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Final Assignment

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Pope Francis's Vision of Civic and Political Love in the Context of Care for our Common Home

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CIVIC AND POLITICAL LOVE

228. 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”.

229. 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.

230. 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.

231. 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.

232. 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.

We enter this world uncertain of who we are and how the world will embrace our true beings. We grow into our own form of ourselves conquering different obstacles and soon to be rewarded with what God has in store for us. We come into the world where we have a responsibility to make our common home one to be worshiped, one to be proud of. Pope Francis second encyclical *Laudato si* shows how we can use the relationship with God to guide us in everyday life and make a well performed community. The final chapter, chapter six, has us really question our actions on ourselves in our daily attitudes and our lifestyles. We take a look at this quote from an earlier chapter that said, “Many things have to change course, but it is we as human beings above all who need to change” (202). This stuck out most to me and I think highlights the idea of chapter six greatly. There are times when things change, we might not like the change, but we have to learn to properly adapt to these changes. We learn at a young age that actions speak louder than words, we lose insight to this as we get older. You and I see the changes that are made or that are needed to be made but are not pursuing them in our own actions. Pope Francis, specifically in chapter six expresses the thought of “love”. Blindsided from the nature around us in our lifestyle we need to gather as a living community to make our home the one we are proudly to be a part of. A home that will be here upon generations after us and one that makes us who we are.

Together we come to embrace the idea of love in a community. Jesus points out to us that we are not alone in this journey and that our Father provides a path in which our brothers and sisters can use our divine love to come together to provide fraternal love. (228) Pope Francis states “it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us.” By this he means that our endless love should never be questioned or be compensated by the word of others. He opposed a thought that this is why we can love our enemies in the same sense that we can inspire to love the uncontrollable. Pope Francis uses *Mother Nature; Sun, Wind, and Clouds* to address this. This relates to any natural desire that has some sort of light at the end of the tunnel. Comparably, the saying “after a storm comes a rainbow” I think fits perfectly. Just like after darkness (storm) comes beautiful light (a rainbow). Facing challenges is inevitable and comes with darkness, but that will slowly go away as time may heal. God has a plan for us, we might need to climb the highest mountains to reach them, but it will be worth it at the end. By connecting this with the uncertainty we are living today, Pope Francis highlight hemes of “love”. The Coronavirus has become a huge black cloud that leaves a tremendous strain on America. This outcome of this virus has brought devastation both in the economy and in the lives of the American people. Now, we are getting closer to the light making life go back to the new normal. With the actions that have been taken throughout these last few months we have seen the love for the city come together through the community to help flatten the curve.

From a young age we lean on our parents for guidance and nurture in hopes to then grow up into the world of our own independence. While that is valuable some of us struggle to ask for help. I am one of them. Sometimes I just do not like asking for help, people associate asking for help as being weak and that is not true at all. This connection was also conveyed in St. Augustine. He had a mentor/ counselor to help him along his journey to find his true being

(confessions 9). In relationship to this my personal experience also plays a part with my relationship with one of my High School teachers, Mrs. Griffin. Mrs. Griffin allowed me to see that it is okay to ask for help and to take time for myself. Pope Francis writes, “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” (229). Moreover, there are a lot of fish in the sea that should come together and unite as one to make a difference in the world around them. God made us each unique in our own way so why not mix everyone's ethics, faith, goodness and honesty so that we can form a strong love for our community so diverse and so powerful.

The university of Scranton is a very welcoming and loving community that is part of the reason why I chose Scranton to pursue my higher education beyond High School. Before attending Scranton, I was told that this school was known for “opening doors” My first thought was okay, yes we “open doors” to a different way of learning but that's not all it means. Being on campus really made me understand this. The Scranton community filled with undergraduates are always willing to give an open hand. Experience first-hand, everyone looks out for each other even the small gestures go a long way and make someone's day. Everyone is so friendly and yes, we literally open doors for each other, you can be a few feet apart from the nearest door and someone will be waiting for you holding the door right open. While that might not seem like a big deal to everyone, it just goes to show how close and loved each student is here at the University. In section five chapter six of *Laudato si* it 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 shows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness,” (230). They explained that the little things in life do matter. You never know how a small action like holding the door or a quick smile brightens someone's day. In the end, the world has so much hate and crime that we need to find ways to eliminate those harsh thoughts and bring positivity to the community we are a part of.

Expressed in Dante's *Divine Comedy* we are present with the four loves: Storge, Philia, Eros and Agape. These loves are expressed at different points of someone's life. Whether it is through a romantic relationship or the love shown from a friendship and family members. The idea is then continued to be displayed in his work that small actions that are in place to make the world a better community. Pope Francis states, “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” (231) he delivers specific expectations in order to make society a “cultural of care”. As a result, Pope Francis striving to picture an image where small gestures can heal the world one action at a time. In the community that we live in there are many opportunities available that a person can take that are in favor of preserving the natural functions of the environment.

You and I are created by God to use our talent to do good by people and the community, but that is not all. There has been a creation of neighborhood networks to guide us into the path

that is needed to pave. Just like a school is created for a safe and educational place to grow, welcoming spaces like buildings, foundations and abandoned monuments are put into place for people's safety. These spaces are there to connect each and every one and to gain trust with joyful memories. "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."(232) To recap we are reminded that our responsibility in this world is to care for the environment and the people around us. These values are embedded to us by the church teachings and our Father.