**Laudato Si-A Very Brief Summary**

**Introduction**-This document is the first encyclical written by Pope Francis. An encyclical has the highest level of authority of any document written by a pope. The first encyclical a pope writes shows us what the primary concern(s) of his papacy will be. The title comes from the first two words of the document in the language it is written. Laudato Si is written in the language spoken by St. Francis-patron saint of the environment-rather than Latin. Laudato Si means, “Praise be to You”. This phrase comes from the **Canticle of Creatures** from St. Francis. It is a song in praise of creatures and creation.

The document is broken up into an introductory section and six chapters. There will be a question for discussion for the introduction and each chapter. These questions will help us enter into the heart of that section of the document.

*Discussion Question for the Introductory Section-“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”*

**Introductory Section Summary**-Pope Francis believes if we don’t grapple with the above question, then “I do not believe our concern for ecology will produce significant results.”

If we look around at our world things look bleak but “human beings, while capable of the worst, are still capable or rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.”

*Discussion Question for Chapter One-“What do you think is the most pressing environmental issue facing our world? Why?*

**Chapter One Summary**-this chapter presents the most recent scientific findings on the environment as a way to listen to the cry of creation, “to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”

In this chapter Pope Francis focuses on such issues as climate change, pollution, access to safe drinking water, and loss of biodiversity. The pope makes it very clear that the damage we are doing to the earth effects the poor the most. The Pope says that the global North owes an environmental debt to the global South. The North has often destroyed the South’s environment in pursuit of cheap goods and oil. He calls upon the North to change their lifestyle and consumption habits which are so detrimental to the South.

*Discussion Question for Chapter Two-“Canada’s official name used to be ‘the Dominion of Canada’. The word ‘Dominion’ comes from the Creation Story. What do you think Dominion means? How might our understanding of the word ‘Dominion’ effect how we treat creation?*

**Chapter Two Summary**-Using the Creation and Fall Stories, the pope illustrates how humans have broken our three most vital relationships: with God, with neighbor, and with the environment. He rejects the idea that the creation story “justifies absolute dominion over other creatures” and reminds us that the creation story tells us both to till and keep the earth. We have done a good job of tilling it but not of keeping it.

*Discussion Question for Chapter Three-“Do you feel that your age group is more or less concerned about the environment than you parents’ age group? Why or why not?*

**Chapter Three Summary-**Pope Francis focuses on the human roots of the ecological crisis. He believes that human beings no longer realize their rightful place with respect to the world and take on a self-centred position that focuses exclusively on themselves and on their own power. This results in a “use and throw away” logic that justifies every type of waste and abuse such as: exploitation of children, abuse of the elderly, slavery, human trafficking, abortion and hunting animals to extinction.

*Discussion Question for Chapter Four-“When purchasing a product are labels such as ‘fair trade’ or “grown in a sustainable manner’ important to you? Why or why not?*

**Chapter Four Summary**-The Pope feels that our earth is confronted by “one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” Thus, the solution must not be just an environmental one but also a social one. We must commit ourselves to the common good which means making choices based on “a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.” This is also the best way to leave a sustainable world for future generations. We must not only proclaim these truths-God calls us to care for the environment and for the poor- but also live our lives according to them.

*Discussion Question for Chapter Five-“If you had to give the Canadian government a grade for how well they have protected the environment, what grade would you give them? Why?*

**Chapter Five** **Summary**-The Pope has harsh words for governments who have spoken a great deal about the environment but have done little to protect it. He appeals to those who hold political office to avoid a mentality of efficiency and immediacy and instead to openly and honestly consider both the social and environmental impact of their decisions.

*Discussion Question for Chapter Six-“What are some concrete things that you could personally do to make a positive environmental and social change in the world?*

**Chapter Six Summary**-In this final chapter, Pope Francis invites us all to an ecological conversion but he realizes that reshaping habits and behaviours is not easy. He believes that such “change is impossible without motivation and the process of education” and that schools have an important part to play in this education. He continues that the “importance of environmental education cannot be overstated. It is able to affect actions and daily habits, the reduction of water consumption, the sorting of waste and turning of unnecessary lights.”

He invites us all to begin this process of change by aiming “for a new lifestyle”, one that will ask the question, “how do the choices I make effect the poor.” He then encourages us to bring “healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and political power” to further bring about change.