

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

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Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* teaches us the many aspects of society that need to be reconstructed and how we can go about doing that. One of which is caring for our common home, Earth. Pope Francis' explanation and significant meaning in *Laudato Si's*: Civic and Political Love, gives us a representation of the suggestions he's made to make our world healthier and happier to live in. Love can be both civic and political in the way we show gestures to one another. When we are able to love our society, we are able to love one another and do so in a manner that commits to the common good that create positive relationships between one another. The Earth is our common home that we all need to take part in upkeep; when we love and care for our home, it becomes natural and effortless to love and care for one another. In Pope Francis' encyclical letter, he expresses the importance of loving and caring for our common home while maintaining that same love to another in our cities.

The encyclical letter of Pope Francis starts off with the expression that caring for the earth in everyday life is how we are able to live together in communion. Pope Francis states "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. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies.

This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a “universal fraternity” (Laudato Si, 228). In other words, we should love each other freely and genuinely, we shouldn’t care for each other in the way that we owe it to one another; it should be natural. This same type of genuine and willing love is how we can go about applying to that the love we have for our home, Earth. We’re all brothers and sisters created in the likeness of God’s image and God created everything good. Fraternal love between one another is that type of interconnectedness that Pope Francis is trying to explain to us. A film that would assist in visualizing Pope Francis’ letter, is *The Mission*. This film does an amazing job at symbolizing brotherhood and what it means to be have an fraternal love and care for someone who isn’t your blood, but rather just a friend. The film is about priests who come together for a mission to teach the Guarani about Christianity. A slave trader named Rodrigo spent his life capturing the Guarani for enslavement. Towards the middle to end of the movie, we see his views and perspective change on the way he lives and about the Guarani. The tragic event of him killing his brother gave him nothing but guilt and remorse afterwards, leaving him to be forever guilty and ashamed of what he had done. It was Father Gabriel who had come to him and offered him a way to make it through this feeling of remorse and eventually welcomes him into the brotherhood. But if we look closely at that film, we see the relationship between Father Gabriel, a Jesuit Priest who exposes the Guarani to the Christian religion, and Rodrigo, a slave trader who captured Guarani to sell for money, come together and end up caring and loving one another. Father Gabriel provided a genuine sense of love and care for Rodrigo even though Rodrigo had an awful past. He looked past that and cared for him regardless of the things he’s done. This film provides takeaways that we can apply as

normalcy in our lives to be as interconnected and in communion with each other as God created us to be.

Pope Francis goes on to talk about being good and decent to people rather than to be superficial in the way we treat each other. He states, “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. 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”. (*Laudato Si*, 229). We shouldn't let differentiations of one another cause friction between us as brothers and sisters. If anything, it should help us learn from one another and widen our ways of thinking; in order for that to happen, we need to have a basis of genuine love and acceptance of one another to be able to not allow our conflicting interests get the best of us.

In a society where technology plays a significant role in our everyday lives, it can be difficult to stray away from it to be more aware of what's going on around us. In the continuation of Pope Francis' encyclical letter, he goes on to talk about the importance of human interaction and how we shouldn't let other things come between how we can be aware and communicate with each other. He states “Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. 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”. (Laudato Si, 230). It can be hard to stray away from technology and take moments to stop and appreciate what’s around us because technology, especially now more than ever, has consumed our lives and it has invested its way in to making it a necessity that we can’t live without. As a business finance major, technology plays a big role. We are constantly looking at new statistics, keeping up with stock markets and researching what investments or business moves would better oneself or a company as a whole. Bringing up the topic of the global pandemic we’re currently in, technology is really all we have. We’re not allowed to go out and have gatherings and meet with people so we’re forced to stay in our homes; technology is our only source of communication and our only way of being tied to one another. Technology has it’s pros and cons and I believe that Pope Francis brought up great points of how it could harm the interactions between us. We’re currently in a time and age where people don’t care enough to watch what’s going on around them. We’re glued to social media apps such as Instagram and Twitter because we want to keep up with the latest celebrities or try to figure out what’s going on in a person’s life. However, if we were to apply this to right now, we can use technology to our advantage and use it to mimic that same interaction without risking our lives to see one another.

In order for us to have the natural state of unconditional love for one another, we need to start with our society first. Pope Francis states “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”.[156] That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”.[157] 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”.[158] 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. 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” (Laudato Si, 231). Everything we do or action we take has a starting point. In the words of Pope Francis, in order for us to be able to love each other, we need to love our society and earth first. When we give the unnoticed the little things importance and create a norm for caring for our common home, we end up creating of foundation of how we should loving and caring for one another. We can look at the four types of Greek loves to help us exemplify that. One of them being Storge. Storge is the means of affection and love between relations. However, it also acts as a foundation love for the other four which are Agape, Philia, and Eros. The feeling of Storge is organic and gradual and it lays a base for it to develop into the remaining three loves. According to C.S. Lewis, “ Affection, as I have said, is the humblest love” (Lewis 3). We can use the meaning of Storge to help us act on the way we interact and treat each other.

Not everyone has leader qualities or the courage to be the first; I would know because I am one of them. Being a leader and taking that first step is something that’s always been scary for me and out of reach. However, joining a team and making a collective effort to achieve a common goal I feel is better than not doing anything at all. Pope Francis discusses these points by saying, “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. 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. 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 common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences” (Laudato Si, 232). Towards the end of this section, we can see that he ties his points back to the first chapter of *Laudato Si*. The first chapter discussed the importance of preserving our home we call earth and how our ways of living are declining the quality of human life. We’re destroying our own home by increasing pollution, ignoring the climate changes and being in selfish in the way we live. He makes a point to mention that spending time on research to find ways on how to care for the environment isn’t being done because it doesn’t involve a fast and easy way to make money; that usually being the main driven force of a majority of corporations. Furthermore, when we come back to chapter six, we see how he tells us that not only preserving our environment create a better way of living it will also teach us how to better care for one another.

Pope Francis explains the practice of Saint Therese of how we should love. Saint Therese’s teaching tells us to be more appreciative of the little gestures and to not allow life to pass us by and to be aware of everything around us. When we ignore the little things and give no regard our surroundings, we give room to violence, exploitation and selfishness. We’ve seen the consequences of this in Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. The text states “...My maker was divine

authority, the highest wisdom, and the primal love. Before me nothing but eternal things.
Abandon every hope, who enter here” (Inferno 3.7-9). Those who exploited other people, and indulged into the dark and abusive side of love and sexual pleasures, were left in forever suffering; whereas those who were genuine and cared for one another were not only closer to God, but obtained the gift of Paradise.

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