



Pope Francis' encyclical on creation, LAUDATO SI, was the topic for the most recent Sunday's "Conversations at the Center" in Brighton. The many attendees welcomed Fr. Daniel Horan, OFM as the presenter and discussion facilitator. Fr. Dan, a former resident at the Center and presently a student completing his doctoral studies at BC in Systematic Theology and a Chaplain at Babson College in Wellesley, MA, has in recent months conducted several retreats and workshops on this encyclical.

Father began by briefly explaining the three models of creation found in the document, that is: the dominion and subduing approach, the attitude of stewardship and lastly the understanding of communion with creation. In the first model humankind uses creation for its own purposes without regard, respect or responsibility for the giftedness of creation. It is a form of domination and abuse. In the second model of stewardship, based on the Genesis II account of creation, we are connected to all of God's creation and are obliged to be caretakers of God's creation, as also found in Psalm 24. In the third model of creation, we, as humans, relate to the goods of this world as community, as family with an attitude of kinship. The encyclical, obviously opposed to the first model of exploitation, moves between models two and three.

What is most significantly obvious in this document is Pope Francis' intention to address all peoples, not only Catholics, Christians, people of any religion but all folks, as citizens of this earth. Secondly, he builds on the many documents of his predecessors, Pope St. John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, all of whom have laid the foundation for this encyclical letter.

Another interesting point of discussion made by Fr. Dan was the naming of this document as substantial to the social teaching of the Church, as the abuse of our planet very directly affects the poor. As he said, "The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor." We see this very dramatically today as we see the pollution of water and the soil in many part of the world, especially where agriculture is the principal means of support for significant populations of peoples.

When asked how we could make a difference, besides doing our best to respectfully use the goods of this earth, Fr. Dan suggested that we make the message of the encyclical better known by increasing awareness by discussion and education among groups of folks in our communities and parishes and of course, by prayer.

As usual, the discussion was carried into the dining room and the sharing of a delicious brunch!