

DECREE 8 - FIFTH PLENARY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND CONVERSION FOR THE SAKE OF OUR COMMON HOME

1. As drought, bushfires, floods, and extreme weather become more common in Australia, we realise the urgency of responding to our baptismal calling of taking up God's mission of love for the whole of creation.
2. Throughout the Scriptures we learn of God's love for creation, from the affirmation of the goodness of creation in Genesis (Genesis 1:2–4) to the Book of Revelation's vision of a creation made new (Revelation 21:5). All life and all that sustains it comes from God the Creator as gift, and so we are committed to care for our Common Home, and to cherish and promote the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. Local and universal Catholic Social Teaching, too, has helped us to reflect on how we might live in right relationship with the Creator, one another, and all of creation.
3. Pope Francis' landmark Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (2015) powerfully pointed out that we do not stand outside creation but are "joined in a splendid universal communion" with other creatures and are called to care for the common home which we share with them (n. 220). In their Social Justice Statement 2021–22, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, the Australian Bishops also affirm that we need "an integral approach to economic, social and ecological issues" – an integral ecology – if we are to address the interlocking crises of our times.
4. *Laudato Si'* reiterates Pope Saint John Paul II's call to ecological conversion and encourages the Church especially to undertake ecological education and to foster ecological spirituality (General Audience, 17 January 2001; *Laudato Si'* Chapter 6). The call to ecological conversion is part of the call to defend human life from conception to natural death, especially those who are most vulnerable, and to care for all forms of life on Earth, because "systems of life and love are deeply interconnected" (John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, n. 93). Responding to this call requires new ways of seeing the world, thinking, and behaving (John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, World Day of Peace Message 1990, n. 13; *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*). Ecological conversion entails turning from human dominance to belonging to the community of life and to interdependence with all other creatures, awe in the beauty of creation and being nourished by a sense of God's presence (*Laudato Si'* n. 223).
5. Ecological conversion is both personal and communal, and therefore we must act to care for creation in ways that are both personal and communal. Such action will be informed by Scripture, our theological tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, human knowledge and scientific insight. In responding to these issues, we acknowledge the "unique place of the wisdom of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who were caring for country before Abraham set out for the promised land, and who continue to do so today" (*Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*). As part of the Oceania Region, we have a particular responsibility to act in solidarity with the peoples of the region to ensure that their voices are heard and attended to in discussions and initiatives in the Church and the international community.

6. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform provides a unique global vehicle for communal action. In *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, the Bishops Conference committed itself to joining the Platform and developing a *Laudato Si'* Action Plan. Individuals and families, parishes, dioceses and eparchies, educational institutions, healthcare and healing organisations, businesses and the economic sector, organisations and groups, along with religious institutes can all participate either by developing their own *Laudato Si'* Action Plans or by taking part in an established Action Plan.

7. **THEREFORE**, this Plenary Council:

- a. recognises the sacred duty to care for and protect the Earth as a common home for all God's creatures, including the generations to come;
- b. encourages all Catholic people, families, parishes, dioceses, eparchies, religious institutes, educational institutions, and other Catholic organisations to accept Pope Francis' invitation to join the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and either develop *Laudato Si'* Action Plans, or participate in existing *Laudato Si'* Action Plans, as a vehicle for their ecological conversion; and
- c. promotes initiatives in Church and society which promote and defend human life from conception to natural death, especially those who are most vulnerable.

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DECREE

The Fifth Plenary Council decrees:

Article 1

That, witnessing to their communal ecological conversion and the urgent need for action, by 2024, each Catholic parish, diocese, eparchy, educational institution or organisation commits to joining the *Laudato Si'* Platform; and by 2030 either develops its own or participates in an established *Laudato Si'* Action Plan which includes the following elements:

- a. a public commitment;
- b. a governance model, processes and procedures;
- c. a mechanism for listening to the ecological wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, developed in partnership with Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and diocesan justice, ecology and peace bodies where these exist;
- d. regular reporting on progress towards and accountability for defined goals and objectives; and
- e. co-construction of those goals and objectives with the people they are meant to support and serve.

The Eastern Catholic Churches in Australia will interpret the decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia in accordance with the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the traditions of each church *sui iuris*.

In accordance with canon 446 of the Code of Canon Law, this decree is not to be promulgated until it has been reviewed by the Apostolic See. It will be promulgated in *Australasian Catholic Record* and the website of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in accordance with its usual practice. The decrees will oblige six months after promulgation.