

Faith and Just One World

A theological reflection on J1W in the light of Laudato Si.

This document is designed to be read alongside the description of the 4 aims of CAFOD's Just One World strategic framework. It sets out CAFOD's initial response to Pope Francis's invitation to reflect and to contribute to a global dialogue on ways to respond:

*'The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.'*¹

This document uses the methodology applied by Pope Francis in the encyclical – to see, to judge in the light of faith, to act, and to celebrate.

1: Roots in reality: What is CAFOD seeing around us?

CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, works through partner agencies and with communities to enable some of the poorest people in the world to flourish and become 'artisans of their destiny'².

We are called to listen and respond to the cry of the poorest and of the earth itself – both hurt by the rush to forms of development that fail to respect the common good and are neither integral nor sustainable. We believe that development should enable all of us - humanity and the earth - to flourish, both now and for generations to come.³

We are seeing the impact of growing inequality and extreme poverty, which means, for example, that millions of people do not have access to sufficient food nor to clean water. We are working alongside people who do not have safe and sustainable housing nor dignified work. We are witnessing a rise in migration, as people seek safety and a place of peace, away from war and conflict, and from extreme weather.

We know that climate change is the single biggest threat to reducing poverty and we can see that the poorest amongst us are being hit the hardest. Many of the communities supported by CAFOD are suffering from more frequent and extreme floods, storms, or droughts, which are pushing the most vulnerable people further into poverty. Farming families are struggling with more unpredictable seasons, meaning crops fail and livestock die.

We are inspired both by the resilience and capacity of the very poorest and most disadvantaged people to respond to the challenges they face, and by the loving solidarity of parishioners in the Catholic community of England and Wales. We will continue to find practical ways to deepen further the connection between these communities across the globe. Together we will seek to counteract the injustice of global poverty and global indifference by

¹ *Laudato Si'* #13

² *Populorum Progressio* #65, Pope Paul VI

³ cf *Laudato Si'* #18

bringing hope. *We, as CAFOD, are both privileged and proud to share in the dreams and hopes of so many people, and to celebrate their successes alongside them.*

2: Roots in faith: How does CAFOD understand what we see in the light of our faith?

*'An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.'*⁴

As a Catholic agency our work is inspired by faith, by the experience of people who are poor or disadvantaged, and by the solidarity expressed by the Catholic community in England and Wales. CAFOD's work is rooted in Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church, including Catholic Social Teaching. This means that we want to work with people of all faiths and none. We have a deep respect for the equality of all people.

We believe that God has created everything and that the earth is not given to us to be exploited and degraded, but to be protected and cared for. It has value in and of itself as it glorifies God singing its own hymn of praise. Since Christ has redeemed humanity and all creation, it is integral to Christian faith to value and care for all creatures while respecting human life and dignity. Pope Francis has recently emphasised that everything is interconnected.⁵

Christians believe that as disciples of Jesus Christ, inspired by the Spirit of his Resurrection, we can love each other as neighbours with all our hearts, souls and minds, just as we love God. Love of God and love of neighbour are truly united⁶.

The Tradition of the Church considers the family as the first and foundational society⁷, and therefore *Laudato Si'* highlights the importance of the family both for integral development (for all individuals and the whole society) and for integral ecology (social and natural).

We live in and flourish through loving and transformative relationships with God, our neighbour, our own self and with the earth. ⁸

Love is at the heart of CAFOD's work, the love of God that we receive and respond to in our prayer and in our actions. For CAFOD, love is not only individual, but also communitarian, civic and political. As labourers in the Kingdom of God, we are called to act against injustice and to bring about change in favour of human flourishing and integral ecology, and to act against the structures of sin that keep people poor.

⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium* #183, Pope Francis

⁵ *Laudato Si'* #138 & #240, Pope Francis

⁶ *Deus Caritas Est*, #14, Pope Benedict XVI

⁷ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of The Church*, # 213

⁸ *Laudato Si'* #70, Pope Francis

*'He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty'⁹.*

Our faith teaches us that to respond to God's loving call, we need to make radical decisions in favour of those who are poorest and most vulnerable rather than in the interests of the richest and most powerful. Our work requires an attitude and practice of reflection to inform every action. We are asked to live simply and in a sustainable way, in solidarity with people who live in poverty.

3: What are the challenges we face? How do we understand progress?

Pope Francis suggests¹⁰ that, deeply rooted in contemporary society, there is a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning of progress. *'Put simply', he writes, 'it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.'*¹¹

CAFOD acknowledges that economic growth has for too long been prioritised over the true flourishing of humanity and other creatures. And we can see that the overarching narrative guiding political and economic decisions across the globe is based on the myths of both infinite growth and infinite resource. These myths need to be challenged.

The creation of wealth for its own sake does not necessarily lead to more dignified and more human lives for most of humanity. Indeed, it can lead to a lack of respect both for poor people and for the earth. The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are one. Both are responses to exploitation in pursuit of material wealth for the few, whilst, on the contrary, our faith teaches us that the goods of creation are meant for the good of all.

Alongside this we have seen that, rather than seeking the common good and building a common response to contemporary challenges, many of us are led towards individualism and hence indifference towards the fate of the other. Despite this trend we see encouraging signs, particularly at times of humanitarian crisis, that many of us are moved to respond with compassion towards those in most need.

The scale of cultural, political and social transformation that is required to respond to the challenges of climate change, ecological damage, poverty and inequality means that we need leaders who can prioritise long-term solutions for the many over short-term benefits for the few. We should be cautious about beliefs in a technological 'quick fix' to global problems – including the problems of ecological degradation.

CAFOD is committed to sustainable and integral development for the good of each person and of all. We work together towards the common good, in solidarity with each other across the globe. We are one world, one community, living together on one planet.

⁹ *Magnificat*, translation from the Divine Office. Luke 1:46-55

¹⁰ *Laudato Si'* #113, #114, Pope Francis

¹¹ *Laudato Si'* #194, Pope Francis

We seek to tackle the scandal of global poverty now, and to leave behind us a better and more sustainable world for our children and for future generations.

4: How will CAFOD respond? What are the ways forward?

*'Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also "macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones"...Social love is the key to authentic development...'*¹²

As an agency of the Catholic Church we are committed to the long term work of transformation, to authentic development and integral ecology (that is, both social and environmental). We will continue to respond to the cry of the earth alongside the cry of the poor. Alongside others we will nurture and protect our common home.

This commitment is challenging and demanding and requires an attitude of deep reflection alongside collaborative action. We will work together in sustainable and effective partnerships. 'Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*.'¹³

Responding to this challenge will require all our creativity. We will be welcoming and inclusive, we will encourage and enable the participation of all the communities alongside which we have the privilege to work.

We acknowledge our own limitations and understand that we cannot do everything. *'We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that "less is more".'*¹⁴ We have a contribution to make to the whole task. But we are neither the centre nor the whole. With a spirit of humility we acknowledge that we can bring and offer only the gifts and talents that we have, and we celebrate and value the gifts, skills and knowledge that others bring.

Our role is to be 'present to each reality'¹⁵, to understand what is happening and to respond in the light of our joyful faith in the Risen Christ. We believe that a better world is possible:

*'The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.'*¹⁶

See:

Just One World and *Change and Just One World*

Available from the [CAFOD website](#)

¹² *Laudato Si'* #231, Pope Francis

¹³ *Laudato Si'* #164, Pope Francis

¹⁴ *Laudato Si'* #222, Pope Francis

¹⁵ *Laudato Si'* #222, Pope Francis

¹⁶ *Laudato Si'* #13, Pope Francis