

Pope Francis spoke to all on behalf of all

Comments of H.E. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of Justice and Peace Europe on the encyclical letter "Laudato Si"

Last week Pope Francis addressed his encyclical letter "Laudato si" on care for our human home to every person living on the planet. It has received an overwhelming echo all over the world. Most of the reactions have been positive. Indeed the Holy Father has expressed the single issue for our times that most concerns humanity. Pope Francis has not only spoken to all but he spoke on behalf of all of us. He has done so very modestly by taking into account the teaching of his predecessors, of fellow bishops and other religious leaders, by accepting the insights of modern science and by refusing to offer political remedies and technical fixes. After reading this long and beautiful letter I would like to share a few comments from a European perspective as President of *Justice and Peace Europe*.

"Laudato si" forcefully insists that debates on the environment must integrate questions of **justice**. Pope Francis tells us "*a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach*"(N°49). A valid response to the ecological crisis can only arise if the common good is pursued from the perspective of the excluded. Assuming this perspective in Europe is not as simple as in other parts of the world, as Europe is the richest region of the world. Therefore *Justice and Peace Europe*, as part of the wider Justice and Peace movement of the Catholic Church, feels encouraged by the encyclical letter to continue its mission to promote social justice in Europe and to do so especially in the context of the European organisations and their institutions.

"Laudato si" has reminded us with great clarity that the depletion of some natural resources, water in particular, creates a serious risk for **peace**. New forms of war and armed conflict have come upon us. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) – the latter being on the brink of redrafting its outdated Security Strategy - should fully take into account the growing risk of environmental wars. *Justice and Peace Europe* together with its numerous partners will support efforts to prevent such conflicts.

"Laudato si" leaves no doubt that **climate change** is mainly the result of human activities. Stopping climate change requires a change of life style in the richer regions of the world, including Europe. The Pope's letter is a generous invitation to reduce our energy consumption, change our transport modes and move towards a circular economy. It is a friendly call to Europeans to discover other forms of well-being. It is also – at the political level – an encouragement to fully accept the idea of differentiated responsibilities (N°52). Some poorer countries especially will need substantial help to adapt to the consequences of climate change. *Justice and Peace Europe* therefore asks the European Union and its member states to offer additional funding for the UN's green climate fund, which should provide \$100 billion a year by 2020 for the most affected and deprived regions in the world. Credible funding for climate adaptation is a key to success for the forthcoming climate summit in Paris.

“Laudato si” teaches us that there is no solution to the current ecological crisis without a **global consensus**. “*Everything in the world is connected*”, writes the Holy Father. Therefore the isolated action of a single nation is laudable and often useful in order to make a first step but it is not sufficient. Because of the transnational character of the economy, and especially the financial sector, the power of nation-states is further diminishing in the 21th century. For *Justice and Peace Europe* the European Union remains – despite indisputable shortcomings - an appropriate response to these “*Rerum novarum*”, to this revolutionary change. Based on the rule of law it may inspire new forms of global governance on ecological matters and lead “*to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water*” (N°164).

“Laudato si” is a forceful argument for better safeguarding and protecting God’s creation. The loss of **bio-diversity** is a global phenomenon because of “*short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production*” (N° 32). It also affects Europe. In its recent report, the *State of nature in the EU*, the European Environment Agency has stressed the success of the EU Species Action Plan yet assesses that the outlook is favourable for only 16% of habitats and 23% of species. Thus, *Justice and Peace Europe* supports efforts to reinforce conservation measures.

Finally, “Laudato si”, reminds humanity of the need to renew itself. Without respect for the **dignity of every human person**, “*the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself*” (N°117). The Holy Father has stressed the connection between an adequate vision of the human being - an authentic anthropology – and the challenge to get the ecological question right. *Justice and Peace Europe* will contribute towards promoting this renewal in its dialogue with the European Union.

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<p>The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (<i>Justice and Peace Europe</i>) is a European network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, working for the promotion of justice, peace and respect for human dignity. It contributes to raising awareness of the Catholic social doctrine in the European societies and the European institutions. Its General Secretariat is based in Brussels.</p>

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