



## Indonesian Carmelite NGO's response to Pope Francis' Laudate Deum

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On October 4, 2023 Pope Francis issued a letter of appeal to all people of good will which he entitled "Praise be to God". This letter of appeal is a reaffirmation of his message in his Encyclical entitled, "Laudato Si': Caring for Our Common Home" which he issued on May 24, 2015. This Encyclical has captured the attention of many people in the world, including politicians and leaders of various religions because of its contents which present the concerns and views the Pope as the leader of the Catholic Church, regarding the destruction of nature which victimizes many people, especially those who are poor and marginalized. This encyclical wants to raise people's awareness that the destruction of nature is the result of greedy human actions exploiting nature as they think that the earth belongs to them and they have the right to control and exploit it as they wish. In this encyclical, the Pope emphasized that because the perpetrators of the destruction of the earth are humans, it is humans who are obliged to repair it. If humans neglect this responsibility, the earth, which is their own home, will be damaged and they will perish too. At the end of the encyclical, Pope Francis calls on all human beings to immediately move and act to save the earth which is our only home.

In his new letter of appeal, Pope Francis invites everyone to look back at what has happened since his encyclical was issued 8 years ago. It turns out that instead of good developments, there are a lot of failures here and there. Many negotiations have been carried out, many agreements have been achieved together, many regulations have been



made, but all of them have not been implemented seriously. Perpetrators of negligence or even denial of the rules and the agreements that have been prepared together to mitigate natural damage are not subject to sanctions so that more and more negligence and denial occur. Nature is increasingly damaged, which can be seen in the increasing temperature of the earth and the increasingly frequent occurrence of unusual natural phenomena: prolonged droughts, excessive rain, increasing difficulty to get clean water, and so on. Through this letter, the Pope reminded that if this is left unsolved, the impact of this problem will be many times greater, and as usual the victims will be those who are poor and marginalized. The last part of this letter is very harsh in content. The Pope boldly criticized the superpowers who always evaded responsibility for natural damage by throwing this problem onto other countries.

In this letter of appeal, the Pope once again criticizes the technocratic paradigm that is

developing in contemporary society. The technocratic paradigm is a way of thinking that believes that all problems can be solved with science and technology. The excess of this paradigm is the belief that humans have the power and wisdom that can overcome everything, control everything and regulate everything. Such a paradigm will make humans view everything as an object and themselves as subjects who have the right to the objects.

The human paradigm is something fluid, it can change and be changed. It is true that doing so requires time and energy, but the sacrifice to do so is far smaller than the impact of world destruction that is clearly before our eyes. The question is how we can change this paradigm.

No human being wants to get hurt. Humans will immediately avoid harm by themselves. Natural damage will certainly harm every human being without exception. Unfortunately, this awareness has not yet emerged in the minds of many people because it is still shrouded in ego. Humans are lulled by the comfort they feel and forget to look at their future, both their own future and the future of their descendants, the future of all humans. Ego makes their perspective limited both in terms of scope: only to themselves, their family and group, and in terms of time: now and not later. A new paradigm will be awakened if there is awareness that this earth is the only home of mankind and that humans do not inherit this earth alone but together with others. The destruction of the earth means the destruction of humanity.

The new paradigm that humans are part of this earth and that the unity between humans and between humans and the earth is inseparable can be instilled through education, not only through formal education at school but also through informal education through religious, community, campaign and other activities. Each of us can participate in the effort to instill this new paradigm. As we all know, education through giving good example is much stronger than education through teaching, we, first, need to carry on an ecological conversion and then live according to the new paradigm.



Indonesian Carmelite NGO tries to instill this new paradigm among the children. It develops various program and activities to build the children's awareness of the unity of humanity and the earth. Children are invited to interact with the earth by inviting them to learn in and from the nature. They are invited to take a walk in the open air, then sit quietly and watch the beauty of the nature, not just looking but paying attention to nature to its details. They are then invited to reflect on how nature has played its role in their lives. They are encouraged to be grateful for the nature around them, thank the nature, and ultimately love the nature. Those who love the nature will not destroy the nature, but rather take care for and protect it. This activity, which is held once a week, not only makes children happy because they are free from the formal classroom but also awakens their interest in nature.

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