

GENERATION LAUDATO SI



Catholic Youth on Living Out
an Ecological Spirituality

EDITED BY

Rebecca Rathbone
AND Simon Appolloni



Published in Australia by
Garratt Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent
Mulgrave, VIC 3170
www.garrattpublishing.com.au

Copyright in this work remains the property of the contributing authors.

Copyright this ANZ edition © Garratt Publishing
First published in 2023 by Novalis Publishing Inc.
This edition published by arrangement with Novalis Publishing

All rights reserved. Except as provided by the Australian copyright law, no part of this book may be reproduced in any way without permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover Design by Garratt Publishing
Text Design by Troy Cunningham
Cover image from iStock

ISBN 9781922484789

Cataloguing in Publication information for this title is available from the National Library of Australia.
www.nla.gov.au

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

The authors and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material.



CONTENTS

Prologue by Alice Carwardine // vii

Foreword by Fr Joshrom Isaac Kureethadam SDB // x

Introduction // xii

1. LEADERSHIP/GOVERNANCE // 1

2. THE ECONOMY // 27

3. EDUCATION // 49

4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT // 69

5. TECHNOLOGY // 103

6. LIFESTYLE // 127

Afterword by Jeannette Filthaut SP // 149

Contributors // 151

Endorsements // 161

Helpful Resources // 165



SAMPLE

PROLOGUE

In May 2015, after devouring Pope Francis' encyclical, I experienced what I expect many have experienced when reading *Laudato Si'* for the first time – a complete transformation of faith. Since its release, *Laudato Si'* has become more than a title for an encyclical: it has become a movement, a revolution, an adjective, and a gift to share with others.

This book highlights the way that *Laudato Si'* has been working in the lives of young people to bring about cultural change. My own experience can serve as an example: during Lent of 2018, I felt God calling me to go Zero-waste. In this time, I fully came to realise how *Laudato Si'* was really meant to be lived. Two weeks in, I had a compost full of maggots, every DIY toothpaste recipe I tried (which failed miserably), and I was about to quit. That morning during staff prayer, we read the story of Jesus going into the Temple to overturn the tables of the money changers. In response to those few words, I wept as I realised how God had revealed the true meaning of cultural change. This is what Pope Francis was calling us to, and the young people inside this book have heard him and are working to bring about the deep spiritual and physical transformation so greatly needed in our world.

The authors in *Generation Laudato Si'* are all keen learners. They understand the value in taking risks at this critical moment in time. When studying *Laudato Si'*, my eyes were opened to how the interconnectedness of the Church's historic doctrines has brought about the root causes of climate change. My research journeyed to concepts such as Original Sin, Satisfaction theory, and (finally) Deep Incarnation. I attended every possible workshop, lecture, and seminar on eco-theology, *Laudato Si'*, and St Francis of Assisi. For the next five years, I was always the youngest in the room. And, more times than not, the only female. Even in different circles – for example, when I attend local Bushcare working bees – I'm always the youngest, and sometimes the only female. As young people, we must continue to step outside of our comfort zones, because the risk of not doing so is too great.

Through my journey with the Australian Mercy Integral Ecology Emerging Leaders Fellowship, I continue to be mentored, lovingly, by leaders in the integral ecology and eco-spirituality space. And I am constantly reminded of two things:

1. Young people don't have all the answers. We are, mostly, not too arrogant to assume that we know more or know better. But now, more than ever, we are challenging every discourse and hidden curriculum taught by the systems of education that sought to perpetuate the consumerist culture we live in.
2. Inspired by the lyrics of Joyce Johnson Rouse, 'We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us.' This book is a humble collection of the works of young people who are confidently standing on their own two feet, aware of those who have inspired us.

The world is being changed by young people, whether the older generation are on the journey or not. Pope Francis is very clear that, 'Young people demand change. They wonder how

PROLOGUE

anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded (LS 13).’ Eight years on, and the work of young people across the globe prioritises planetary health and support for the vulnerable. We’ve moved past the ‘wondering’ and have already started to build a better future. One of the common characteristics between the writers here is that each one of them understands that to live *Laudato Si*, to have an ecological conversion, is entirely a selfless act. Our strength is through collaboration, connection, and community. We do everything, not just for ourselves, but for the planet and the vulnerable. And what we need is for the cynics, consumerists, politicians, and those motivated by corporate and economic greed to decide to ‘get with it’ or ‘get out of the way’.

Young people are like mycelium. Unlike grass-roots initiatives that sometimes fail to penetrate deep and get high off the ground, the work of the young people discussed in this book are far reaching and interconnecting. The work of young people has adapted to be like connecting microorganisms spreading and channelling energy throughout the whole forest. We can decompose things down and help to grow new things up while creatively redistributing resources to the rest of the forest. We are the generation that is going to bring the world through this crisis. And this book will show you how we are doing it.

I hope as you read this book that you feel welcomed into a vibrant community of young people all working for social and ecological justice. We are no longer standing alone. Because of the work that these authors are doing, we can all feel a deep sense of confidence and hope for the future.

Alice Carwardine

Coordinator Caritas Catholic Earthcare

FOREWORD

I have had the joy and agony of dealing with ecological issues for several decades. It all began with a sense of elation in the 1980s when I began to explore our infinitely vast universe as a young student of cosmology. I was intrigued especially to discover the beauty and grandeur of Earth, the only place we can really call home in the cosmic expanses. However, already in the 1990s, a profound feeling of concern and anguish began to creep in, on discovering how human activities have been rapidly – and, in many ways, irretrievably – mutilating our common home.

As I delved deeper into ecological thinking and activism, a sense of helplessness and frustration began to overwhelm me. On the one hand, reports after reports from the scientific community have been warning humanity about the many ecological crises, imperilling not just our climate and ecosystems, but our socio-economic systems as well. On the other hand, the world of politics and economy remained indifferent, if not hostile, to addressing ecological degradation. Even the churches and the religions were largely apathetic when it came to protecting and healing God's creation.

However, there were also encouraging signs of hope! I would like to mention at least two here. The first was the publication of the landmark encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis in 2015.

FOREWORD

Laudato Si' was indeed a paradigm shift! Pope Francis spoke of Earth as our common home rather than just the environment that happens to surround us. He spoke of the “good news” of creation and sought to trace the deeper human roots of the ecological crisis. Above all, Pope Francis championed an integral approach in understanding the crisis as the “cry of the Earth” and the “cry of the poor” and reminded us that we all need to come together as politicians, economists, policymakers, scientists, activists, faith leaders, and so on to rebuild our common home. The Pope called for ecological citizenship through education and spirituality.

The second sign of hope was the emergence of social and youth movements for the care of our common home. In recent years, our children and young people have taken to the streets, in large and growing numbers, giving vent to their frustration about our inaction. They reminded us of what is so obvious, sketched out in big, colourful letters on cardboard placards, namely that “There’s no Planet B.” Thanks to our courageous young leaders, ecological questions are beginning to receive the attention they deserve.

It gives me great joy in this context to see a book that brings together *Laudato Si'* and the youth. It is a beautiful mosaic of so many wonderful ways in which the integral ecological vision of *Laudato Si'* is being lived out by young people and communities around the world. I pray that the present book, illumined by the spirituality and wisdom of *Laudato Si'*, inspire us all to create a people’s movement from below for the protection of our common home and our human and biotic family. Time is running out, but concrete examples of hope and action can inspire, as the present book does.

Fr. Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam SDB

Coordinator of the Sector of “Ecology and Creation”

Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Generation Laudato Si'*!

What you're holding in your hands are the thoughts, wisdom, dreams, aspirations and actions of a young generation who sees that a better world is not only possible but is happening all around us. A generation that is inspired by their faith and by the wisdom of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* to live and promote an integral ecology – where people, nature and God can all be in right relationship with each other. The youth featured in this book are witnesses of a world that is hurting but also of a world that still has a chance to be healthy and just for all. And that, dear friend, makes this book a very special thing to be holding.

The beauty of the philosophy behind this collection is in its simplicity: a book about *Laudato Si'* should be created in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*. The book was printed under just working conditions using 100% FSC certified paper from sustainably managed forests; the interior papers are made from 100% recycled fibre content. And rather than writing yet another analysis of the encyclical, we've instead given a group of young people from across this planet this platform to speak for themselves – to raise issues that are important to them, describe them in their own words, and invite and inspire you (yes, you!) to join the effort of fostering an integral ecology in concrete

INTRODUCTION

and practical ways. We have taken special care to ensure as equal representation as possible – which is why you will read contributions from both young women and men from many countries in every region of the world. The final result is a labour of love that captures a beautiful collection of the wisdom, creativity and actions that *Laudato Si'* has inspired in a young generation of leaders across our wounded, beautiful, messy, worth-fighting-for world.

This is what makes the collection in your hands so unique: it connects you with the perspective *of* young people *by* young people. And what better time than the present to do this? Half of the world's population is under 30 years old. Youth represent the largest demographic on Earth, which is promising. It is often said that we are the last generation that can do something about climate change before it is too late. But what you'll read in the pages ahead is not a sense of despair – far from it! Instead, you'll encounter only hope, determination and faith made contagious by the passion of the young people writing. If we are going to create an integral ecology before it's too late, it's hope, determination, faith and a bit of grit and determination that will get us there – not despair.

The six chapters of this book cover front-and-centre topics that we encounter in our day-to-day lives: education, community development, the economy, technology, lifestyle, and leadership and governance. Our contributors break down each of these topics using the See, Judge, Act method. First, you'll see the issues that exist through the eyes of young people, then you'll hear their wisdom as they judge these issues through the lens of *Laudato Si'* and their faith, and finally you'll hear inspiring testimonies of young people who are taking action to make a positive impact within these issues and inviting you to get involved from wherever you are.

We hope you will use this collection to expand your understanding of our world today – its problems and also their solutions – by letting yourself learn from the wisdom of young people. We hope that our contributors energize and inspire you to take up this cause. The collection in your hands is only one

piece of the larger and continuously expanding collection on the GenerationLS website (generationsls.com). Follow and continue the conversation on Twitter and Instagram @GenerationLS. We hope that all of this will ignite a meaningful conversation about what it means to create a world that is just for all.

So, before you turn to the next page, take a moment to open your mind and your heart to the voices you'll encounter in this book. Let yourself become a witness to them, as they are witnesses of the communities in which they live and serve. Let them show you the ecological and social crises of our time through their eyes, but then let yourself be evangelized by them so that you will believe that an integral ecology is not only possible but is actually happening all over the world today.

This is not a book as much as an invitation to come along on a journey around the globe and to share in the hopes, dreams, faith and actions of young people working for a better world. When the physical object leaves your hands and goes into its spot on your shelf, we hope that you keep these hopes and dreams in your heart and let them sustain you on your own journey to create an integral ecology in your part of the world.

Rebecca Rathbone

Co-editor

1

LEADERSHIP/GOVERNANCE

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

SEE

YOU DON'T NEED TO TAKE A

LONG

look to notice that many leadership and governance structures in our world are built in a way that excludes young people. Looking at political systems, for example, in Canada (and in many other countries) young people aren't allowed to vote or run for office until they

are 18 years old. Finances present a second hurdle for a young person brave enough to run for office – how many young people have \$50,000 lying around to run a competitive election campaign or can afford to forgo work to hit the campaign trail? The result: political chambers are, for the most part, filled with more senior politicians. So, in countries where people have the privilege to do so, young people exercise their political rights from the outside looking in on the streets, through advocacy and, finally, at the polls when they reach the age of majority.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis catches politicians in his headlights, saying that states too often prioritise short-term benefits to stay in

... political and institutional frameworks do not exist simply to avoid bad practice, but also to promote best practice, to stimulate creativity in seeking new solutions and to encourage individual or group initiatives. (*Laudato Si'* 177)

power over long-term thinking that benefits the common good for present *and* future generations. If politicians aim only to please voters who can (re)elect them or fund their election campaigns, how can they possibly pay any significant attention to the concerns of young people who make up a zero-to-small portion of their potential votes?

And yet, the contributors in this chapter are still finding ways to influence leadership and governance systems. How? By breaking through these barriers and championing long-term best practices that they know will benefit not only people today but also the generations that are on their way.

In the Judge section of this chapter, Domenica Reyes (Ecuador) helps us to see how modern methods of communication can empower us to influence the world. We also hear from Luke Henkel, who describes how he grapples with being persecuted for protecting the earth by the same governing body in the United States that the UN has entrusted with the task of protecting the earth. Lucy Esipila (Kenya) highlights the crucial role that local communities play in caring for the earth and the important responsibility we all have to ensure that the voices of the poor are included in all of our environmental efforts.

Kehkashan Basu (Canada) confirms Lucy's ideas in the first half of the Act section, describing the impact that her social innovation, the Green Earth Foundation, has on empowering Rohingya refugees to break out of the cycle of poverty in the Kutupalong refugee camp. Finally, Dewy Sacayan (New Zealand) calls us to embark on an ecological conversion and gives us three concrete ways to do this through influencing in a positive way the structures that caused the climate crisis to begin with.

All of the inspiring young people you will meet in this chapter are breaking through barriers and breaking down unhealthy systems; the result is that they are important changemakers in our world today. They remind us that engaging with world leaders and systems of governance is not always negative. They remind us that the fight

to protect our common home is not just about challenging bad practices, but actually by being leaders and influencers to create good practices. In this way, we can all help to shape the structures that influence our world into forces of good to care for our common home.



1. Make an account of where the voices of youth are heard in your community, your country. What patterns do you find?
2. What are some of the main policies that a younger generation wants to see put in place in society but are being sidelined or ignored by older politicians?

Twitter and Instagram: [@GenerationLS](#)

JUDGE

A RALLYING CALL

Domenica Reyes

Ecuador

The term “arise” calls us to take action – to get out of our comfort zone and lead the change. As *Laudato Si’* says, “Young people demand change” (LS 13); therefore, as young people, we should lead this change. We are called to live in our faith and honour our Creator in so many different ways. Sometimes we’re waiting for someone else to do something, but now it is time for us to take the lead. We *can* drive change and ask for better policies to make best practices part of politics.

In leading the Laudato Si’ Movement’s youth working group, Laudato Si’ Generation, I’ve had the opportunity to work with so many amazing people who are ready to commit to bring *Laudato Si’* to life. In the beginning, it can be challenging. But we have the tools to raise our voices, to make changes, to demand a better future. We have the power of the Internet, of social media, that can connect us from all over the world. Everything is interconnected, so we need to join efforts, meet with leaders from different parts

of the globe, share ideas and actions, and inspire each other. Let's take the church outside and bring our message so that government officials and political leaders have no choice but to listen.

LIGHTHOUSES OF JUSTICE

Luke Henkel

United States

I was arrested for peacefully protesting in the United States recently. The event I attended was a peaceful mass action to protest a pipeline that was to be built through key American waterways and through Indigenous territories. Thousands of people turned up to protest because they knew that the oil company has a terrible safety record and had rushed their environmental impact study. That day, well over 300 of us were arrested and held in a tiny jail together for 48 hours. Months later, I am still entrenched in a court battle with the company.

My charge? Trespassing on critical infrastructure property. (Yes, the state where the protest took place defines pipeline and fossil fuel infrastructure as critical infrastructure.) The company is bringing felony charges against us on the grounds that our protest cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

How ironic is it, then, that the governance body that arrested me and is trying me for a felony charge for protecting the environment (the US government) is the very same governance body that arenas like the Conference of the Parties (COP), the governing body of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is tasking to protect the environment on national and global levels? To reconcile this idea in my mind and in my heart is a work in progress.

Laudato Si' is a document that has truly helped me to sort out this and other challenging topics and has even kept me from

falling apart as I grapple with the injustices that the environment – and those trying to defend it – face every day. I love the idea of environmental defenders as witnesses because to me, witnessing is about truly lifting up the voices of others.

To explain my point, imagine a lighthouse. A lighthouse is meant to highlight danger, but if a sea captain is busy looking only at the lighthouse, they will hit the rocks and sink. What's more important is the water that the spotlight is pointing to. In the same way, if I am a witness to the environment, the focus should be on the issues I shine my spotlight on rather than on me.

I attended the pipeline protest with thousands of witnesses. Thousands of lighthouses who shone their spotlights on the interconnectedness of all things, saying things like, “Your pipeline will destroy water, which is life!” But where were the company and the American judicial system looking? Like the unfortunate captain, they seemed to see only the lighthouses and how much money these were costing. They completely missed what we shone our spotlights on.

Laudato Si' has helped me to truly believe that it doesn't have to be this way.

It's easy to be critical and say “all institutions suck” or “all governing bodies are a mess.” But Pope Francis's point in *Laudato Si'* (177) about the importance of institutions not only avoiding bad practice but also promoting best practice has been a good reminder for me about the important role that institutions can and sometimes do play in creating cohesion among those acting for social and ecological justice. Institutions would greatly benefit from breaking out of their formal political boxes, and the rhetoric they use to feel safe, and instead actually talk from and to the heart and pay attention to what environmental witnesses are saying.

Because in the end, *actions* matter, especially to young people. What really draws people in is getting to work. So, I encourage you to consider: Where are you going to work, and where will you shine your spotlight?