

St George's Laudato si' Group: Autumn-Winter Special Update

***Laudate Deum* and the significance of Pope Francis' mission at the Dubai UN COP28 Climate Conference**

Continuing our work in support of the socio-ecological encyclical Laudato si', we pray for the success of Pope Francis' mission at the forthcoming UN COP28.

Why is Pope Francis' message to the UN COP28 Summit important?

Back in 2015 Pope Francis released his letter *Laudato si'* ahead of the Paris UN COP21 Climate Summit. The document has since become hugely influential in all ecological debates. Eight years later, in 2023, Pope Francis released his letter *Laudate Deum* ahead of the COP28 Climate Summit. The Summit outcome will be critical in the direction that global leaders take to tackle the bio-climate calamities our civilisation faces. Pope Francis' message that we are running out of time to avoid the worst effects of climate change must reach everyone.



Scan this QR Code to view Pope Francis' *Laudate Deum*

What are the UNFCCC Conferences and what is the Catholic Church's role?

COP28 stands for the 28th meeting of the *Conference of the Parties (COP)* to the UNFCCC (*UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*). The COPs welcome representations from State Parties to the UNFCCC, as well as regional organisations, NGOs, and civil society. As such, COPs are the foremost global fora for multilateral discussion on climate change gathering States Parties, faith leaders, climate scientists, journalists, Indigenous Peoples, and youth organisations. The Catholic Church and the pontifical diplomacy have always participated in international conferences concerning issues that affect humanity, including environmental and human rights issues. This is because the Church's ministry and Theology of Creation, as well as its vast body of Social Teachings, are central to the Catholic faith. Catholic doctrine teaches that we have an obligation to protect all of God's Creations; we are reminded that we are indeed its custodians. Human-made climate change affects all biosphere; we have seen its destructive impact on ecosystems and entire communities worldwide. As Catholics we are called to act to prevent further devastation.

What is *Laudate Deum* and what does it have to do with COP28?

Laudate Deum is the name of Pope Francis' latest socio-ecological Apostolic Exhortation. It is addressed to "all people of good will on the climate crisis", making it the first encyclical where the phrase "climate crises" appears. *Laudate Deum* (LD) which is the extension of *Laudato si'*, emphasises that poor countries, and the poorest in society have contributed least to global warming, yet they endure its worst effects (LD 19). Despite numerous commitments resulting from previous COPs, harmful emissions continue to rise, undermining former promises from State Parties. Thus, writes Pope Francis, "our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point (LD 2).

Over 84% of the world population identifies with a religion, which is why the *Global Faith Summit on Climate Action* in partnership with the Holy See, the Muslim Council of Elders and the COP28 Presidency gathered faith leaders and scientists before the Summit (in Abu Dhabi) and during it (*Faith Pavilion* in Dubai) to work for climate justice. Pope Francis' message to the

COP28 will have both, an ecumenical impact, and a wider influence beyond the faith communities.

What are some of the most important Messages of *Laudate Deum*?

One of the main messages of *Laudate Deum* is that the Catholic Church subscribes to the science of climate change, which means we cannot continue to deny the climate crisis (LD 5/6). Other crucial messages are that Catholics should carry on working to build a society that:

- is committed to sustainable policies that protect both, nature, and the most vulnerable, prioritising humanity over profit.
- commits to a rapid and fair energy transition from fossil fuels.
- commits to changing our relationship with God's Creation.
- overcomes its excessive dependency in a technology often dominated by an elite (LD 20/23) and commits to education for integral ecology.
- refuses to place national interests above the global common good and above the rights of future generations.
- recognises the role of civil society in the defence of human rights and nature (LD 35) and the need of "multilateralism from below" (LD 38) where the voice of the youth is heard.

How can our Parish support Pope Francis' Mission at COP28?

It is important that we continue educating ourselves, regarding the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, scientific knowledge about climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the correlation of these phenomena with social injustice. At the same time, we might wish to pray for State Parties to resolve to curb the climate crisis at the COP28, and that ambitious commitments reached therein are borne out. We hope to see, *inter alia*, the following determinations and outcomes from COP28:

- All Parties update their *Nationally Determined Contributions*, unlocking any stalemate concerning the *Loss and Damage Fund* to provide assistance for poorer countries.
- renewed commitment to keeping global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.
- Serious initiatives to reform the global food system -known to be a driving factor of the climate crisis.
- Inclusive COPs where the voices of indigenous communities on the frontline of the climate crisis are heard.
- Commitment to the acceleration of the energy transition, overcoming "extractivism" and the depletion of our limited natural resources.
- Support the initiative for a *Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty*.

Finally, each of us may consider emailing our MPs, asking them to urge the Prime Minister and the UK Government to push for the action that Pope urges at COP28.