

# POPE'S LETTER HAS RAISED BAR FOR DEFINING A NATION'S GREATNESS

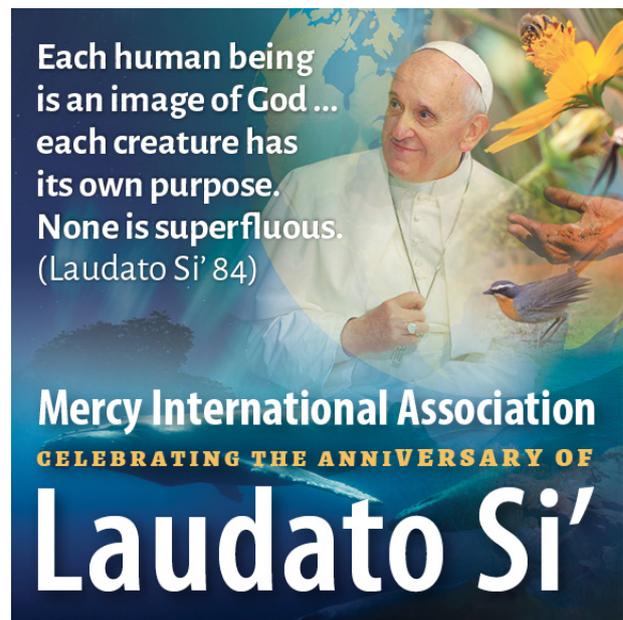
**When Donald Trump made his first visit to the Vatican last month, among the gifts he received from Pope Francis was an autographed copy of the pope's letter *Laudato Si'* on caring for the environment. Whether the president managed to read the letter before deciding to pull the United States from its commitment to honour the Paris Agreement on climate change is unclear.**

Time will tell whether Mr Trump can make America great again by turning his back on the rest of the world. But in writing as he has on care for our common home, Pope Francis has made it clear that no nation on earth can achieve greatness on its own terms. Solidarity is the clue to his view. All life is interconnected, and we can fulfil our own destiny only by respecting and upholding the rights of all other beings to their place in our world. There is a moral dimension to which all political and economic decisions must be aligned if they are to stand and survive the test of time.

A feature of the second anniversary of *Laudato Si'* has been the groundswell of grassroots support for the pope's call to 'every person living on the planet' to join in the dialogue and to engage in what he has described as 'an ecological conversion', a change of mind and heart about how we relate to our world and its resources. Many throughout the Catholic world are responding to the invitation to take the *Laudato Si'* pledge, a campaign by the Global Catholic Climate Movement to raise awareness of the encyclical's message and to encourage the Catholic community to take action on critical issues. The three components of the pledge are to pray for and with creation, to live more simply, and to advocate to protect our common home. (Check out <http://livelaudatosi.org> if you would like to take the pledge or find out more about it.)

For its part, Mercy International anticipated the anniversary of the pope's letter with a global novena of prayer, and reflects its ongoing response to *Laudato Si'* by grouping responses to the year-long Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP) under the twin headings of displacement of persons and degradation of Earth. The two themes, central to the pope's letter, are often interconnected, since damage to the environment is likely to be worst where the human population becomes displaced by the grip of poverty and hunger.

MIRP's guiding team and coordinators say that from the process has emerged a vision for Mercy's



Graphic: Mercy International Association

global presence. They promise that this presence will be "a countercultural sign" for our time, championing inclusion in a world of displacement, a sense of the sacredness of all creation for an Earth that is being degraded, and a new way of being Mercy in a broken world. May this be the dream for the future that inspires us all!

*Taihoa, spare a moment.....*

You are invited to end this reflection by pondering, either alone or with someone who shares your involvement in Mercy, on one or both of these questions:

- *Name one or two ways in which the Mercy ministry to which you are committed seems 'countercultural' to you. In particular, how does it champion inclusion in a world where so many are at present displaced?*
- *How does your Mercy ministry foster a sense of the sacredness of all creation, in an Earth that is so often being degraded?*

# A DECLARATION FOR EVERY KIWI TO CONSIDER

The United Nations' 13th Sustainable Development Goal – climate action – is among the eight named by Mercy International Association as 'most relevant to the mission of the Sisters of Mercy.'

Among the latest in a series of leaflets to focus on the SDGs, Mercy Global Action has developed a useful resource on Climate Action

([www.mercyworld.org/uploads/ckbl/files/2017/SDG%20](http://www.mercyworld.org/uploads/ckbl/files/2017/SDG%20)

[13%20May%202017.pdf](http://www.mercyworld.org/uploads/ckbl/files/2017/SDG%2013%20May%202017.pdf)). Its starting point is a quote from Pope Francis, noting that 'climate change is contributing to the heart-rending refugee crisis. The world's poor, though least responsible for global warming... are suffering most from its impact.' (*Laudato Si'*)

The leaflet goes on to highlight some of the facts related to global warming, including an increase in earthquakes, cyclones and flooding, the deaths of thousands and the displacement of millions of people, and the prospect of extinction faced by animals and plants, unless greenhouse gas emissions are soon and severely reduced.

The leaflet includes a series of proposals for collective action. These include raising awareness about the negative effects of climate change at local and international levels, lobbying for a transfer to renewable energy and for divesting from fossil fuels, campaigning for climate change measures, and forming groups to study *Laudato Si'* and the recommendations the pope makes in his letter.

Suggestions for personal action include avoiding waste of natural resources such as water, and support for fair trade products when shopping.

Among the goals adopted by Mercy Global Action, which represents the Sisters of Mercy at the United Nations in New York, are plans to curb climate change, to advocate to address the refugee

problems caused, in part, by climate change, and to lobby to limit gas emissions by keeping 80 percent of fossil fuel resources underground. MGA will campaign against ecological violations, including the contamination of water, associated with different forms of mining.

Closer to home, a group of New Zealand scientists, professionals and celebrities joined last month to launch a call for action on climate change. Our Climate Declaration calls on the Government to phase out the extraction and burning of fossil fuels by 2050, with no new coal mines or coal-burning plants and an end to deep-sea oil exploration and fracking for oil and gas.

Our Climate Declaration also invites citizens to play their part in taking climate action. Visit [www.ourclimatedeclaration.org.nz](http://www.ourclimatedeclaration.org.nz) to add yourself and your organisation to this venture.

– **Dennis Horton**



## *He Inoi: Prayer*

### *Embracing Earth with care*

*E Te Atua hau taiao,  
God, breath of the cosmos:  
by your word you call our world into being,  
in your endless love, it continues to unfold.  
Make us aware of our impact on all life,  
that our touch may heal and not destroy.*

*Let us join with other citizens of goodwill  
to declare our resolve to act for our climate,  
to protect whatever is at risk of harm  
and to avoid whatever has the potential  
to leave our world worse than we found it.*

*May we accept our share in caring for Earth,  
sustaining today a hope for tomorrow  
and healing our wounded world  
in mercy's name. Amen.*