

In the encyclical letter *“Laudato Si”*, Pope Francis discusses the issues surrounding the care for our common home. All of the issues talked about in the letter relate to how we care for our planet and our people, especially the poor and most vulnerable. By using the social justice principles of the **Common Good (Ho painga ma to katoa)**, **Stewardship (Kaitiakitanga)**, and the **Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (Ho whakaaro nui mō to hunga rawakoro)** will help to combat and overcome some of the issues discussed in the encyclical, like pollution and climate change, the issue of water and global inequality.

The **common good** is about respecting the rights and responsibilities of all people because God created us equal to one another and didn't make any one person more special than the rest. Jesus didn't treat anyone differently based on their ethnicity, age, religion, wealth or health status and by following the social justice principle of the Common Good we can learn to live more like Jesus and make our common home better for everyone to live in. By living with the common good in mind we are able to act selflessly and put the needs of others before ourselves, just as we are told to do in the Bible by the *Philippians 2:3-4* *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”* As Pope Francis said on September 9 to a general audience at the Vatican, *“If society does not join together in seeking the common good during the pandemic, it will emerge worse off”*. This is very relevant during our current pandemic.

**Stewardship** is looking after our gifts from God, whether it is the environment, our own personal talents or other resources. We as children of God are kaitiaki - guardians of the earth - and we need to look after the gifts that we have been given so they can be enjoyed for generations to come. God loved everything he made, *“God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good. - Genesis 1:31”*, and treasured them that is why it is important to look after all of the gifts we have been given as we only have one earth, which doesn't come from our ancestors but is borrowed from our children, so the decisions we make as kaitiaki will directly impact on our future generations that will inhabit our common home. In the encyclical, Pope Francis states *“All*

*of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents”*

**Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable** makes us think about the needs of those less fortunate. The poor and vulnerable have a special place in the kingdom of God and by putting into practice the preferential option for the poor means that we need to consider how our decisions will affect the most vulnerable in our communities. Jesus told us that by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, helping the stranger, looking after the sick and visiting the imprisoned we are looking after him. To live more like Jesus we need to do more good things that help the most vulnerable people in our communities, *“Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” - Isaiah 1:16-17*, so everyone can live as equal. We can help the less fortunate by donating to the food bank, visiting the sick, giving clothes to op shops and making new people in our communities feel welcome. From the Scriptures we learn that the justice of a society is tested and judged by its treatment of the **poor**.

Pope Francis discusses many issues facing our common home. Some of the issues covered in his encyclical are pollution and climate change, the water issue and global inequality. Pollution and climate change is a major problem for the most vulnerable people in our communities. Everyday people are exposed to forms of pollution through transport, industrial fumes, fertilizers, fungicides and herbicides. These pollutants closely link to our terrible throw away culture that occurs from our non-biodegradable waste that causes hundreds of millions of tons of waste to end up in landfills, because of this throw away culture, our common home is beginning to look more like a pile of filth.

The cause of climate change, belongs to everyone so we need to look after it for future generations because we only have one earth created by God, so if we don't look after it then we will be wasting his gift that he *“brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.” - Jeremiah 2:7*, placed us in to look after and cherish. Placing a ban on plastic is a start, as well as

using electric cars instead of petrol to help combat the issue. We can also prevent erosions. All people play an important role in protecting our environment. The water issue is something people living in the poorer countries face everyday. The people have to walk long distances just to get to a water source, which is hardly drinkable. Having clean water is something that we take for granted and sometimes even abuse.

Global inequality is a major problem facing society today. Many people are put at a disadvantage because of their ethnicity and gender. Women today are still paid less than males. People are still being discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. The Bible teaches us that everybody was created equal in God's image, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* - Galatians 3:28.

By acknowledging the **common good, stewardship and preferential option for the poor and vulnerable** we will be able to help combat and overcome the issues of pollution and climate change, the water issue and global inequality by helping guide us as kaitiaki and children of God towards doing the right thing that will put the needs of the environment and the most vulnerable first. These principles help us to live like Jesus did, because he didn't treat people differently and he put the needs of others before his own.