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In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis discusses our common home – the Earth. There has been a considerable amount of issues rise up in the past couple centuries, and most of it has to do with the way people are treating this planet. Humans are evolving quicker than the natural working of things can keep up, and it is leading to vast consequences. When our activity also includes destruction of the Earth – factories spewing chemicals into the air, destroying forests so we have room and items to build with, oil being unloaded into the water, and more – it contrasts the love we are supposed to be showing for everything God created. This theme of love for everything and everyone is portrayed in several works including Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Pope Francis's letters. Caring for nature is caring for everyone on the planet, and only through everyone working together will we be able to save the beautiful planet we call home.

As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si*, “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.”” (pg 147-148). He is speaking of how we are all connected to one another. We even love the gifts of wind, sun, and clouds even though they are not alive and do not always follow what we want. The same goes for people. Even though we cannot control their actions, or necessarily agree with them, we still love them through fraternal love. It

is love that allows things to grow and flourish. As seen in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, when Dante travels the heavens, he sees souls residing in harmony and happiness together. As he traveled to Empyrean, home of the Mystic Rose where Mary and the saints reside, he looked upon the face of God and saw "a single volume bound by Love" (*Paradiso*, 33.86). Love is what drives the universe, and what keeps it in harmony. The more who break that bond, the further the world will descend into chaos. A glimpse of this chaos can be seen when Dante travels through the City of Dis, or Hell. Those who reside here twisted God's love for their own pleasures and gain, and now have to suffer the pain they brought upon others and the world.

Pope Francis next points out that we live in a world of heightened expectations and superficiality – "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 lighthearted 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*, pg 148). Society praises those who can make it without the help of others, men who hide feelings, women who have a certain appearance. People are taught to care about certain things, and focus more on that than taking care of themselves and the world around them. They are even pitted against each other in terms of looks and how to act. Companies rush to support these falsehoods, building factories and gathering materials that will harm the environment. We must push these aside and work together to bring civic love, a love for everyone in our cities and towns and in society itself, to the forefront of our beliefs, and care for one another again. A good example of this is Rodrigo Mendoza, a mercenary and slave trader turned priest in the movie *The*

Mission. At first, he saw the Guarani Indians as below him and turned them into slaves.

However, when he accompanied a Jesuit by the name of Father Gabriel to a mission in the South American jungle in an attempt to turn his life around, he saw that they were people just like him. Mendoza learned the ways of their society, and in turn the Indians accepted him as one of their own. They lived in harmony with each other and the earth, which is what we should be aiming for in today's world. There was no competition on who can do what better, and accepted everyone for who they were, even if they were a past enemy. The focus is on loving everyone in their society, on civic love.

The floor is then turned to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's words, who "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. 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." (pg 148). Little gestures can lead to the formation of civic love because it makes others feel better and more appreciated when they are acknowledged in a positive way. A world of worsened consumption is seen in *Inferno* from *The Divine Comedy* as Dante travels through the city of Dis. Although there is love shown by the souls trapped here, it is not a good kind of love. It is a love twisted by evil, taking joy in using other people for their own gain. Virgil, Dante's guide, pointed out that "when [love] turns to evil, or shows more / or less zeal than it ought for what is good, / then the creature turns on its Creator" (*Purgatorio*, 17.100-103). This is seen through people's disregard for the people and world around them. Humans are happy to pollute the environment and turn on each other if it means they can obtain what they desire. If society works on turning to a civic love, and

caring for each other while pursuing our own desires, our internal love will resist the clutches of evil and the destruction that comes with.

Laudato Si turns to discussing how “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.” 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.” 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.” (pg 148-149). These small gestures of mutual care mentioned can continually reinforce the notion of civic love. Little reminders helps show that we care for one another without making a big show, like society seems to expect these days. Acts of kindness are always recorded and put out for everyone to share, when they should just be between you and the other person. It can also be helpful in aspects of political love. Any candidate or high-ranking official can make big shows of love towards the public. However, the small gestures behind the scenes matter just as much, if not more. It shows that they are truly in it for us, and not just to make a show of how they are being kind.

False political love can be seen in *The Mission*. Cardinal Altamirano visited the missions scattered across Spanish territory, and was astounded by the society the Jesuits helped create within. However, when the Portuguese wanted to obtain the land they were settled on and enslave the natives, the Cardinal had a choice on whether to keep these missions under Spanish protection or give them up to the Portuguese. Unfortunately, he chose the latter, and the entire South American mission that was home to the Guarani Indians was slaughtered. By the time he realized his mistake it was too late, and had to live with the knowledge that he sentenced hundreds to their demise. He demonstrates false political love in that he preaches love and acceptance for all, but does not care for everyone. The Cardinal was more interested in keeping the Portuguese happy than about the well-being of the natives who made their conversion to Christianity because they were not the same ethnicity. All people deserve to be treated as equals, no matter their skin color or sexual orientation. If everyone with influence used their political power to promote love and acceptance for all, it would become more normalized and adopted into societal norms.

As Pope Francis points out, “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.” (pg 149). It does not take a big-name person in the spotlight to bring about the changes needed. Those coming together to work in or support an organization designed to help those in need make a big impact as well, and express civic love. It brings people with common interests together to fight for the good of the earth and others. It’s those who do their good without filming every aspect of it who reap the greatest benefits. They are not doing it for the praise of others, they are doing it out of the goodness of their heart to make the other person’s life better and make themselves feel good about making a positive impact. Those who do good deeds merely for the praise on social media show false political and civic love. They are only doing these acts so others believe they are a good person, even if they truly are not inside.

Organizations for the common good is demonstrated by the Jesuits in *The Mission*. Father Gabriel returned to the jungle even after his fellow priest was killed by the natives, and befriended them. He worked on building up a society in the jungle so they could live through more conventional means, and introduced them to Christianity to give them something to live by and look to. Gabriel was not looking for people to praise him for his good works. He was merely trying to spread God’s love to others and make their life better. He was willing to give up the comforts of home to live in the jungle so they could set up their new village to become more comfortable and efficient. It’s these selfless and unknown acts that keep good in the world.

By working together to make a more loving and accepting society, we can in turn focus on the world around us. Everyone can take measures to reduce the pollution and waste left behind. Inequality and the child labor industries can end. The world can become a better place if

love is spread and shared with everyone and everything. We only get one world to live on, and one life to make a difference in it.