

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

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Humans find themselves thrown into a world that is formed from others before them with many issues and complications. A pessimist may view this as the beginning of a journey of suffering, but Pope Francis is much more optimistic. There are many environmental issues that are caused by humans, but Pope Francis believes the human race can come together to care for our common home. When Pope Francis refers to the Earth as our common home, he implies that there is a unity of love within the home that we all can reach. God's fundamental goal is for love to exist in the community and for humans to spread this love. Many people may not understand the importance of establishing a community. As the climate issues persist, Pope Francis used his encyclical letter, called *Laudato Si*, to communicate his message of the importance of the common good of our home. The focus of this essay will discuss what he has written in section 5 of chapter 6. He wants us to unite as a community to prevent pollution and to keep our home safe from any damage. Pope Francis wants to establish that humans have the basic right and duty to keep our common home clean, and humans can only establish this unity through love within the community.

In the beginning of this section, he discusses how we are all connected in a community through God. He 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). When he discusses our unity, he establishes the fact that we are all brothers and sisters because of our common father in God. Understanding that our love for one another is innate, helps us suppress the conflict in nature. The movie *The Mission* displayed the capacity of love for our enemies to establish that anyone is capable of forgiveness. In the movie, the character named Mendoza began as a slave trader of the natives. He was eventually forced into recognizing his own wrong doings and came to a mission, which was established for the natives, to provide his services. Mendoza wronged many of the natives and their families, but they accepted him into the mission with loving embrace (Joffe, 1986). This example of forgiveness is what Pope Francis wants us to recognize because we are capable of putting personal conflict aside to establish a plan to prevent universal conflict.

Next Pope Francis 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). He is further establishing the importance of our “shared responsibility” for our common home by saying that we need each other to effectively establish a plan for this responsibility. Humans often result in violence when conflicting interests arise, but

Pope Francis believes that unity and enlightenment could help us achieve our common goal. All of these conflicts that arise are irrelevant to the goal of love within the community. In Augustine's book *Confessions*, he tries to understand the source of evil and sin. Augustine states, "Your light, that I knew as well that I had a will as that I had life: when, therefore, I was willing or unwilling to do anything, I was most certain that it was none but myself that was willing and unwilling; and immediately I perceived that there was the cause of my sin," (Augustine, Chapter 3: Verse 4). In this, he is stating that he believes that the origin of evil and sin is caused by free will. Many Christians share this belief with him, and this understanding of the influence of free will can help further unify us as a community. Humans have free will to decide how they want to make an impact in their life. Their evil actions serve as a distraction from love in the community which can cause them to negatively impact the world and stray away from unity. Educating others on their free will helps them recognize the importance of their role in the shared responsibility.

As the letter continues, Pope Francis 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 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). Here, Pope Francis discusses displays of love that are simple, yet essential to establish a loving community. A small gesture of love could be asking a person how they are feeling or even helping a neighbor with an outside chore. This interaction is one of caring attitudes for the individuals within their community. As previously stated, the goal is to establish love in the community, and little gestures of care are important to represent their selflessness. Pope Francis

also mentions that life is mistreated if consumption is the primary goal, and this is due to the selfish nature of dominant consumption. Many humans tear down trees and forests for their corporate establishments, but excessive deforestation harms everyone in the world as trees are an essential resource for the air we breathe. In *Dante's Inferno*, Dante takes a journey through Hell. He comes across the city of Dis and is able to communicate with those that reside. Many of the individuals he meets have committed selfish sins. An example of this would be the thieves who are chased by snakes as a punishment for their selfishness. They showed more care for themselves and took from others, so they were punished for this in the afterlife (Alighieri and Ciardi, 2003). The city of Dis is a city built from an unloving community. The individuals were selfish and receive punishments from their sin. An unloving community is one that does not commune at all. The city of Dis helps establish that a loving community is essential for a proper unified community.

Next, Pope Francis discusses love on a larger scale when he 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). He elaborates on the importance of the small gestures in that it makes love present constantly throughout our daily lives. Charity is extremely important for love within a community because it creates a community with a loving goal to provide for those that need assistance. Continuing to help one another establishes the greater connection between communities and can unite them in loving displays of selflessness. These displays of love should not just be between people in the community, but it should also be included in political action to further expand the love within the community. As people in power are able to establish strategies that make love the new normal in the communities. To further discuss what Pope Francis has stated, we may want to discuss a prominent issue in the world today which is the COVID-19 virus. The pandemic we find ourselves in has caught many off-guard and makes many of us feel vulnerable. In this time of need, health care workers are being constantly praised for their valiant efforts to help those that are infected. Witnessing the small gestures of praise and appreciate personally gives me hope that a unified loving community can exist in the world. My personal aspirations are to work in health care, and I have friends and family members that work in hospitals. These little acts of appreciation motivate the workers to help those in need because their selflessness is being recognized. When they see how much their patients and others care for what they do, they are filled with the love of their neighbor. With my future career in health care in mind, I hope to assist those in need to provide essential relief of suffering.

For the final part of this section Pope Francis states, “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). In this he essentially is saying that there are various ways people can influence their community and display their love other than just in politics. There are several different existing organizations that allow for contribution to help the environment around them. This can be something as personal as cleaning up a park in your proximate community or it can be a new experience such as the Peace Corps to help others in different communities and cultures across the world. Through these actions, we are socializing with others to a common goal. The main goal is to help care for our common home. We should strive to care for those that are in need to establish this love in the community, so they have equal accessibility to resources as everyone else. Through community action, we will find the most love displayed which has the ability to influence others to maintain this loving attitude.

Pope Francis wrote this letter so that people can be mindful of the importance of a loving community. The home we reside in is shared with all of us, so it is our duty as a community to be responsible for the care provided. We are capable of forgiving our enemy to recognize the importance in helping our community. Establishing a loving community would not occur overnight, but small gestures are essential for the foundation of establishing a loving and connected

nature within the community on Earth. Our contributions to society can be greater as we have the ability to aid in organizations with loving goals in mind to care for our community. The personal conflicts we have now over available resources are not the prominent issue we should be focusing on as we all share the home we are damaging. Unifying humans as a community through love would help establish proper care for our home.

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