LESSON 57: CARING FOR THE POOR

Revision from previous lesson:
In the previous lessons, we have learned a few very important issues about morality in living the Catholic life. We know now that the moral life requires for us to be chaste in our relationships with other people, to uphold the sanctity (holiness) of marriage and family, to appreciate God's gift of our own genders and sexuality, and also to always uphold the intrinsic dignity of human life. In this lesson, we speak about our responsibility towards those who are poor, since God has a special concern for victims of poverty.

Current lesson:

1. When God first created the world, everything contained within it was meant to be equally shared by all mankind so that everyone's needs would be properly taken care of and nobody would suffer lack. However, unequal distribution of these gifts from the Creator among men has caused many people to suffer from severe lack.

   CCC 2402: "In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men."

2. From the Old Testament itself, Sacred Scripture already reflects God's concern for the poor. In the laws given by God to the ancient Israelites, He had already instructed that they be mindful of the poor among them (e.g. Deuteronomy 15:4; 15:7-8; 15:11). Through the prophets that He had sent to them, Israel was chastised for their neglect of the poor (e.g. Isaiah 3:13-15).

   Exodus 22:21-27: "You will not molest or oppress aliens, for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal, my anger will be roused and I shall put you to the sword; then your own wives will be widows and your own children orphans. If you lend money to any of my people, to anyone poor among you, you will not play the usurer with him: you will not demand interest from him. If you take someone's cloak in pledge, you will return it to him at sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else will he sleep in? If he appeals to me, I shall listen. At least with me he will find compassion!"

3. In fact, God judged Israel's faithfulness towards Him by how they treated the poor. For God, the people of Israel were not just obligated to "do favours" for the poor; rather, they owed *justice* to the poor. The poor were not seen by Him as recipients of charity and generosity. Taking care of God's poor was precisely a duty owed by Israel towards God and a sign of their fidelity towards him. For God, righteousness was to be proven through justice. When people neglected the poor, it was a surest sign that they no longer intended

to be faithful to God as His people. Forgetting the poor meant ignoring that He was the God of the people who was consistently concerned for their wellbeing.

4. In the Gospels, we see Jesus continuing with the same divine attitude towards the poor. Three of His most prominent and detailed parables pertained to how the poor and helpless were treated: the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), and the Last Judgement (Matthew 25). In these parables, we can see that Jesus unambiguously identifies Himself with the poor, and that He judges society based on their mindfulness towards the poor.

   Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 325: "Jesus takes up the entire Old Testament tradition even with regard to economic goods, wealth and poverty, and he gives them great clarity and fullness (cf. Matthew 6:24, 13:22; Luke 6:20-24, 12:15-21; Romans 14:6-8; *1 Timothy* 4:4). Through the gift of his Spirit and the conversion of hearts, he comes to establish the 'Kingdom of God', so that a new manner of social life is made possible, in justice, brotherhood, solidarity and sharing. The Kingdom inaugurated by Christ perfects the original goodness of the created order and of human activity, which were compromised by sin. Freed from evil and being placed once more in communion with God, man is able to continue the work of Jesus, with the help of his Spirit. In this, man is called to render justice to the poor, releasing the oppressed, consoling the afflicted, actively seeking a new social order in which adequate solutions to material poverty are offered and in which the forces thwarting the attempts of the weakest to free themselves from conditions of misery and slavery are more effectively controlled. When this happens, the Kingdom of God is already present on this earth, although it is not of the earth. It is in this Kingdom that the promises of the Prophets find final fulfilment."

   Matthew 25:33-46: "He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.' Then the upright will say to him in reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?' And the King will answer, 'In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink, I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.' Then it will be their turn to ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?' Then he will answer, 'In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.' And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life."

   Evangelii Gaudium, 197: "God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself 'became poor' (2 Corinthians 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked

by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the 'yes' uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Saviour was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families; he was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Luke 2:24; Leviticus 5:7); he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: 'Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God' (Luke 6:20); he made himself one of them: 'I was hungry and you gave me food to eat', and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Matthew 25:5ff.)."

5. Since the Holy Catholic Church teaches that every human person has a right to be treated with dignity, society must always be ordered in such a way that human dignity is upheld. This means that socio-economic systems in society that compromise human dignity by keeping them poor and disadvantaged are considered unjust and must be changed.

   Evangelii Gaudium, 53: "Just as the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a 'throw away' culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the 'exploited' but the outcast, the 'leftovers.'"

6. All creation is divinely given to the whole of humanity so that the resources that come forth from it can be equally shared. When all people have equal access to the resources of creation, then every man is able to live with a God-given dignity that is inherent in the human person. Resources from creation should not just be given to meet the basic needs of every man, but also to fulfil the person's human potential.

   Gaudium et Spes, 26: "…there is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to the human person, since he stands above all things, and his rights and duties are universal and inviolable. Therefore, there must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment…"

7. Everyone has a right to privately own resources such as property. However, this is not an absolute right. Ownership of resources should always give rise to the common good of

society. This means that there are times when even privately-owned resources should be shared, especially when a person who "owns" these resources already has more than he actually needs. There are people in society who remain poor and do not receive their fair share of resources due to them because society is largely functioning in violation of this principle of equal distribution of resources.

CCC 2403: "The *right to private property*, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *universal destination of goods* remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise."

CCC 2404: "'In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself.' The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family."

8. In society, people who are poor are often ignored, excluded, disgraced, and powerless. The Church calls us all to stand on their side in a spirit of solidarity. We must do this not just by being concerned for their material poverty and "giving to charity", but even more so, honouring their right to be treated with dignity because they are human like everyone else. Standing in solidarity with them means that we work to uphold the common good of society, which involves addressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental problems that have prevented the poor from reaching their human potentials. Solidarity means more than just providing for their material needs, for it requires us to love the poor as whole persons and to desire for their overall wellbeing.

9. Because society largely disregards those in poverty, the Church calls us to exercise a *preferential option for the poor*, which means that we must intentionally always stand on the side of the poor. After all, Sacred Scripture shows that God approaches the poor with precisely that same attitude: loving them, defending them, and speaking on their behalf. In embracing the same attitude towards the poor, we are honouring the God, who has made them in His own image and likeness.

   Proverbs 14:31: "To oppress the weak insults the Creator, kindness to the needy honours the Creator."

   CCC 1938: "There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace."

   CIC 222 §2: "They (the Christian faithful) are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources."

   Evangelii Gaudium, 187: "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them

to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid. A mere glance at the Scriptures is enough to make us see how our gracious Father wants to hear the cry of the poor…"

Evangelii Gaudium, 199: "Without the preferential option for the poor, 'the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged…'"

Evidently, we must think of the poor not as an afterthought, but as the primary consideration in all the decisions that we make in our personal lives and as Church communities. This is not a privilege we are granting to the poor, but rather, a debt of love that is due to them. The wealthier we are, the more generous we ought to be in sharing by giving back to the poor what already belongs to them, by virtue of their right to be treated with dignity. The poor are not victims who need our help; they are people whom society has robbed of their right to live on the resources of creation. In sharing with them, we are not doing them a favour or rendering help to them; we are returning to them what is rightfully theirs.

10. Poverty suffered by the poor is more than merely about lacking resources. It is also about their being excluded from networks and relationships that enable them to participate in supplying their capabilities in exchange for resources that they need to survive and thrive. A good example of this reality is how people who suffer certain disabilities tend to get excluded from the workforce and are unable to find employment, thus suffering economic poverty.

    It is very easy for the well-to-do people to pass the poor off as being "lazy" and "unresourceful", thus "deserving of the poverty they find themselves in". People who fall for such fallacious reasoning are merely trying to appease their conscience when they know that they have actually disregarded the importance of the poor whom God sends their way. Conclusions cannot be justly made about the poor when we have not devoted sufficient effort to understand their predicaments in life.

11. Exercising preferential option for the poor means that we must always view life from their perspective. It requires for us to always be mindful of those whom society tends to forget, marginalise, discriminate against, and outcast. We see in the Gospels that it was precisely to such people that Jesus gave special attention. It was to them that He brought the kingdom of Heaven. Christ and His Gospel do not allow us to discard the poor just because their presence in society may be inconvenient or disturbing for us.

12. Our concern for the poor must be more than a mere campaign or seasonal programme. It must come from a genuine love and concern for their constant wellbeing. We need to integrate them into our lives as individuals, families, and Church communities, so that we are constantly mindful of their presence and needs. They must not be an afterthought but a priority foremost in our daily considerations.

    Laudato Si', 49: "It needs to be said that, generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. Yet they are the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. These days, they are mentioned in international political and economic discussions, but one often has the impression that their

problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way, if not treated merely as collateral damage. Indeed, when all is said and done, they frequently remain at the bottom of the pile. This is due partly to the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world's population. This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality. At times this attitude exists side by side with a 'green' rhetoric. Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Evangelii Gaudium, 199: "Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other 'in a certain sense as one with ourselves'. This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: 'The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely'. The poor person, when loved, 'is esteemed as of great value', and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one's own personal or political interest. Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that 'in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?' Without the preferential option for the poor, 'the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications.'"

13. We need to recognise that the way resources are used and distributed under both totalitarian regimes as well as free markets have their own evils. Totalitarian systems deprive people of their social right to make a living in a way that is proportionate to the labour that they render. In free markets, people may tend to forget that not everything needed by human beings can be obtained through economic activity. In both systems, there must be proper regulation to ensure that all economic activity upholds the common good of humanity. The poor must be considered as having the most crucial and urgent moral claim on a nation's conscience.

CCC 2425: "The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with 'communism' or 'socialism.' She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of 'capitalism,' individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor. Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for 'there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the

market.' Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended."

14. There must also be a concern for the plight of creation itself, and this refers to the natural resources that God has created for mankind to enjoy. Our care for creation is not meant to be expressed for the sake of creation itself, but rather, for the sake of humanity for whom God created nature and all the resources contained within it. An undue exploitation of creation would mean that there will be those among humanity who are deprived of the right to enjoy these natural resources, from this generation as well as the generations to come. To exploit nature is to exploit our fellow mankind.

    Evangelii Gaudium, 215: "There are other weak and defenceless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations."

    Laudato Si', 117: "When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person …it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected."

    Laudato Si', 159: "The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us…'The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next'. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision."

15. When we speak of environmental problems that arise from exploitation of creation, we are referring to problems with the planet's systems such as air, water, and soil, among others, that have arisen as a result of the way the planet has been mistreated by human beings. Our planet has now arrived at a point of severe environmental crisis because these problems have rendered our generation, as well as those to come, more vulnerable than ever to unnatural disasters and tragedies. Modern developments have affected our ecosystem which includes human beings, plants, mountains, glaciers, atmosphere, rocks, galaxy, oceans, and seas. The ecosystem also includes natural resources like water, electric charge, fire, magnetism, air, and climate. Modern industries have caused drastic changes in this ecosystem.

    Here is a list of environmental problems that have been caused as a result of such developments causing great damage to the human environment:

A) *Air, water, and land pollution*. Water pollution is caused by oil spills, contaminated water flowing from our streets and alleys into the ocean (also called urban runoff), and ocean dumping. Air pollution arises from the burning of fossil fuels, hydraulic fracturing, and gases emitted by vehicles. Water and soil pollution are caused by industrial waste in a major way.

B) *Climate change and crisis*. Climate change today is largely a result of global warming, greenhouse effect, urban heat, and coal industry, among other human activities. It is changing the overall weather scenario in a harmful way. Ice in the polar regions are melting, new and infectious diseases are occurring, and some plants which are crucial for human survival cannot grow anymore.

C) *Global warming*. The average temperature of planet earth has increased by 0.8 degrees Celsius over the past century due to the effect of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, water vapour, and other gases. These gases possess heat trapping capacity that is needed to create a greenhouse effect so that this planet remains warm for people to survive. Without these gases, this planet would be too cold for life to exist. However, the accumulation of greenhouse gases has grown rapidly, which means more heat gets trapped in the atmosphere and few of these gases escape back into space. These gases heat up the earth's surface and this results in global warming.

D) *Deforestation and logging*. Because of people's consumeristic habits, buying and selling, the consumption of materials has almost tripled in the last few decades, and demand continues to grow. As a result, a direct action that we have come to recognise as "deforestation" occurs. Deforestation means, clearing of forests or green cover for means of agriculture, industrial, or urban use. It involves the permanent end of forest cover to make that land available for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation informs us that an estimated 18 million acres (or 7.3 million hectares) of forests are lost each year. The long term effects of deforestation can be severely devastating and alarming as they may cause floods, soil erosion, an increase in global warming, climate imbalance, wildlife extinction, and other serious environmental issues.

E) *Industrial and household waste*. Each household produces tonnes of garbage each year. Garbage that can be recycled are usually sent to local recycling plants, but other items that cannot be recycled are used as landfills or sent to third world countries which become dumping grounds. But yet, governments continue to stimulate their economies to produce more and more and their citizens to buy more and more, eventually producing even more garbage. Huge landfill sites that are created for this garbage affect human health, degrades soil quality, affects wildlife, causes air pollution, and results in climate change.

F) *Acid rain*. Because of the presence of pollutants in the atmosphere caused by industrial processes, rain (or snow or fog) that settles to earth becomes acidic. This is also caused by combustion of fossil fuels which release sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere. In turn, acid rain causes eruption of volcanoes, rotting of vegetation, and sea sprays that produce sulfur dioxide and fires, and bacterial decomposition, among other effects. The effects of these on aquatic life, forests, and human health are devastating.

G) *Ozone layer depletion*. The ozone layer, a layer of gas that sits about 20 to 30 kilometres above the earth's surface, mainly contains ozone which prevents harmful ultraviolet radiation from entering the earth. This layer is capable of absorbing 95 to 99 percent of

harmful ultraviolet radiation emitted by the sun. Industrial activity has now caused considerable reduction in the ozone layer, and humanity is less protected from ultraviolet radiation than we used to be.

H) *Genetic engineering*. Industries are genetically modifying food and animals in order to increase production. These methods bring serious consequences to mankind in the form of allergies, environmental degradation, and development of immunity in pests, among others.

I) *Urban sprawl*. Forests are being destroyed and turned into development projects for factories, cities, commercial areas, and residential houses. In the process, animals and plants are destroyed completely without being preserved. In the long run, the impact of these activities on human beings and the environment is terribly harmful.

J) *Oil spill*. When liquid petroleum is spilled into the ocean, the marine ecosystem is badly affected. Even after years of an oil spillage, its effects may continue. Although oil spills happening in the past few years have caused drastic consequences, steps have not yet been taken thus far to avoid such occurrences in the future.

K) *Hydraulic fracking*. Hydraulic fracturing or fracking is the process of pumping millions of gallons of water, sand, and chemicals underground to create enough pressure to crack or break apart the rock and release the gas. Fracking can lead to an increase in water pollution, an increase in the number of droughts, the spread of toxins, less focus on renewable energy sources, and others.

L) *Natural resource depletion*. The petroleum industry has been digging into the earth's crust in search of more petroleum that can be used or sold to other countries. Such energy sources are limited, and when exploited beyond the current necessity, leads to an increase in air pollution and global warming. Experts have predicted that non-renewable sources like this will likely vanish in less than 50 years from now. But yet, oil companies continue to plunder because of greed for profit.

M) *Desertification*. Desertification happens when fertile land becomes desert as a result of irresponsible agricultural activity or deforestation. It leads to flooding, hunger, poverty, and poor water quality.

N) *Habitat loss and destruction*. Pollution causes habitats to be destroyed, since toxins change the quality of air, water, and land. When habitats are destroyed, animals and plants become extinct or displaced. Pollution also disrupts underwater systems and changes the composition and quality of soil.

O) *Water crisis*. Water has become polluted as a result of human activity. Because of this, human beings and animals end up suffering from lack of access to clean drinking water. The World Health Organisation tells us that one third of the world's population does not have access to clean drinking water.

16. There is a popular movement that claims the world is overpopulated. This movement propagates the use of contraception and abortion as means of population control, because this alleged "overpopulation" of the world would mean that there are insufficient natural resources to be shared by all the human beings in the world.

    In actual fact, overpopulation is a myth. When we use resources responsibly, there will always be enough for everyone to share. The world produces enough food to feed 10 billion people, but there are only 8 billion people in the world. While it is true that there are hungry people in some parts of the world, this hunger is not caused by insufficiency of food or resources. It is caused by political, economic, and ultimately, moral failures.

It is also a fact that fertility rates have actually declined because of modernisation. As people move from farms to cities, they tend to have fewer children. People in the farms used to have more children in order to help them with farming activities. As women become more educated, they are also more focused on their careers, which has caused an increasing number of them to postpone marriage and have children later in life; this means that they have less children than women in the past used to.

Today, more than 80 countries in the world are no longer repopulating themselves with birth rates at least equalling death rates. The United Nations predicts that every nation on earth, with the exception of only a few African nations, will no longer be self-replacing within the next couple of decades, and this is a serious problem. It means that the world population is aging, and there will be insufficient young people to support the old people.

Therefore, the dilemma faced by global humanity today is not one of overpopulation. It is, rather, a dilemma of choice in terms of the way we live and the values we embrace as a human society.

Laudato Si', 205: "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us."

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