



INTRODUCTION

"What is the purpose of our life in this world? ... What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?" In Laudato Si', Pope Francis strives to answer these questions at the very heart of our existence. He says, "Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe our concern for ecology will produce significant results."

There are several themes that unify this encyclical. They are:

- *the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet*
- *the conviction that everything in the world is connected*
- *the critique of new forms of power derived from technology*
- *the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress*
- *the "value proper to each creature" and the human meaning of ecology*
- *the need for forthright and honest debate*
- *the serious responsibility of international and local policy*
- *the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new life-style*

Discussion Questions

In his opening words, Pope Francis calls the earth *"a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us."* In what ways is the earth our sister? In what ways is she our mother?

Referring to his namesake, St. Francis, Pope Francis says, *"Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise."* What does it mean to you to think of the world as a "joyful mystery"?