

Clergy Study Days 2020

Opening presentation:

His Excellency, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, J.C.D.

My fellow priests: Good morning, good afternoon, good evening.

Welcome to clergy study days 2020 – an altogether new experience for us. Part of the benefit of these study days is the opportunity for us to be physically together, in order to build up bonds of greater priestly fraternity among ourselves.

Nonetheless, we will still be able to reap the benefits of the learning and ongoing formation that these clergy study days afford, while we continue to hope and pray that we will soon be able to resume our in-person activities. I remind you all of the importance of observing all of the safety protocols when celebrating Mass for your people, and to remind them to continue following sound safety practices in their day-to-day life: the three W's (wear a mask, watch your distance, wash your hands).

For this year of 2020, we chose as the theme for our Archdiocesan Clergy Study Days, "*Laudato Si'*: The Fifth Anniversary". In keeping with the Encyclical's theme of applying Catholic Social Teaching to issues about the environment, last month Pope Francis focused his weekly general audiences on these principles. He stated: "Contemplating and caring are the two attitudes that show the way to correct and rebalance our relationship as human beings with creation". In particular, he noted the need these days during the coronavirus pandemic "to look after and care for each other". He said: "Our poorest brothers and mother earth lament for the damage and injustice we have caused, and demand we take another course". By following the path of contemplation and caring, we "become guardians of our common home, guardians of life and hope".

Motivated by these notably prescient words of Pope Francis, my hope for these study days is for all of us to: first of all, become

more familiar with the science of climate change and how this affects the entire globe as well as the application of Catholic Social Teaching to this crisis; and, second, surface ideas for how you can educate your own people on this and also to find ways to “green” our own facilities, reducing their carbon footprint thus making them more environmentally friendly.

Reflecting on our God-given home, in this year of 2020, we now have a clearly visible preponderance of scientific evidence on the grave climate emergency our common home is facing at this time: that is, evidence which is empirically verifiable. Among the most prominent scientific studies yielding evidence on climate change is the work of United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Established in 1988, and consisting of over 900 scientists, the IPCC provides yearly scientific assessments about climate change.

The IPCC prepares Assessment Reports about knowledge on climate change, its causes, its potential impacts, and response options. Additionally, the results of ongoing scientific studies worldwide are published in highly distinguished professional journals including *Science*, the Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and *Nature*, the International Journal of Science.

With regard to the science in general, 75% of all land mass and 66% of the world’s marine environments have been severely altered by human activity. Of course, it is the world’s most vulnerable people who are bearing the brunt of environmental degradation, in addition to that of conflict, inequality and injustice. At least half of the world’s population does not have access to essential health services, and nearly 30% of the population of small island states live at less than fifteen feet above rising sea levels.

I would like, too, to point out some specific facts that we all need to be aware of. First of all is the infamous deforestation

happening in the Amazon – certainly one of the principle themes of the recent Amazon Synod that received far too little attention.

Scientists estimate that approximately 20% of the Amazon rainforest has disappeared over the past fifty years. While the people living in the Amazon region are the most obvious among the vulnerable people bearing the brunt of the climate crisis, deforestation is impacting human life worldwide, because removing trees and vegetation releases more carbon dioxide into the than even transportation. In fact, the Amazon itself holds a quarter of all carbon dioxide absorbed by land, but the amount of carbon it stores has already dropped by one third since the 1990s. The carbon emitted from clearing Latin American forests roughly equals the emissions of 125 million U.S. cars. But the impact goes far beyond the Amazon region: it affects us all. This is why reducing deforestation and promoting reforestation is essential, especially in the Amazon, for reforestation is a way of removing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. To give some perspective: within the global carbon cycle, tropical forests have a carbon sink roughly equal to what is in the atmosphere. Approximately half of that is in the Amazon. Hence, to lose the Amazon would dramatically increase climate change. Forests are key to climate.

Secondly, I would also like to give a brief review of eight specific facts and figures on the current reality yielded by the work of the IPCC.

1. The warming of the oceans: due to climate change, the world's oceans have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea levels have risen.
2. The warming of the atmosphere: the World Meteorological Organization expects that last year, 2019, will fall among the top five warmest years ever recorded.
3. Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth: these are projected to increase with increased global warming.

4. Direct economic and human losses resulting from climate-related and geophysical disasters: these caused the loss of an estimated 1.3 million human lives between 1998 and 2017, and a loss of almost \$3 trillion dollars.
5. Global climate finance: climate-related financing has increased over the years, including significant increases in developing countries.
6. Investment in fossil fuels: this, however, continues to be higher than investment in climate activities.
7. The need for investments for disaster risk reduction: an investment of only \$6 billion over the next 15 years would result in total benefits of \$360 billion in terms of avoided losses over the lifetime of the investment.
8. Projected losses due to climate change: global losses are projected to rise by more than 100% to \$157 billion each year by 2030.

One last quick specific fact that hits close to home: for us in northern California, the recent months of August and September recorded the hottest temperatures on record since 1880.

In view of this and more, it is no surprise that Pope Francis is warning us that we are now in a state of climate change emergency. He reminds us of our Catholic responsibility to prepare our common home for the present generation, and especially for the future generations: the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren of today. Indeed, it is no longer just a problem, but an emergency. Pope Francis is calling all of us, each one of us, to defend and to protect all of creation, the very home that God has given us.

Our study days this year are one effort we are making to respond to this call. I am grateful to the three prominent climate ethicists who have accepted our invitation to offer presentations on related ecological challenges in *Laudato Si'*.

The speakers are:

Rev. Dr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, Vatican Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development;

Dr. Christiana Zenner, Theology Dept., Fordham University;

Rev. Dr. Alexandre Martins, Theology Dept., Marquette University.

Rev. Dr. Joshtrom Kureethadam received his Ph.D. from the Gregorian University, Rome. He served as professor of philosophy of science at the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome, and at Oxford University. His publications include: *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology*; *The Philosophical Roots of the Ecological Crisis: Descartes and the Modern Worldview*; *The Ten Commandments of Laudato Si'*.

Dr. Christiana Zenner received her Ph.D. from Yale University. She serves as professor of theology, science, and ethics at Fordham University. Among many scholarly articles, her publications include: *Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and Global Fresh Water Crises* (first and second editions).

Rev. Dr. Alexandre Martins received his Ph.D. from Marquette University. He serves as a professor of social ethics, global health, and philosophy of religion. Among many scholarly articles, his publications include: *Introdução a Cristologia Latino-Americana*; *A Pobreza e a Graça*; *Bioética, Saúde e Vulnerabilidade*.

It is a pleasure for me to invite you, our dear priests, to view all three of their virtual presentations, at a time convenient for you:

Rev. Dr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, "*Laudato Si' and the Call to Care for Creation and One Another*";

Dr. Christiana Zenner, "*Science and Tradition in Laudato Si' and Catholic Social Teaching*";

Rev. Dr. Alexandre Martins, "*Integral Ecology and Learning from Below: Care for the Earth and for the Poor*".

As we ponder the climate crisis facing us and the authentic Christian response that is called for, let us recall that Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment is inspired by his, and our, patron saint, St. Francis' Canticle of Creation. Let then begin with the beginning in mind, and keep that always as our vision: in creating the human race, God created them male and female, and gave them dominion over the earth. That is, our Christian vision teaches us that we are to exercise *stewardship* over all that God has given us: not to exploit it for our own selfish purposes, but to use it in accordance with God's will – for living our vocation faithfully and well here on this earth which is our common home in this life, so that we may reach our true home of heaven when we pass from this life to the next.

May our Clergy Study Days these year be especially informative and enlightening for all of you.

And may you remain in good health.

God bless you, and thank you for your priestly service to the people of our Archdiocese.