



# Meeting the Moment

## *Two readings of 'Laudate Deum'*

**Vincent Miller and Edward Tverdek, OFM**

FEBRUARY 2024

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Tverdek observes that Pope Francis is far from the first pontiff to address issues of climate, sustainability, and the exploitation of the natural world. What explains the difference between how Francis and his predecessors have been received on the same topics? If you were a regular Mass attendee or practicing Catholic before Francis's papacy, do you remember the environment ever being a topic of conversation or preaching in religious spaces? Did the words of previous popes ever enter these discussions?

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2. Pope Francis uses the phrase "homicidal pragmatism" to describe the dangers of the technocratic paradigm. Tverdek compares the paradigm to an accumulation of intergenerational debt. Where do you see evidence of this "debt" in our collective efforts to combat climate change? How can we begin to pay it and address the underlying problems contributing to it? What role should new technology play in addressing climate change?

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3. Instead of simply seeking green substitutes (think EVs instead of gas guzzlers), Tverdek challenges the assumption that we need to maintain the same lifestyle in a greener future (cars as default transportation). What are some real, necessary changes that are sometimes papered over by appeals to environmentally friendly swaps? What parts of our lives can we not sustainably continue in the future? Do we risk alienating those we hope to persuade toward climate action if we explore these potential trade-offs or sacrifices?

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4. A different question of persuasion emerges in Vincent Miller's article. He argues that the "carefully calibrated" messages designed to soft-pedal the urgency of the crisis and the insufficiency of our current actions are not working. Do you agree? What messages about the environment have been most meaningful to you? If you've made changes to respond to the climate crisis, what inspired them? What messages cause you to feel disengaged instead?

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5. Miller prefers Aquinas's conception of hope, which "arises precisely amid difficulty and seeks a way toward a possible but uncertain good." How would a vision of "hard-seeing" hope change the way we spoke and acted about the environment? In embracing this understanding of hope, "intimate with mourning," does Pope Francis make a more compelling argument than other institutional leaders or educators?

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Laudate Deum, Pope Francis, October 2023: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html)  
Laudato si', Pope Francis, May 2015: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)  
"Tears & Ashes," Vincent Miller & David Paul Bayles, March 2022: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/tears-ashes>  
"Why Call It Progress?," Austen Ivereigh, October 2019: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/why-call-it-progress>  
"Beyond Growth," Max Foley-Keene, November 2020: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/beyond-growth>  
"Still Too Slow," Isabella Simon, January 2024: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/still-too-slow>