

Pope Francis Calls on Believers to Protect All Creation, Including Defenseless Unborn Lives

Pope Francis has landed in Washington, D.C., for what promises to be an eventful three days in the nation's capital city. His whirlwind visit has been highly anticipated by religious and non-religious alike.

Yet hours before his arrival, another event brought into sharp focus why his core message needs to be heard.

Tuesday morning, the U.S. Senate voted 54-42 on a motion to proceed with the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act; the measure, which needed 60 votes to continue in Congress, is effectively concluded for now.

"How blind can you possibly be to ignore the pain of the unborn?" asked one pro-life advocate on Twitter. Apparently 42 Senators are blind to the humanity of the most vulnerable.

Which makes it fitting that Pope Francis addresses Congress this Thursday—a Christian voice who points to the intrinsic value of all creation and our responsibility to care for every person, using Scripture as his guide.

The pontiff has been gaining popularity since the beginning of his papacy in 2013. While millennials are the largest demographic who favor Pope Francis and his message, his appeal crosses all sub-groups, according to the Barna Group.

Favorability is up among Protestants with a 10-point increase (from 48 percent to 58 percent) since 2014. These evangelicals report that the pope is having a "positive influence on their

views of the church.”

Pope Francis is not without his critics. In advance of his historic address to Congress, the Vatican released his encyclical on the environment entitled *Laudato Si'*—a call to “care for our common home.”

In nearly 40,000 words, Pope Francis lays out how humanity must change its course of action to combat “climate change” and the “damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation.” Some have called *Laudato Si'* too conservative, while others point to a political motivation—with the encyclical released ahead of the United Nations Climate Summit in Paris this winter.

Many disagree economically, politically and scientifically with the pope on his environmental concerns. Yet both Protestant and Catholic Christians can agree with his strong words and inspiring actions to promote the sanctity of all life.

Pope Francis condemns abortion in *Laudato Si'* while highlighting the inequality of value placed on certain life over human life. He writes,

“At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure ...

“But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others.”

For an example of inequality in our midst, look no further than the mainstream media’s distorted coverage of two stories that broke this summer within weeks of each other, each dealing with created life.

Starting in July, undercover videos by The Center of Medical

Progress exposed the grotesque and illegal selling of baby parts by Planned Parenthood. Despite the lack of media coverage, some Americans have nevertheless been made aware of what happens within the walls of the nation's largest abortion provider.

Not only are babies being murdered, but their body parts are being sold to the highest bidder—as if human life is some sort of commodity for profit.

Cue the next story—one that generated widespread media outrage. A Minnesota dentist hunted and killed a well-known lion named Cecil. This famed lion was among the thousands of protected wildlife living in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. He was lured out of the safe zone and shot with a bow and arrow.

Celebrities and politicians alike lamented the killing of this majestic animal. Talk show host Jimmy Kimmel even broke down in tears describing the killing of Cecil.

The stark difference between the silence over profiting from dead baby parts, and the moral indignation from media and celebrities over a protected lion, shows the grievous inequality our society places on human life.

Revealing the worth given to all created life, Pope Francis calls us back to our God-given responsibility. It's a conversation the Christian church certainly needs to have. And, thanks to the larger-than-life pulpit the pope occupies, his ideas on the value of life will be broadcast even by mainstream media outlets that generally avoid such issues.

"It is clearly inconsistent to combat endangered species," the pope exclaims in *Laudato Si'*. "While remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted."

Pope Francis is stating that the debate on “climate change” and any discussion about the environment must include the protection of all life. He questions the accepted narrative:

“Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?”

In the realm of the protection of the environment, many believe the answer to the abuse of our planet is population control. Environmentalists, Western governments, and even certain religious groups believe we need to deny one part of humanity to save another.

Eliminating defenseless human lives is always wrong. Yet even the *New York Times* has written recently that fears of a “population bomb” are completely unfounded; these policies are simply another progressive move to “cure the abuses” of our planet, without fully considering the facts.

An unfortunate example of this is the tragic abortion rate among the women of the Yazidis religious community. Whole groups of women who have been victimized and raped are having abortions imposed on them as a part of an extensive reproductive health strategy. A beautiful and unique culture could become extinct in the name of reproductive control.

Pope Francis objects to population control, calling out those “those who view men and women and all their interventions as no more than a threat, jeopardizing the global ecosystem,” driven by a “refusal to face the issues.”

The pontiff states his views clearly in *Laudato Si'*: “The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious as, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or

animal.”

This moral call by Pope Francis challenges each of us to examine our lifestyle, whether it be how we treat the environment, wildlife, the poor, the victimized, or the unborn. He further states,

“We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of human cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity.”

If endangered animals have detailed strategies for conservation and protected safe zones, then why not humans? Are we willing as a society to heed the pope’s call—having a full, open dialogue about what it means to be good stewards of every created life?

Yet there will be no conversation when the media continues to shut out the undercover Planned Parenthood videos. There’s no dialogue when elected representatives refuse to listen to their constituents asking them to protect the most vulnerable pre-born lives who feel pain.

The pope’s visit to America will no doubt bring millions of religious and non-religious people to listen to his teachings. His encyclical encourages a conversation on our responsibility as citizens of this earth in protecting our environment. But that protection encompasses all life that many fail to see in equal measures.

While celebrities mourn the fate of Cecil the Lion, the videos exposing Planned Parenthood highlight all the more how humans debase God-given life. It starts with moral outrage—knowing the difference between right and wrong. Then the outcry over Cecil surely points us to the dignity of all created life.

If we truly believe that it is our responsibility to care for the world around us and to treat every life humanely and

without suffering, than we must acknowledge where we as a society fail to measure up.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are God's image-bearers, with the responsibility of being caretakers of His created earth and the dignity that He bestows upon all creation:

"The Creator can say to each one of us: 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you' (Jeremiah 1:5).

"We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary."

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