John 19:38 (Pause)

WE REFLECT on CONFLICT and ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRANTS and REFUGEES:

From *Laudato Sí* —Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded (LS 25).

(Let us contemplate in silence for 1 minute)

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FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is laid in the tomb

(Fast food stand—symbol of a root cause of hunger and misappropriation of food resources.)

Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.—Mark 15: 46 (Pause)

LET US PRAY WITH LAUDATO SI on FOOD and HUNGER:

God of all Creation, we forget that the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of you, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth. We want to bury the thought that we believe the ultimate purpose of other creatures is to be found in us. Help us, in your mercy, to fully understand, rather, that all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is you, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Help us to recognize that whenever food is thrown out it as if it were stolen from the table of the poor. Enlighten us in recognizing the solutions to food scarcity and insecurity. Endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, call us out of the tomb of our own making to lead all creatures back to you, their Creator. (Cf. LS 50, 83)

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Concluding Prayer

God of all Creation, at the end, we will find ourselves face to face with your infinite beauty and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which you have entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking you. May we sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope. Praise be to you! (Cf. LS 243, 244)

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