

It is a pleasure to share with you the speaking notes and PowerPoint slides from the talk given at the WUCWO Luncheon, Monday, August 15 2016, Rita Janes , past president of Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Catholic Women's League Council

PP#1



Greetings:

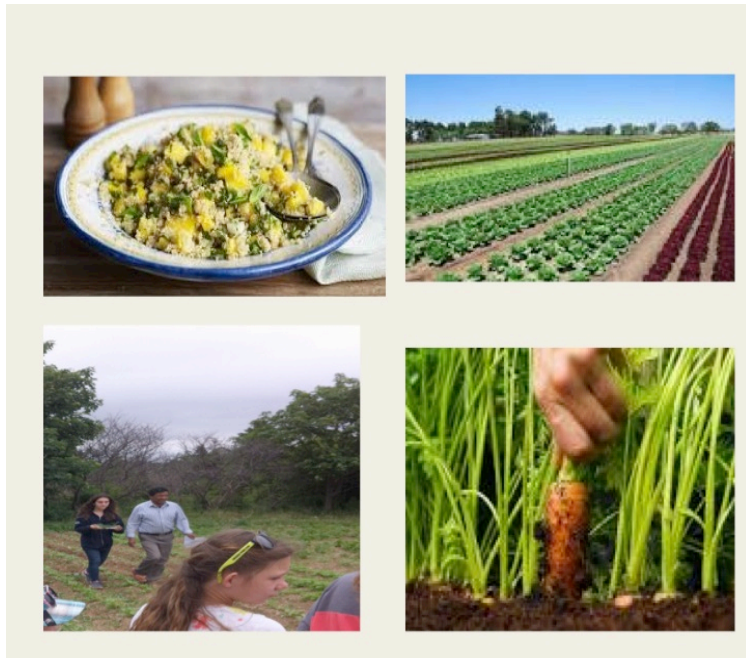
- Members of the World Union of Catholic Women Organization: Catholic Women's League; Clergy; Friends and guests

“ Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us..”

Thank you Velma for the very kind introduction.

What a privilege to be asked to be with you for this delicious lunch today and also share some thoughts about Laudato Si'.

PP #2



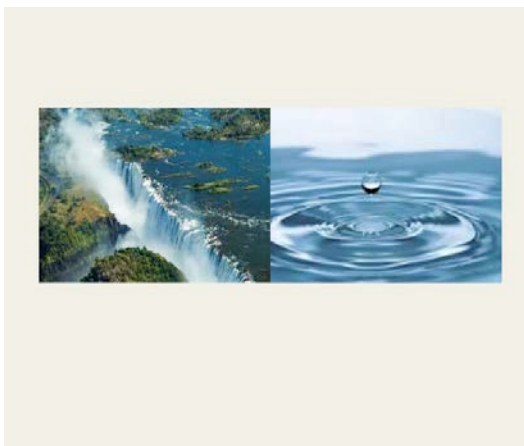
I will begin by heeding the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, reminding us we should always take a moment at the end of a meal to give thanks.

And His Holiness tells us why we should?

- to remind ourselves of our dependence on God for life;
 - to strengthen our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation;
 - to acknowledge those who by their labours provided us with this food today;
- and
- to reaffirm our solidarity with those in greatest need.

And so we give thanks and express our gratitude for this delicious lunch. Amen

PP#2

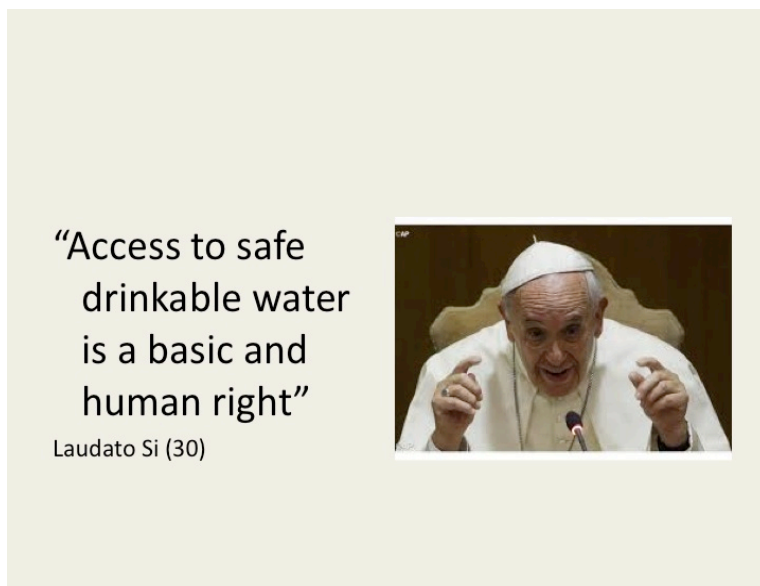


It was so heartening to read the Resolution you passed at your general assembly in Fatima, 2014.

A resolution to promote good practices in sustainable use of water and to encourage governments to do the same.

And, I noted, that this resolution was passed one year prior to the release of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*.

Is that a surprise? It shouldn't be. There are many examples in *Laudato Si'* that clearly indicate that Pope Francis listens carefully to women's voices and concerns. He heard your voice from Fatima. Didn't he? PP#3



His Holiness says: " access to safe water is a basic and universal right, essential to human survival".

Several places in *Laudato Si'* His Holiness references water and encourages us to be **people of action** in ensuring that it is a human right.

I guess his new word now is " don't just sit on the couch". Remember that from Youth Conference in Krakow?

But you are certainly **women of action**. You will not be caught sitting on the couch.

At Fatima, you agreed to:

- a) provide a local well for rural people in Senegal; and

b) provide drinking water for a school, which presently does not have water.

Congratulations!

PP#4



Yes, you are addressing a water issue, but, you are also addressing a woman's issue.

In too many countries it is the women who are responsible for finding and collecting water for their families.

All the water they need for drinking, washing, cooking and cleaning.

They walk miles carrying heavy buckets.

And once they are old enough, young girls, children, also join the women in doing the same back breaking work.

This means school is affected, locking women in a cycle of poverty.

They cannot attend school.

They cannot earn an income.

And my friends with global warming and continued, yes, continued exploitation of water by big corporations it is not getting any better.

But access to safe water is not only a problem of the Global South.

PP#6



While flying over my own province of Newfoundland and Labrador, on my way here yesterday, I look down.

There are so many ponds, lakes and rivers... Immense! ... Beautiful!

Yet there are over 250 boil water orders in Newfoundland communities.

Reminds us of "*Water, Water everywhere and not a drop to drink*".

And across Canada, especially afflicted are the many First Nations communities, so many, too many, living with polluted water.

Catholic Women's League members here today, remember, about 10 years ago, you also passed a resolution asking that all people of the world have access to clean affordable water. I believe it was the catalyst for the WUCWO Resolution we just referenced.

Now, we may need to have another look and take more affirmative action so that all Canadians, yes, all Canadians, no matter what their postal code, can enjoy a clean glass of water straight from the tap or the well. And I remind you be

particularly cognizant of First Nations communities in Northern Canada. Yes, **let us be women of action.**

PP#6



Let's turn to Laudato Si , and the invitation from Pope Francis for a change of heart, or sometimes referenced in the Encyclical Letter by other names, such as, ecological conversion; change of minds; change of consciousness; change of perspective.

PP#7



Throughout Laudato Si' we feel the urgency of the message His Holiness is giving us .

Our planet is not too healthy and we are all suffering ,
but the ones who are most affected are the poor and vulnerable of the world,
especially those in the Global South.

PP#8



He also lets us know in very clear and blunt language that we, yes we humans, have played a major part in making it so.

He reminds us that we are called in the gospel to “ till and care for the earth” but maybe we have done “too much tilling and not enough caring”.

PP#9



As we become more familiar with the Encyclical, it becomes quite clear to us that it is much more than a document about global warming or climate change. Isn't that true?

His Holiness, courageously, courageously I say, offers to the world a religious vision of an ecological issue, a vision based on our Christian and Catholic faith, a vision of how we can all develop right relationships with ourselves, with others, with the Creator, and with all creation.

Pope Francis does not just give us an encyclical letter to put on a bookshelf, but more a challenge of how to live differently, ... how to pray differently, how to work differently, how to be hopeful differently, how to love differently.

Indeed! Wonderful challenges for each and every one of us. Don't you think? And it best resounds with us through that quote that is on everyone's lips (not a Pope Francis original but certainly made well known by him) "the **cry** of the earth and the **cry** of the poor are one".

One year after the release of *Laudato Si* there is certainly a recognition that this Encyclical Letter, has caught the world's attention.

Why we wonder? Some of it obviously has to do with his own popularity, pleasant personality, charm and charisma.

But, think about it --- **When did he release the Encyclical?** PP#10

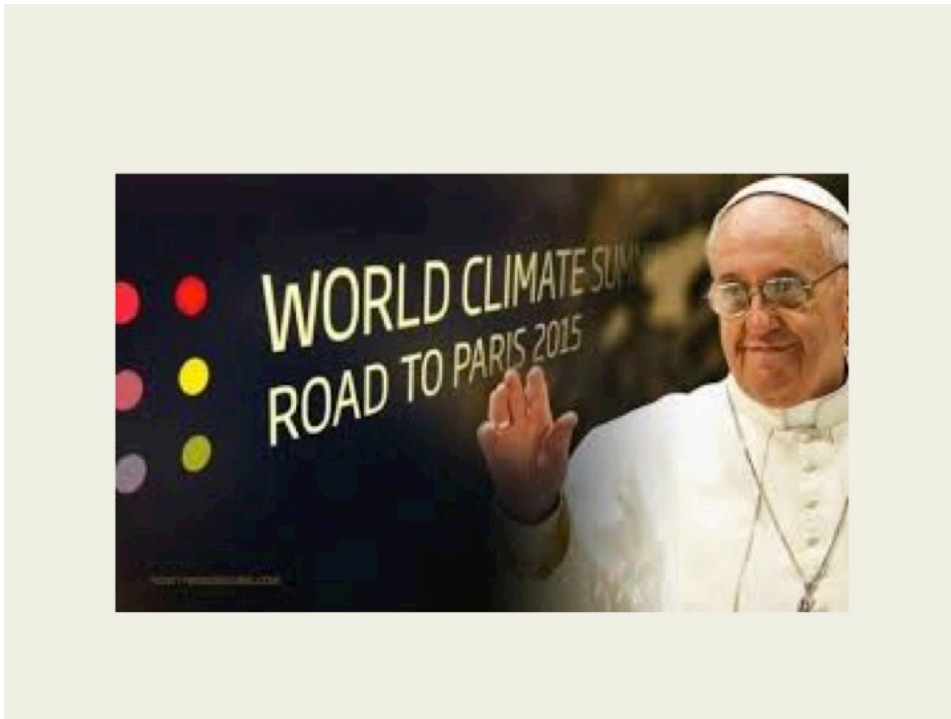


A few months prior to his visit to Washington, his visit to the United Nations, the release of the Sustainable Development Goals and most importantly yes, most importantly, prior to the **International Summit on Climate Change in Paris**, November 2015. Yes, His Holiness made a very strategic decision. He knew timing was important. He is so astute; we could all learn from him - how to get our message heard. Isn't that our challenge?

Allow me share a story with you:

Early this spring I attended a conference of scientists, environmentalists, economists, policy makers, theologians of all faiths. We were meeting to discuss climate change six months after the Paris Summit.

PP # 11



Sitting around a discussion table with about twelve people, one renowned scientist started the conversation by bemoaning the little impact scientists have had, or are having, on climate change. And furthermore, he said, this is after decades of sharing with the world scientific knowledge about the dangers to our planet of global warming.

They all agreed.

They agreed that certainly they were not able to communicate or connect with people of the world.

But why then, they asked, was there such an enthusiastic and positive response at the Paris Summit? An eagerness to sign on?

One said: “ Yes. We have had several of these Summits in the past but at this one we had universal signing by 197 countries to aim to keep temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius .

So then the question was again posed to the table “Why do you think we have such a positive response now?”.

Why did we get this agreement this time? Why?

He held up a copy of Laudato Si'. This is what made the difference.

This is what brought countries together.

Another added: "Let's face it. It is obvious we couldn't do it alone because along comes Pope Francis with his Encyclical. In it he references our science as we have been doing for years , but he added the moral , the religious dimension and the whole world started to listen. We needed the church as a partner.

Another chimed in:

We thought it was a mind issue.

Pope Francis made it a heart issue.

Yes, they said , even that one sentence " the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one" brought the world to attention.

PP#12



I also found it interesting that this group also recognized that Pope Francis was not trying to make us feel guilty.

And in fact we know that. He reminds us in the Encyclical : “ **All is not lost**”.

Throughout he gives us much reason to have **hope and promise**. He says: “Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope”.

And it is not a false hope he gives us.

It is not a Pollyanna view of the world or a naïve optimism.

PP#13



He reminds us : “Yes, Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home” (Laudato Si’, 13) .

We can be hopeful, because God is with us as we strive both individually and as part of our communities to change course.

His Holiness says: “ Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and make a new start.... If only we allow His grace to work deep in our hearts” (Laudato Si’ ,205)

PP#14



And he tells us another reason we can have hope is by putting our trust in young people.

Young people will bring about change – saying they have “**a new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit**”

We can count on them.

May I share a story with you

The first three weeks in July we host ecological summer camps for children (7 to 9 year olds) at our Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice Centre in St. John’s . I often drop by. This one time, along with their teacher, the children are playing a game in the garden.

One little boy, Patrick, is more off to himself and sort of walking differently - tip toeing ; hopping around; almost like doing a ballet.

(Patrick, by the way, was often known to be of task.)

I asked him : “ What are you playing, Patrick?”.

He said: “I don’t want to break the roof.”

I said “Oh, Oh, the roof?” Because he is hopping around on the grass.

“Yes” he said, pointing to the ground,.... There are worms , and ants and a lot of insects, creepy crawleys down there. ... They live down there. That is their home. I don’t want to break their roof”.

I am left in wonder..... Patrick sees it on my face.

He looks at me and adds, “**God made them too, you know**” ..

Out of the mouths of babes.

And there is a question Pope Francis leaves with us that gives us much to ponder over. This is more than, deeper than, a question about the environment alone.

PP#15

• What kind of world do we want to leave our grandchildren?

“ What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, the children who are now growing up?” (Laudato Si’, 160). What kind of world do we want to leave to Patrick?

Yes, His Holiness means much more.

Because he adds: “Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results (Laudato Si’, 160).

PP#16

Invitation



His Holiness concludes the Encyclical by inviting us to struggle with these deeper issues. He invites us to a **new future**.

What did he say to the young people in Krakow “ get off your couches”.

He is saying the same to us throughout the Encyclical but more directly in the last chapter .

He asks us to dialogue and take action; to take care of our common home.

He says “ **In this time of crisis many things have to change....**

But it we human beings above all, who need to change”. Laudato Si’(202)

And one of these changes he references is a “ **change of heart**”; “ **an ecological conversion**”.

What is he inviting us to do? What is this change of heart, ecological conversion that he is inviting us to?

PP #17



It is: “ How can we develop the **same kinship** , a healthy relationship, with all creation that St. Francis had and as St Francis expressed in that beautiful hymn the Canticle of the Sun “ Brother Sun”.... “Sister Moon”.... “Brothers Wind and Air” “Sister Water”.

PP #18

The Invitation

- How can we develop an ecological spirituality that makes loving the earth and all its creatures an essential part of our faith?

And:

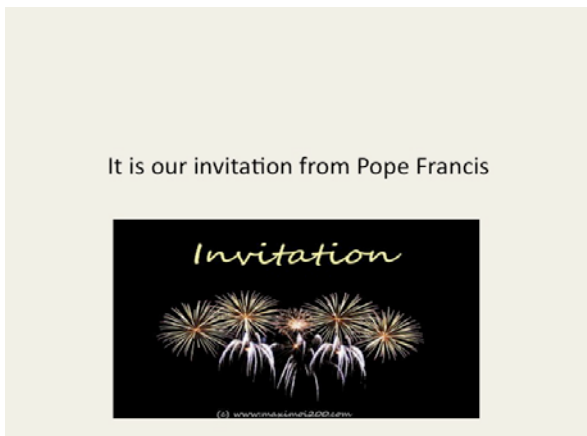
- How can such a spirituality motivate us to a more passionate concern for the earth?

“How can we develop an ecological spirituality that includes a love of creation, as an essential part of our faith? a love of all living and non living creatures on the planet that God created out of love?”

And then, and most importantly, how can such a spirituality motivate us to have a more passionate concern for the protection and care for our common home?

Remember Patrick. He was sort of getting it wasn't he?

PP #19



Are we ready to be women of action and begin this ecological conversion ? ... to this change of heart? To accept the invitation from Pope Francis? No one is saying it won't be a challenge. It won't happen over night.

We can't do it alone; We can't do it in isolation.

We need our communities – our families, our parishes, our organizations.

And catholic women here today.

You belong and have the support of two very strong communities: The World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and the Catholic Women's League.

You can do it.

You are women ready to accept Pope Francis' invitation to a change of heart.

I will end with a verse from a prayer Pope Francis gave us:

PP#19

A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you **with** all your creatures.

Father, we praise you **with** all your creatures.

They came forth from your powerful hand;

They are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love

Praise be to you!

“ Father, we praise you **with** all your creatures,

Father, we praise you **with** all your creatures,

They came forth from your powerful hand

They are yours, filled with your presence and tender love

Praise be to you!

Thank you very much