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## Catholic Diocese of Columbus

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Bishop Earl K. Fernandes and the Diocese of Columbus warmly welcome the Holy Father's Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, which follows his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si*. All are invited to read and study the document as we continue to assume responsibility for our "common home." The Holy Father felt the urgent need to address environmental issues at this time, admitting that "our responses have not been adequate." (*LD*, 1)

While many may perceive this exhortation as something political, revolving around the politics and science of climate change, it is much more than that. This is a moral issue. October is Respect Life Month. At the center of creation is the human person, made in God's image and likeness, but the person does not live in a vacuum. Citing the American bishops (cf. *LD*, 3; USCCB, *Global Climate Change Background*, 2019), Pope Francis states that "our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together."

The theme for Respect Life Month in the United States is "Radical Solidarity." With this exhortation, the Holy Father invites us to radical solidarity with those who suffer from the deleterious effects of environmental change and disaster. He invites us to deeper conversion and to accept our responsibility instead of attempting to blame the poor or to blame the crisis on overpopulation (cf. *LD*, 9).

Following the main lines of thinking of *Laudato Si*, the Holy Father places before us the challenges placed by an ever-growing technocratic paradigm, with an unlimited growth, without adequate ethical reflection. Technology, and its associated economic power (cf. 29-32), allow a select few to dominate others and to treat people and the rest of creation as things to be used rather than persons and creatures of God to be loved, warning that "Contrary to this technocratic paradigm, we say that the world that surrounds us is not an object of exploitation, unbridled use and unlimited ambition." (*LD*, 25)

If we continue to treat creation as something to be used and discarded, why should we be surprised that children in the womb, disabled, and elderly people are also discarded? Why should we be surprised by the violence on our streets? Pope Francis highlights the human person, writing, "Human beings must be recognized as a part of nature. Human life, intelligence and freedom are elements of the nature that enriches our planet, part of its internal workings and its equilibrium." (*LD*, 26)

What is needed now more than ever is an integral human ecology, which accounts for the role of the person in his or her environment. The exhortation itself places fundamental questions before us: "What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?" (*LD*, 33)

While acknowledging that Climate Change Conferences have not yielded adequate results and while remaining hopeful for the Conference of Parties 2028 in Dubai, the Holy Father sees this time as critical for our planet and for all of us. On this Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi, as Catholics, we must recognize the beauty of creation and the God who created all things if we are to have a future together in our common home. Creation reveals the One who made all things. The Eternal Father, who saw all He had made and declared it good, sent His Son to be born into this world and to be the Redeemer of all creation.

As disciples of this Son, Jesus, let us assume our responsibility, even by small actions such as reducing pollution and waste, consuming with prudence, fasting, and prayer, to help create a "new culture" (*LD*, 71) in which every life and every creature in our common home is valued, cherished and loved, and, in doing so, show our love for God, crying out with Francis of Assisi, "*Laudate Deum*."