

## [Pope Francis's Vision for Civic and Political Love in the context for Care for our Common Home](#)

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### Introduction

The one thing that all humanity shares are our home, the Earth. Humans have always relied on our environment, either having to move constantly or developing the tools to manipulate to our benefit. But how are we supposed to interact with Earth? Since a child, I always felt at home in nature, more at peace and with God. Going on hikes was a family activity we would bring us together. Throughout the semester, we have discussed the question, what is our role on Earth? Through Augustine and Dante, we learn what it means to love and to be loved. In the movies *The Mission* and *The Secret of Kells*, we witness the harmony of humans in nature through a connection of spirituality. Finally, *Laudato Si'* wraps up humans' purpose in saying that "love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world" (Francis, 2015). Through God and nature, we are able to love and care for each other and creation.

### Love in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Augustine's *Confessions*

In Augustine's "Confessions" he is searching for meaning by questioning all actions in his life. In his reflections, Augustine says that "our heart is restless until it rests in you," explaining the confusion he faces each day (Augustine). As people, we face these difficulties in our search

for love and peace; it is only when we are one with God that we truly understand the world. Similarly, In Dante's "Divine Comedy," he goes on a journey through the afterlife. At the apex of Paradiso, Dante meeting with God in the form of the Mystic Rose. As he becomes closer to God, Dante establishes a better understanding of love. Pope Francis discusses the love that Augustine and Dante came to know through our innate responsibilities for those around us. Pope Francis states that "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship" (Francis, 2015) telling us that we practice loving each day with our family and friends. Pope Francis continues saying that love is "an integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation, and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms" (Francis, 2015). Pope Francis and Saint Therese explain the importance of love in our current materialistic world. We can become distracted by material things and being cool when we should be focused on the love for the people and the communities around us. Pope Francis continues to explain the love that "In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society" (Francis, 2015). This is the progress of love that Dante learns throughout his time in the Paradiso, starting with the human connection he shares with Beatrice and ending with a newly revealed love of God. "When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us" (Francis, 2015). Our love can grow through our experiences through and with others. Love and care make

us more well-rounded beings able to understand our surroundings and understand other perspectives.

### Nature in the Mission and the Secret of Kells

Similar to the journeys of Dante and Augustine, the Mission shows the repentance and return to faith as Rodrigo leaves the Hispanic colony to join the natives in the forest. Pope Francis says that "care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters" (Francis, 2015), establishing a secure connection between nature and community. While building a church at the mission site Rodrigo becomes free from the pressures of a corrupt society and participating with the indigenous peoples. In returning to nature and community helped Rodrigo reenter and find what was truly important to him, the love of God, and the community. In the Secret of Kells, Brendan also expands his knowledge of God through a return to nature. Meeting with spirits and retrieving the diamond eye, enabled Brendan to complete the final "Chi Rho" page in the Book of Kells. Nature literally allows him to illuminate his knowledge of God through the pages of the Bible. Nature can help us explain and see the divine. God gave us nature, and from it, we can learn and grow. Pope Francis continues saying that "When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment" (Francis). No matter what nature will withstand and have a tremendous power even when humans lack in the community. In a community that values and cares for the environment, we can all grow closer to God and each other. Nature may feel separate from humanity, but harmony with nature is vital to securing our lives. The forests and oceans of the world are home to much more than just humans. Along with our pets, all of the

animals and insects are integral to the balance of the world. Primitive religions were deeply connected to nature and spirit. The practice of yoga was to create unity with the Earth and the energy inside our individual bodies and the bodies of others.

## Service

Pope Francis calls us to protect our common home in laudatory Si', one way that we can do this is through service. There are different ways to serve the needs of your community and those around you Cleaning up a park, volunteering time at a food bank, donating goods, and helping out at community centers. As stated, before loving and caring for one another is how we can grow closer to God's love. In our democratic community, government officials are elected to serve the public. "Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone" (Francis, 2015) The Pope acknowledges that government is a difficult job that takes a particular type of community to serve the greater community. But when a government job is done well, it protects and improves the community it serves. For those who cannot join the government, community service is a valuable action that anyone can do. By committing oneself to service "around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered, and a new social fabric emerges. Thus, a community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism" (Francis, 2015). Once again, Pope Francis calls us to let go of the material world to grow our love and community. "These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a

sense of solidarity, which is at the same time aware that we live in a current home that God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences" (Francis, 2015). The Pope explains that the spirit of community service itself creates a culture that inspires a greater love and connection to God. At my high school, this culture of service was taught by requiring each student to complete 100 hours of community service over their four years. The goal of this was to teach students their responsibility to their communities. Through this, I completed over 700 hours working at the art center and teaching a second-grade religious education class. Through service, I gained a deeper understanding of the needs of the people around me and found my vocation in teaching the young and helping them understand.

## Education

In primary and secondary education, the goal is to create well function members of society. Through teachers, students need to learn the importance of protecting the environment and their role and responsibilities as citizens. In secondary education, students are going through their more formative years. From Middle school to the end of high school, students' bodies and minds are developing to be fully functioning humans. During this transformative time, it is necessary for the teachers to help them in becoming useful members of society. In social studies, a key concept in the importance of voting and one's civic responsibilities. Students must become aware of their surroundings and the more significant role they play in the democratic process. Each of my future students will be taught they one vote does matter, and with passion, one person can change unjust laws. The art of teaching is reliant on connection with students, a passion for others to succeed, a unique love. A type of "love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a

better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also "macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones" (Francis, 2015). The job of the teacher is often overlooked, but during this pandemic, we have seen the importance of educators as their job is most essential to a prospering society.

## Conclusion

Laudato Si' is Pope Francis' approach to a modern philosophy with the catholic faith. The Pope breaks down the faith into simple terms that which with are hard to disagree. The Pope is persuasive to those who do not have full faith in the catholic God. The call to serve is based in love, "that is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a 'civilization of love'. Social love is the key to authentic development: "In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity" (Francis, 2015). As humans, we are called by each other to have a responsibility to help us grown and learn more. This responsibility can take anywhere, as our common home of Earth does not play favorites. We all have a responsibility to care for our home as so we can continue to prosper for the future generations. As we have gone through two months of quarantining, the resilience and bond of humans, have grown more significant than anything I have experienced. During the pandemic, we have started to see society come together as one for the common good. Congress has passed bipartisan bills, and counties have started to share ventilators and face masks. Together as a planet, we have bonded to encourage hope and life. Although churches are not open, the human spirit is strong as we know that "God is in all directions." We must remember that humans are all connected to each other through the Earth and God.

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