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'Laudato Si' ('Praised Be') – Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) has eagerly received Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, '*Laudato Si'* ('Praised Be'). As an encyclical we receive it as a document with a teaching purpose. Out of our own commitment to 'extravagant hospitality, compassion and justice in the Earth community, being shattered by displacement,' we welcome the emphasis in the encyclical on the need to protect the Earth and dignify humanity.

Along with Sisters of Mercy worldwide we see vividly the links between climate change and environmental degradation and the plight of immigrants, women and children, and those victimized by violence and racism. We worry about even greater suffering, given forecasts for increased climate refugees, environmental-related conflicts and food crises. We, too, are very aware that the poor are the least able to protect themselves from such crises.

We welcome the recognition of the science that points to the reality of human influenced climate change and our subsequent responsibility to mitigate these effects, locally, nationally and at the global level. We hope that world leaders, at the United Nations Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals in September and international climate talks in Paris in December will take heed of the Pope's moral imperative to work for a more just and sustainable world.

As Sisters of Mercy we feel compelled to do our part. Individually and corporately we embrace the spirituality and theology embedded in the encyclical. It will give added impetus to our efforts around conservation and influencing public policy. We are committed to continuing to work hard to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and to utilise renewable energy sources into the future.

We will be encouraging all within our influence to deepen their respect for the integrity of creation and to act in harmony and interdependence with it. We too join in the Canticle of Praise of St Francis when he says, "Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures".

A translation of the encyclical may be accessed here:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

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