Seven Steps to the Encyclical „Laudato Si“ by the Holy Father Pope Francis

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The encyclical discusses climate change, poverty and inequality as the main ethical challenges of the 21st century. It is therefore inappropriate to reduce it to an environmental or climate encyclical.

The encyclical is fundamentally on Justice!
The Background of the Encyclical

Pope Francis visits USA in September

G7 Summit in Germany in June

COP 21, Paris

UN SDG

Source: Bundesregierung/Kugler
Pacem in Terris addresses „all men of good will“ in a global crisis

„Pacem in terris“ by Pope John XXIII

Cuba Crisis

The Berlin Wall
The encyclical identifies the atmosphere as a global common good, as the collective property of all humans.
Risks from climate change depend on cumulative CO$_2$ emissions...

Based on SYR Figure SPM.10
Mitigation involves some level of co-benefits and of risks due to adverse side-effects, but these risks do not involve the same possibility of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts as risks from climate change.

Based on SYR Figure SPM.10
The Economics of Climate Change

Resources and reserves to remain underground until 2100 (median values compared to BAU, AR5 Database)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Until 2100</th>
<th>With CCS [%]</th>
<th>No CCS [%]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bauer et al. (2014); Jakob, Hilaire (2015)
“The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and ‘the first principle of the whole ethical and social order’ [71]”, No. 93


St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)
Summa Theologiae II/II q. 66, a. 2.
The Pope rejects misleading moral dilemmas.

Step 3

The Pope regards water shortages for the poor, the loss of biodiversity, the collapse of societies, and the aggravation of inequality as impacts of dangerous climate change.
Preferential Options for the Poor

- Water availability
- Sanitation
- Telecommunication
- Access to electricity
Avoiding dangerous climate change and the eradication of poverty are no conflicting goals.
The Common Good and Vested Interests

**Step 4**

The encyclical exposes the denial of climate change as the veiling of power interests. Veiling, because the debate is not about scientific accuracy, but rather self-serving interests that are to be enforced against the common good.
Step 5

The encyclical assesses technology largely positively, but it warns of technological determinism, technocracy, consumerism and fatalism.
Ethical decisions about the direction of technological change

Technology needs ethical deliberation and design, especially energy supply.
Call for Stewardship at all relevant levels

Step 6

The encyclical places the solutions of the global crisis at the levels of international cooperation, national policies, municipal governance, communities, families and the individual.

Laudato Si does not ask for a world government!
Against market based instruments? What the Laudato Si really says:

“The strategy of buying and selling ‘carbon credits’ can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide. This system seems to provide a quick and easy solution under the guise of a certain commitment to the environment, but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors.” (No. 171)
How to understand the concrete recommendations and concerns in Laudato Si

- Pope Francis refers to **reason** and not to faith when presenting his concerns on ‘carbon credits’ and emissions trading; he does not claim technical competence.

- Thus, **technical evaluation** of policy instruments within the encyclical should **not be understood** as a new **doctrine in the social teaching** of the Catholic Church.

- It is an **invitation** and engagement in a reasoned **debate** over how to **derive prudential** rules from the more **fundamental ethical principles** discussed in the encyclical.

- Climate **policy instruments** need an **evaluation** according to **justice, fairness, effectiveness** and **efficiency**.
The Catholic Church could lift its best kept secret:
The Catholic Social Teaching
Step 7

The biblical narration of creation, fall, salvation and consummation is intended to open all Christians’ eyes.

Human history is drama, not tragedy.
Distorted Relation to the Own Self, Others, God and Earth

“Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth.”

Laudatio Si, No. 70

Cain slaying Abel
Peter Paul Rubens - The Courtauld Gallery, London