

## Laudato Si - Essay Contest

It is all about perspective. To date, climate change has been discussed and debated by many, however it has not been examined from a spiritual point of view. The time has come to change our perspective and recognize that, in addition to the scientific, political, and economic dissertations on the environmental crisis, we as Catholics are called by our faith to respect the planet and all human life.

All humans are connected to each other and to the environment around us. Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* reminds us we are all God's creation and should work for the common good of everyone: "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" (LS 228). Despite the fact that the United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, according to the CBS Sunday Morning episode, "Americans Without Water," a staggering two-million Americans had no access to running water in 2020. This reality illustrates a lack of solidarity and directly contradicts the goal of working for a common good.

Having access to running water and indoor plumbing is a necessity and human right that we take for granted here in America. Despite this, a significant portion of the Navajo Nation and Keystone, West Virginia, two low-income communities documented in "Americans Without Water," had no safe running water, and Keystone in particular had a boil water advisory for eight straight years. *Laudato Si* insists we can not ignore the impact on the poor in these and other low-income communities: "The rich and the poor have equal dignity, for 'the Lord is the maker of them all' (Prov 22:2)" (LS 94). Indeed, America is not a third world country that lacks the money or infrastructure to make running water and indoor plumbing a reality for those in need.

We must eliminate selfishness and indifference and instead prioritize the poor and vulnerable in our communities.

In my own home and community, Pope Francis calls on me to challenge myself and convert my thinking on conservation and what it means to protect the earth. I am called to conserve water at home by always using a refillable water bottle, taking 5-minute showers, not letting the water run when I lather up my hands or brush my teeth, and never pouring water down the drain if it can be used to water the garden. In addition, by including less meat in my diet, I can significantly reduce my water footprint and make more sustainable choices. These are just some of the ways I am able to fulfill my responsibility to protect the sacredness of our environment and water in particular.