New Encyclical by Pope Francis
Laudato Si’ - On Care for our Common Home

Pope Francis released his new Encyclical on May 24, 2015. It focuses on care for the environment and all that goes along with it. We urge families, parishes, individuals and Catholic institutions to take the Pope’s words to heart & incorporate this document as you look at the mission and practice of your own ministries. You can find the full text at the Vatican website.

Excerpts from the Encyclical:

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled (11).

I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents (14).

Chapter Titles include:

What is Happening to Our Common Home
The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis
Lines of Approach and Action

The Gospel of Creation
Integral Ecology
Ecological Education and Spirituality
First I want to say, it is good to be back. If you have tried to email or call the office since Holy Week, you know I have been out for a long time. I am still recovering from a very serious illness and would appreciate your prayers for a full recovery.

On some of my better days recuperating, I spent some time taking the long view of the Office for Human Life and how I could re-think what I am doing and how I execute the mission. Maybe you have never read the mission (it’s on the website). Here it is:

*Created in the image and likeness of God from the very beginning of time, human life begins its journey on earth from conception until natural death. We are called to be stewards of the gift of life that God has given us. This ethic of life is the thread that unites all efforts to uphold the dignity of life at all stages of existence. Let us embrace this teaching as we continue our efforts in proclaiming the Culture of Life in our time and place.*

Many people have said this scope is too large for such a small office. Many have said this is the proper way to approach human life. Whatever your opinion, this is the task that has been before me for the last 11 years and will continue to be for the unforeseeable future. During my leave, we were also given the gift of Pope Francis’ long anticipated Papal Encyclical.

One of the life issues that has been a concern of the Office since before my time, has been the relationship between the human person and our home, earth. Yesterday, while in Ecuador, Pope Francis said,

*“There is a relationship between our life and that of mother earth, between the way we live and the gift we have received from God.”*

This teaching is a continuation or a reemphasis of his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home.*

There have been many wonderful documents promulgated by the Magisterium related to human life. This is the latest. He speaks of human life as interconnected with creation, the great gift of God. Because they are interconnected one must be considered within the context of the other. Human life cannot exist without Earth and therefore we must respect and nurture this home. On the other hand, if Earth is abused and debased, human life suffers, especially the lives of the vulnerable poor.

Now is a great time for all of us to read and pray with this beautiful new teaching. Consider how this document might integrate with your current ministry. I will be doing the same. Do not be intimidated by language. Pope Francis has stated that we should speak in words that ordinary people understand and he has done this in *Laudato Si.* It is even translated in English with inclusive language. As we read and pray, we must be mindful that not only is the document written to be an aid to our ministry, but it is first written to be an aid to our personal, religious and spiritual development. Each of us must consider the message the Pope has for us. It may or may not be directly related to your ministry in defense of human life. His perspective is worldwide, which was very evident in his homilies and speeches in his recent trip to South America. This perspective is imperative in our reading and evaluating because writing for the whole world (as he has said, the encyclical is not just for Catholics) brings emphasis and information that may not be familiar to us.

More to come, *On Care for Our Common Home . . .*

**Peggy Gerovac**

Imagine how soulless would be a world within which only the strong, the young, the healthy, the physically attractive, the intellectually bright, and the achievers have a place!

Imagine how soulless would be a world that views the handicapped, the unborn fetus, the physically paralyzed, and the dying as having nothing to offer!

**Ronald Rohlheiser**
“Everything is connected.” This phrase echoes throughout the recent encyclical from the Holy Father, *Laudato Si*.* Pope Francis presents a comprehensive vision. Our attitude toward our common home is inseparable from our attitude toward the unborn, poor, and all who are vulnerable. The crises of our age have arisen because we refuse to receive created things in humility, simple joy, and awe at the work of God.

Francis proposes an “integral ecology” – an approach to creation care rooted in the Christian conviction that the earth, and everything in it, is a gift from our gracious Father. Everything is connected, and so we must resist the temptation to see the problems that we face today as piecemeal. We can’t build a culture of life and trash the planet at the same time. We can’t clean up the mess left by a consumer society if we disregard the preciousness of human life.

Care for creation flows naturally from our commitment to protect all human life. For example, polluted drinking water causes birth defects. We who march for life ought also to do our part to make sure that families have clean water for their children. In our different places in life, we can build up a human ecology by taking account of how our actions affect the lives of the most vulnerable.

Most fundamental is our need to examine ourselves and how we receive God’s good world. We are immersed in a throwaway culture, which exerts its force on us. In our consumer society, we are prone to think of our surroundings, and even the people in them, as objects to help us fulfill our selfish desires. The habits formed in the throwaway culture need to be reformed and redirected. We must tend to our interior life and learn to receive created things as gifts, always remembering the unique dignity of each human being.

Pope Francis reminds us that everything comes from God and can point to God. A fish or a grasshopper, a prairie or a canyon, each thing has its own loveliness and is to be admired as a creation of our Creator – not only for what benefit it brings to us. When we can behold created things in their own particular glory, we move closer to an integral ecology.

The Pope offers simple suggestions for developing gratitude and reverence. He suggests that praying before and after meals might help inspire thankfulness for the food we receive. He notes the importance of resting on the Sabbath. In this spirit I offer a possible exercise. Choose some seemingly simple object, and consider the complexity and grandeur of it. Consider doing this with a different piece of creation each day. Let us take time to cultivate a spirit of gratitude and awe at the beauty of the earth, which reaches its pinnacle in that most marvelous of creatures, the human person. Such an attitude animates a culture of life.

The Power of a Caring Doctor
A Video Update on Physician-Assisted Suicide

In 2000, when Oregon resident, Jeanette Hall, had less than a year to live, she asked her cancer doctor for the pills to commit suicide. Dr. Kenneth Stevens got to know her better and inspired her to consider treatment. The tumor just “melted away” and now -- 15 years later -- Jeanette says: “It’s great to be alive!”

Jeannette’s Story, along with others, is being promoted by both the USCCB’s Pro-Life Communications team & the Patient Rights Action Fund. Their mission is to protect the rights of patients, people with disabilities, and others inadvertently targeted by pro-doctor assisted suicide legislation.

This video, short but full of information, is a great resource to share with your parish community, either through posting to your website or alerting parishioners through a bulletin announcement. The video can be found on the Office for Human Life’s homepage or at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=845sQef3B7E&feature=youtu.be.

“I took the ancient oath to do no harm. I will always care for my patients & never abandon them. For me, helping them commit suicide would be the ultimate abandonment.” - Dr. Stevens
Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act - Some Interesting Facts

Consistent Life Weekly May 15, 2015

Continuing with what the U.S. Congress is up to, the House of Representatives on May 13 passed a bill stopping abortions after 20 weeks with the usual exceptions. It’s unlikely to get further, but this is more progress than we usually make against massive violence in Congress, which is well-practiced in using euphemisms to avoid the reality of how cruel violence is, especially in war. The “pain-capable” part didn’t faze those accustomed to pretending no brutality is involved (and ignoring that decisions “between a woman and her doctor” doesn’t apply since late-term abortion doctors are strangers to the woman).

Some connections:
• A common reason for aborting so late is that the baby is discovered to have a disability. This lethal discrimination against people with disabilities has a detrimental impact on all people with disabilities.
• Another reason is the gender is found and decided to be unsuitable – mostly, girls are killed for being girls.
• A common reason for delay is that the mother is ambivalent about having an abortion, or positively doesn’t want one. She’s hiding the pregnancy, hoping the people who would pressure her won’t be able to until it’s “too late.” The availability of late-term abortions removes this escape valve.

In Ohio News— On June 24, 2015, Ohio Senate passes Pain Capable Unborn Protection Act (SB 127).

“The Strength Within”

By Therese Fetsko, Maggie’s Place MissionCorps member
used with permission from Maggie’s Place online blog

Courage has been one of the qualities for which I have consistently requested prayers during my time at Maggie’s Place. You can ask my fellow MissionCorps; it’s pretty much my staple prayer request! I realize how many times I am feeble in addressing certain issues with the moms and holding them accountable to the rules, as well as getting out of my comfort zone to show the hospitality that Maggie’s Place represents. I think that these are normal struggles, especially for a natural introvert, but it is when I overcome them that I feel most fulfilled in my role at the house. Putting the greater good ahead of my comfort is what keeps me going, as well as the example of my fellow MissionCorps.

But it isn’t just the MissionCorps who exemplify courage in our homes. Many times it has struck me that the moms are the most courageous! They are the ones who choose to live with us, with all our rules and all our love. It is quite a culture shock for many of the moms when they move into our homes. Many of them have never been treated like beautiful daughters of God or been spoken to with compassion when they are struggling. No one here tells them that they are worthless or have ruined their lives when they make mistakes. I have seen several moms move out within the first couple of days after moving in, not because there has been a problem, but I think it is because they don’t know how to handle their new safe and loving environment.

The rules at Maggie’s Place are also a new struggle for our moms. Many moms are overwhelmed by them and let them bring them down, since they view them as restrictive and not as tools to help them grow. Yet, I have seen several moms rise up to the occasion and tell themselves that they will not let the rules bring them down, but that they will work with them to make the most of their time at Maggie’s Place. It is so encouraging to see a mom overcome this hurdle and choose to work hard for herself and her baby!

The biggest sign of their courage, however, is their act of love in choosing life for their babies. Our society today makes it so easy to dispose of anything or anyone that is making your life difficult. How difficult it must be to not be able to take care of yourself, and yet have a new life growing in you that you also have to support! Many of us take our lives or situations for granted, but how fragile are our lives and how little control we have over what life we are born into! The moms of Maggie’s Place have not always had the love and support of their families, and yet they choose to give life and love to their children.

Courage does not consist of having no fear, but rather, it consists of diving in despite the fear that overwhelms the will. It does not mean that we should blindly dive into every situation that we fear, but instead, true courage consists of tackling those things that are true and good even when those things are the most difficult to choose. This true courage is what our moms embody when they choose life for their children and look for shelter at Maggie’s Place. Our moms are the heroes of today in a culture that mocks their courage and self-sacrifice. I am ever amazed by the moms of Maggie’s Place!
I was waiting for a plane one recent morning when messages of hope started jumping out at me.

I had brought two newspapers to read at the airport. The local paper had a front-page story about a surprise 50th birthday party for a man who had been paralyzed from the chest down for over three decades. Doctors had expected Greg Chambers to die before he was 30, and he has been close to death more than once. But he finished high school, took college courses, and has done computer work for a business. “There’s no room for pessimism. It’s just a downer,” he says. “I live a pretty normal lifestyle, except for I just can’t scratch my own nose” (South Bend Tribune, 4/27/15).

Then the national paper featured the story of Amanda Berry and Gina DeJesus, two women who were held captive and sexually abused for a decade by a kidnapper and rapist. They fell into such despair during their captivity that they wanted to kill themselves. But now they have co-authored a book titled Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland. Reaching out to any woman in similar dire circumstances, Ms. Berry says: “Stay strong and stay positive, and never give up hope” (USA Today, 4/27/15).

Finally, in the airport bookstore I came across the new paperback edition of Ghost Boy. It is the personal account of Martin Pistorius, who fell ill when he was 12 years old and spent many years in what everyone thought was a “vegetative state.” For years he was unable to communicate but fully conscious. He could even hear his own mother say it would really be better for him to die. Mr. Pistorius’ condition continued to improve and he now lives in England, a happily married bestselling author. He has forgiven his mother for her moment of despair, saying: “None of us knows what we can bear until we’re asked.”

Why am I so taken with this Trifecta of hope? Because the message our culture increasingly seems to promote is one of despair. We are so attached to our comfort and security, our powers of mind and body, that on hearing about people who lose these we tend to say: “If that happened to me I’d rather be dead.”

I think of reactions to Brittany Maynard, the 29-year-old California woman whose very public decision to make use of Oregon’s assisted suicide law was exploited by euthanasia advocates to promote such laws across the country. Some people said they were inspired by Ms. Maynard’s courage in “taking control” of her death. But what she spoke of was fear: Fear of pain, of indignities, of being a “burden” on her family. She lost hope that the rest of her life could have meaning.

Her personal story was sad. What some legislators have made of it is alarming: They are legislating despair for everyone in similar circumstances. Once people are told they may have only six months to live, they will know that the government thinks their suicides need to be “assisted” rather than prevented like everyone else’s. That does not serve personal freedom. It heavily biases the choice between hope and despair. Society is saying: Hope is for other people. All you have left is death.

The hope embodied in the stories I read is not hope of freedom from illness, pain and hardship. It is hope in life and love beyond those challenges, hope that each life has meaning and the human spirit can prevail. Even the government cannot legislate away hope. The tragedy is that it would try.

Mr. Doerflinger is Associate Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more on the bishops’ pro-life activities see www.usccb.org/prolife.
Fortnight for Freedom was held June 21-July 4 again this year. The theme “Freedom to Bear Witness” focused on how religious freedom enables us to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel.

This year, the Fortnight for Freedom was significant for several reasons:

First, we are seeing increasing violent persecution of religious believers in the Middle East, in parts of Africa, and elsewhere around the world. We hope that the Fortnight will lift up the sacrifice of so many believers.

Second, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26th on same-sex “marriage.” The Court’s decision could have grave implications for religious freedom in our country.

Third, recent political disputes over Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (RFRAs) have led to widespread distortion and misunderstanding of the meaning and value of religious freedom. Clear and effective teaching on religious freedom, supported by prayer, are especially needed.

Fourth, this year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, Dignitatis Humanae.

The Fortnight for Freedom was observed in the Cleveland Diocese by parishes hosting talks on the importance of religious freedom & adding extra prayers to their daily Masses. Bishop Richard G. Lennon had a Special Mass on July 4th at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. He had this to say to the faithful in a letter posted on the Cleveland Diocese website: “It is my hope, as I am sure it is yours, that our Religious Freedom as Americans remain intact. To ensure this is unchanged, we must do all we can to protect and strengthen this right.”

Hear Bishop Lennon’s homily from the July 4th Mass at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChGm0VvtMuc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChGm0VvtMuc).

**Words to Ponder**

[We] must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin . . . the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The mortality rate for someone in commercial sexual exploitation is 40 times higher than for a non-exploited person of the same age. Helping a victim return to exploitation more quickly by terminating a pregnancy increases the odds of death.

Stephen Wagner, former director of the Human Trafficking Program U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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**Save the date!**

40th Anniversary Gala
Saturday, October 24, 2015
InterContinental Hotel and Conference Center

For tickets and more information, contact Womankind at 216-662-5700.

**Auction items are needed!**

We are on the lookout for unique experiences, items and getaways. Have something to donate? Or, you can make a cash donation and increase our buying power.

If you can help, please contact Bernadette.
Pope’s Letter to International Commission Against the Death Penalty
Vatican City, March 20, 2015 (ZENIT.org) (excerpts from full article)

The Magisterium of the Church, beginning with Sacred Scripture and the centuries-old experience of the People of God, defends life from conception until natural death, and supports full human dignity in as much as image of God (Cf. Genesis 1:26). Human life is sacred because from its beginning, from the first instant of conception, it is fruit of the creative action of God (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2258), and from that moment, man, the only creature God loves for itself, is the object of personal love on the part of God (Cf. Gaudium et spes, 24).

States can kill by action when they apply the death penalty, when they take their peoples to war or when they carry out extra-judicial or summary executions. They can also kill by omission, when they do not guarantee to their peoples access to the essential means for life. "Just as the Commandment ‘do not kill’ puts a clear limit to ensure the value of human life, today we have to say ‘no to an economy of exclusion and inequality’" (Evangelii gaudium, 53).

Life, especially human life, belongs to God alone. Not even the murderer loses his personal dignity and God himself makes himself its guarantor. As Saint Ambrose teaches, God did not want to punish Cain for the murder, as He wants the repentance of the sinner, not his death (Cf. Evangelium vitae, 9).

On some occasions it is necessary to repel proportionally an aggression underway to avoid an aggressor causing harm, and the necessity to neutralize him might entail his elimination: it is the case of legitimate defense (Cf. Evangelium vitae, 55). However, the assumptions of legitimate personal defense are not applicable to the social milieu, without risk of distortion. Because when the death penalty is applied, persons are killed not for present aggressions, but for harm caused in the past. Moreover, it is applied to persons whose capacity to harm is not present but has already been neutralized, and who find themselves deprived of their freedom.

"Justice will never be reached by killing a human being."

Today the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime of the condemned. It is an offense against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person that contradicts God’s plan for man and society and His merciful justice, and it impedes fulfilling the just end of the punishments. It does no do justice to the victims, but foments vengeance.

For a State of Law, the death penalty represents a failure, because it obliges it to kill in the name of justice. Dostoevsky wrote: “To kill one who killed is an incomparably greater punishment than the crime itself. Killing in virtue of a sentence is far worse than the killing committed by a criminal.” Justice will never be reached by killing a human being.

The death penalty loses all legitimacy given the defective selectivity of the criminal system and in face of the possibility of judicial error. Human justice is imperfect, and not to recognize its fallibility can turn it into a source of injustices. With the application of capital punishment the condemned is denied the possibility of reparation or amendment of the harm caused; the possibility of Confession, by which man expresses his interior conversion; and contrition, gateway of repentance and of expiation, to come to the encounter of the merciful and healing love of God.

Moreover, capital punishment is a frequent recourse used by some totalitarian regimes and fanatical groups, for the extermination of political dissidents, of minorities, and of any individual labelled “dangerous” or who can be perceived as a threat to one’s power or to carry out one’s ends. As in the first centuries, today also the Church suffers the application of this punishment to her new martyrs.
Thoughts from Project Rachel

WE LONG. In the heart of every man is the longing to be whole, complete, and undivided. And yet, one doesn’t have to take too many steps down the path of life before this desire is hindered and frustrated. The experience of sin empties us. The event of death brings loss and pain. And the heart twists, turns, and agonizes as it encounters suffering and the endless shades and colors that it can paint on the canvas of human life.

Equal to the pain, has been man’s search for a remedy, and through the centuries man has learned it is not to be found within himself. No matter how great the determination, how brilliant the thought, how rich the indulgence in pleasure or distraction, or how much we allow our hearts to become numb to the wounds we carry through denial and pride—the pain, loss, and darkness cannot be overcome. This is because the remedy can only be found by turning our hearts and minds back to the One who made us.

From the Sisters of Life, Imprint Spring 2015 Issue

This is available on our website as a bulletin announcement.
HELP SAVE LIVES
SEPTEMBER 23 - NOVEMBER 1

Join the worldwide movement to protect mothers and babies

From September 23 – November 1, our community will join with hundreds of other cities participating in 40 Days for Life, a life-saving campaign made up of three components:

PRAYER & FASTING
COMMUNITY OUTREACH
PEACEFUL VIGIL

40 Days for Life is a peaceful pro-life effort made up of more than 625,000 volunteers in 559 cities across 24 nations.

With God’s help, 40 Days for Life has seen proven results: 10,331 babies spared from abortion, 118 abortion worker conversions, and 60 closed abortion centers.

Get involved, and you can help save lives!

Cleveland/Painesville 40 Days for Life:
Vigil Locations: Preterm-Shaker Blvd-Cleveland; Planned Parenthood-Rockside Rd-Bedford Hts; Family Planning-So State St-Painesville
Vigil Hours: 7am – 7pm at three sites
Local Contact: John Noall @ 216-245-9744 or clevelandpraysforlife@gmail.com
Learn More & Get Involved at: 40daysforlife.com/cleveland
Urgent Need for Those With a Heart for Service!

Maggie’s Place Ohio/The Zechariah House is seeking women who are willing to sacrifice a year of their lives to the service of our mothers and their infants.

Maggie’s Place provides houses of hospitality and ongoing support to help pregnant and parenting women in need reach their goals, and welcomes them into a community filled with love and dignity. Full-time, live-in volunteers called MissionCorps members provide non-professional case management to the moms.

Maggie’s Place is seeking female applicants 21+ years who are interested in a July or August 2015 start date. For more information or if you would like to apply, please contact Amanda Ayala, Director of MissionCorps at missioncorps@maggiesplace.org. To learn more, visit their website at maggiesplace.org.

2015 Respect Life Program
“Every Life is Worth Living”

The Respect Life Program begins anew each year on Respect Life Sunday, the first Sunday in October. The program is highlighted in liturgies and marked by special events. The USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities publishes a program packet each year to call attention to numerous human life issues. These materials are especially helpful for priests, parish groups and other organizations.

This year’s parish packets include:

• 1 full-color, 22” x 17” poster—perfect for display in church vestibules & parish halls
• 1 full-color, 8.5” x 11” flyer, briefly exploring theme
• 6-7 full-color pamphlet articles on topics including chastity, terminal illness/assisted suicide, supporting a friend who is unexpectedly pregnant, persons with disabilities, and perinatal hospice.
• 1 Prayer & Program Guide (formerly called the Liturgy Guide): Includes homily bullets, novenas, summary of existing USCCB pro-life prayer materials, discussion questions for articles, and more.
• 1 prayer card inspired by the 2015-16 theme; full-color on front, black-and-white on back; business card size—perfect for wallets. (NEW THIS YEAR!)

You may order these material on the USCCB website, under their Respect Life section.

The 4th Quarter of “For Life” will Publish a special insert announcing 2014 Respect Life Events. Does your parish or group have something planned to commemorate this October’s Respect Life month? If so, submit your information by September 1, 2015 to: Peggy Gerovac at pmgerovac@ccdocle.org or mail to Peggy at the Office for Human Life, 7911 Detroit Ave, Cleveland, OH 44102.