

The Heart of the Matter: A response to *Laudato Si, Lines of Approach and Action*  
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For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction (Newton's Third Law); actions have consequences. As we have witnessed with the pandemic and the horrendous war in the Ukraine, chain reactions occur and impact supply, demand, and lives; connectivity is everywhere. As we continue our Lenten Reflection on Pope Francis' encyclical letter, this point of *'interdependence'* is highlighted as the Pontiff contemplates *'Lines of Approach and Action.'* No decision and action that impacts the environment fails to impact others and the world itself, for good or for ill. In this section of his letter the Holy Father stresses this point and calls for dialogue and action.

The world is interdependent on a global scale and at a community level. The Pope, therefore calls for dialogue on international and local fronts which requires joined up thinking, communication and then action; *one world with a common plan* (LS 164). He highlights the truth that the same mindset that impacts poverty impacts the environment, and so he calls for an overall approach to deal with both matters. Politics needs to result in effective new policies. As such, the Pope calls for effective use of the law and regulations to govern behaviour, promoting best practice and limiting bad (LS 177). In essence he then calls for partnership approaches at the differing levels of society within our interdependent state, with transparency in decision making. Parties need to work towards consensus; this, however, will not always be possible on some environmental issues. The Pope sees the Church as having a role in promoting honest and open debate on matters for the common good (LS 188).

In the final stages of this chapter Pope Francis calls for dialogue on issues pertaining to politics and the economy linking the same to the matter of human fulfilment; the former are not the sum total of the latter. Valuing life, its purpose and quality are essential to the success of this discourse; the environment is an integral part of these discussions and plans. As such, science and technology have a massive role to play but cannot answer all the questions of life; here, in another interdependent partnership, the Church has an essential role to play.

## **Our Response**

The Church is the Body of Christ made up of many parts, put together by God (1 Corinthians 12: 12-14, 18); there is true interdependence. God has called the Church to be the agents of His Mission of reconciliation, to be His hands, feet and voice (Colossians 1: 18-23). One aspect of this mission, as detailed within the Anglican Five Marks of Mission,<sup>1</sup> is the goal *'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.'* This commitment is echoed in our Baptismal Vows.<sup>2</sup> The Church, regardless of denomination (and the Anglican Church herself), is a worldwide Body positioned at local, national and international

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.anglican.ca/ask/faq/marks-of-mission/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.anglican.ca/news/covenant-and-care-a-baptismal-promise-to-safeguard-creation/3006799/>

levels. As such, the Church is equipped, well placed, gifted and called by God to take part in this dialogue and to promote and support action in line with God's will.

One of the most vital areas for the Church to focus upon is that of '*human fulfilment.*' Pope Francis calls for the law and regulation to guide activity. In God's Word, we learn that His Law has a similar aim, but we are reminded that we need God's grace for forgiveness and to empower us to obey and live for Him (Romans 3: 20 Ephesians 2: 8-10). This truth takes us to the heart of the matter, the human heart. God's grace in Jesus Christ allows us to enter into our intended relationship with God by faith. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within us, changing our hearts. As He does this the Holy Spirit re-creates our being into the image of Christ (the process of sanctification). Our being drives our doing, so our relationship with God positively changes our actions, what we do. In short, if we share God's grace and truth within His interdependent Church and creation, people's 'beings' are changed, 'doing' changes and blessings follow.

As we determine to observe and obey both our Baptismal vow and care of this world (Genesis 2:15), we will see and enjoy His blessings in our environment; our communion with God, our neighbour and ourselves will be steeped in His love.

*Eternal God, whose Son went among the crowds and brought healing with His touch: help us to show His love, in your Church as we gather together, and by our lives as they are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ our Lord. In His glorious name, Amen.*