

NJPN Comment in the Catholic Universe:

Colette Joyce - Living Laudato Si'

Lockdown means that I am writing this article outdoors in my garden rather than from a desk in Vaughan House, Westminster. I am sitting on the grass, listening to bird song and wondering if the breeze actually requires a warmer jumper. When my mind wanders from the task, I study the patterns of the moss within the lawn for inspiration. This is the simple connection with nature that human beings are in danger of losing in our high-tech, concrete and plastic-covered world. For many of us, the pandemic has created a chance to sit still, stay put, stop polluting and reassess what is important to us.

The week 16-24 May marks the 5th anniversary of the encyclical **Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home** and Pope Francis is calling us all once again into an urgent dialogue about our common home, not just for the sake of our health and well-being, but for our very survival. The problems he spelt out five years ago are getting worse: pollutants in the air, water and soil, a throwaway culture, toxic waste, the loss of biodiversity, extinction of species and de-stabilisation of the climate. This beautiful world, with all its many wonders, stands on the brink of ruin.

He pointed to the decline in the human environment caused by choosing ever-increasing exploitation of the earth's resources over the building of sustainable communities. He highlighted *global inequality* as the gravest of all the problems confronting us. That we have accepted as normal the deterioration of the land and societies of the poorest people on earth to enrich the wealthiest is the gravest of distortions. We measure success by our percentage increases in national GDP (the overall production of 'stuff') when perhaps we should be measuring people's well-being.

The central insight of the encyclical is that *the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor* are one and the same thing. (#48) A 'green' recovery from the pandemic is necessary to prevent future affliction. We have before us an unexpected chance to re-make our societies in a way that benefits both people and planet.

This Laudato Si' Week let us set aside time to decide what changes we need to make to our lives as individuals, parishes and societies in order to save that which is most precious to us.

*Pope Francis invites people everywhere to pray the Laudato Si' prayer together on Sunday 24 May at 12noon local time. <https://laudatosiweek.org/prayer/>
Colette Joyce is the Westminster Justice & Peace Co-ordinator.*