

"Live *Laudato si'*, do not just quote it"

A top Vatican official involved in the promotion of the 2015 encyclical

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Father Bruno-Marie Duffé (Photo by M. MIGLIORATO/PPP/CIRIC)

Pope Francis published his landmark encyclical [Laudato si'](#) five years ago.

This important text, "on care for our common home", is dated May 24, 2015 (Pentecost Sunday). But it was actually released to the public, and with great fanfare, on June 18 of that year.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has been the key Vatican office in helping to [promote the pope's efforts](#) to help us face the "urgent challenge to protect our common home" and "bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development".

The dicastery's secretary, Father Bruno-Marie Duffé, spoke to *La Croix's* Nicolas Senèze about ways to translate the encyclical from word into action and witness.

La Croix: Do you think the coronavirus crisis proved how relevant *Laudato si'* is?

Father Bruno-Marie Duffé: Previous social or environmental crises had already underlined the importance of the approach put forth by Pope Francis in *Laudato si'*.

But it is true that the coronavirus crisis has shown how topical this text is.

The question now is what to do with it? How do you arrive at sobriety? How can it give meaning to our lives? How do you make it a culture?

Isn't the risk of the current recovery precisely that of reproducing the old model?

We need to save jobs and put value on work, but what about inequalities and the meaning of our development?

I am afraid that, consciously or not, our culture of acceleration and instantaneousness is pushing us to repeat what we know how to do, for example, through limitless exploitation of resources or investment in the carbon sectors.

We're struggling to think of other ways to do this...

This is precisely what Pope Francis has been saying over and over throughout this crisis...

Everyone agrees with the pope. There's a hunger for his prophetic speech.

But, as Archbishop Paul Gallagher [Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States] often points out, the question is which pope they agree with!

There is an expectation of moral discernment among the public and decision-makers alike.

Many say that we need to reorient things, to color our development differently.

The challenge is to apply this moral insight to current constraints. At some point, you have to make choices...

Is that what the pope explained to the Heads of State he phoned during this crisis?

He told us that he felt himself facing leaders suddenly confronted with fear and experiencing worry.

He invited them to hope, not to be just crisis managers, to see that it is not so much a question of preparing for the future as of preparing the future.

The role of the Church is not to safeguard the gains it may have made in the past, but to speak radically about the future.

For some years now, however, we have been feeling an increase of powerlessness of politicians on these subjects... Is this why the Vatican today places particular emphasis on the local level?

Considering this weariness in the face of institutions that are increasingly incapable of making sense, we can see a multitude of associations and initiatives that are flourishing.

I am struck to see how these groups concern themselves with ecology today, even if, of course, they are all far from referring to *Laudato si'*!

Within the Church, there is still resistance to *Laudato si'*, does that worry you?

There have always been Catholics concerned about the social involvement of the Church.

In European opinion, there is also the fact that ecology has long been very politically colored, with others fearing that ecology is becoming a new religion, a mixture of genres.

For them, the conversion to which *Laudato si'* invites us does not come close enough to conversion itself.

Nevertheless, I also note that even in traditional circles, some people have become aware of the challenge.

They have appropriated the text in their own way, finding the dimension of contemplation or human ecology that is part of integral ecology.

For all of us, the question now is to act.

How do you do it?

The challenge today is to be convinced of the importance of this ecological transformation.

It's about living *Laudato si'*, not just quoting it.

So we need witnesses who are convinced, and who live what they say.

Witnesses themselves do not always know that they are witnesses: what they do is sometimes imperceptible and may seem infinitesimal compared to major economic decisions.

But this witness is what we ask of Christians.

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