

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

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Civic and Political love is what will bring us one step closer to changing the world.

Through this love we must act in communion and look at the bigger picture for our common home. Pope Francis talks about how we need to be gratuitous to others, love our enemies, and respect everything around us. We see the theme of Love in the City throughout the letter of Pope Francis, The Confessions, The Divine Comedy as well as some of the movies we have watched. To care for our common home, we must have a love for everything around us and learn to respect the creations God has given to us. By reading these sections of *Laudato Si'* you see how he portrays the need of love to fix our common home.

We are all brothers and sisters in the light of God's eye so we should all learn how to come together to love and care for one another. Pope Francis starts this passage by saying, "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). What Pope Francis means by "universal fraternity" is that we must all act as one through the love of God. The love shown between us and God is called Agape (Lewis). If we learn to love naturally through Agape there would be no more wants to satisfy. *The Mission* is a movie that

shows a priest's journey in converting the Guarani people into the Christian faith. Along the way we meet Rodrigo, a former slave owner and killer of his brother. However, for all the horrible actions Rodrigo performed he still has a chance to receive penance. This shows the agape between Rodrigo and God. There is a scene where he cuts the armor off of his back and finally becomes liberated of his sins. By reading Pope Francis, I believe that God is giving us the same chance to fix all that we destroyed by being gracious and loving of our common home. We must follow this calling and cut the pollution, greed, and selfishness off our backs just as Rodrigo did. If we become more conservative of our resources and learn to respect nature, we will all feel liberated in a cleaner environment. Being liberated can teach us to love freely and appreciate the nature we that cannot control such as the wind, sun, and clouds as Pope Francis mentions.

Pope Francis begins to talk about the evils that are bringing down social life and how we must reform it. He starts by saying, "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). Augustine ponders upon where evil is by saying "from there I needed to turn my attention to the question of where evil was; that is what the source was for an act of spoiling something" (see *Conf.* 7.6; Ruden 173). We must also ask ourselves the question of where the evil is coming from that harms our beloved Earth. By reading this paragraph from *Laudato Si*' one of the evils I've come across is being superficial. We seem to think being superficial is good however, it does more harm than we think. I see on social media all the time

of people "putting on a show" to impress others or make them think they live the best life. We must forget about phones and technology and remember the connections that were once there between people. As Pope Francis talks about how we need each other, he is right and we must realize the value that our brothers and sisters have to us. Being superficial prevents bonds from forming between us, that are needed to work together to repair our common home. We must forget the outside and dig deep into our thoughts to collaborate with others to make improvements. In *The Confessions* we see how Augustine moves deeper within himself to help him learn more, "thus step by step, I moved from material objects to the soul that perceives through what is material, and from there to the inward power to which physical perception sends messages of things outside" (see *Conf.* 7.23; Ruden, 195). We can learn through Augustine how to humble ourselves and open our eyes to the bigger picture. Augustine had friendships that meant the world to him, "the friendship which draws human beings together in a tender bond is sweet to us because of many minds it forges a unity" (see *Conf.* 2.10; Ruden). He understands that unity is formed by bonding with others which we must learn to do.

Consumption is another evil that refrains us from seeing the world. Pope Francis uses Saint Therese of Lisieux's ideas to explain how love is needed to appreciate the Earth. He states, "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. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures that 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). Consumption is a major problem that turns our culture into a "throwaway" mindset. Wanting more money and stuff will get us nowhere if we destroy the world in the process of getting it. It is in our hands to stop worrying about wanting

more money for it is what causes sin and destruction of the world around us. Augustine says, “I could be absolutely certain that nothing but myself was doing that wanting or not wanting. And I gradually became aware that in this responsibility lay the cause of my sin” (see *Conf. 7.5*; Ruden, 172). Overproduction in factories causes more pollution and waste. According to this article it is one of the worst of the seven wastes and can be fixed only if we come to realize the defaults of overproduction (Lean Manufacturing Tools). Learning to love the Earth is the first step in starting the decline of consumption and fixing the "throwaway culture." Augustine makes a great point that, “people aren’t right in the head when they decide they don’t like some part of your creation—as I wasn’t right in the head when I turned against many things that you made” (see *conf. 7.20*; Ruden, 192). As he came to realize that he did not appreciate God’s creations we must also do the same. This renewed appreciation can bring us the love between humans and creatures, while also teaching us to respect and take care of our common home.

In, *The Divine Comedy* we see gluttony, greed, anger, and violence in the circles of hell. All of these sins are running our world into the ground with no way out. Gluttony and greed are two reasons why we cannot eliminate poverty. Higher class citizens take for granted simple resources they have such as water and food. In Dante's fourth circle Virgil says, "this is a lost ambition In their sordid lives they labored to be blind, and now their souls have dimmed past recognition” (*The Inferno, Cantos 7, 52-54*). Just as in the circle of greed, the higher class blinds their eyes to those struggling to put food and water on the table. In 2018 11.8% of our population which is, 38.1 million people live in poverty (PovertyUSA). With the COVID19 pandemic, this amount is predicted to rise an extreme amount due to the loss of jobs (*The World Bank*). Pope Francis talks about the need for organizations to help decrease this population.

Two of the many reasons we struggle to love are because of violence and anger. In the ten commandments we are taught to love thy neighbor, however, in Dante's seventh circle we see violence against our neighbor. We tend to turn our backs on people rather than love. In the seventh circle, Dante says, "all Hell was shaken so that I thought the universe felt love and all its elements moved toward harmony whereby the world of matter as some believe, has often plunged into chaos" (Inferno Cantos XII, 39-43). If we continue violence against our brothers and sisters our world will continue to turn to chaos just as in The Divine Comedy. Through Dante's journey he travels deeper into the circles until there is a complete absence of light and God. If we continue with the "throwaway" culture it will eventually leave us with no beauty much like the darkness of the ninth circle.

Pope Francis explains how love can be shown through simple actions which we must learn how to perform. In this section of Laudato Si he says, "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 idea 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). Charity is, important in our journey to fix the Earth. Social love helps bring us together giving us hope that it can get better. A great organization that is helping to eliminate poverty is Oxfam America. Their mission is to advocate for the poor and help build people's lives back up by giving them access to correct resources (Oxfam). We can help organizations like this, by simply giving money. Charity is part of our job, as being humans, we are responsible for looking out for our brothers and sisters and helping those in need. It is also a base from our Catholic Social Teaching that we should have a preference for the poor and vulnerable (Catholic Charities). Another Catholic Social Teaching is the idea of the common good. This means that we should all have the right to the same resources, which is why we should help the ones that do not. However, to start making these differences we must first learn to love one another.

There are many different ways which we can engross into helping. “Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations that 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). My way of helping is that I have a call to care in nursing. Caring does not just entail kindness to others but also loving. Pope Francis in a homily once said “Love isn't playing violins, violins, all romantic. No. Love is work” (National Catholic Reporter). Through nursing, my work is to love the patients I care for and have empathy for them. Understanding our patients on a personal level is important in giving them the best care possible. Care and empathy is not something you can fake, it is the passion for your profession that allows you to love so heavily for your patients. At times it may be tough to have empathy for someone, such as a patient being a prisoner and having no idea what crime they have committed. I have had experience with a prisoner patient and in my mind, I just told myself that they are a normal person suffering and it is my job to help them. There can be no discriminations when working to save people's lives, we are all brothers and sisters of God and deserve the same chance to live. At this time of the COVID19 pandemic, nurses are being warriors fighting for peoples’ lives. Risking their own lives to care for others is very inspiring. I sit here and think that all I want to do is get in a hospital and help, that is why I know I have the passion needed to care and love for others. As St. Ignatius says, we must “go forth and set the world on fire” (St. Ignatius of Loyola). If our world had the same passion nurses do to care for their patients, we could passionately care for our “common home” fixing all the damage we have done.

[156] BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009) 2: AAS 101 (2009), 642.

[157] PAUL VI, *Message for the 1977 World Day of Peace*: AAS 68 (1976), 709.

[158] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 582.]

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