

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Informal note concerning the concerns raised by Dr. Gabriel C K LAM on the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*.

14 January 2016

Initial clarifications

1-for any specific doubts related to grammar and syntax, consider that the most accurate and polished versions of the Encyclical are the English, Italian and Spanish versions.

2-for concern about "I am anxious to know if I would be acting contrary to my Catholic faith and practice by knowingly speaking out and / or put into practice opinions which may not be in line with the Pope Encyclical", obviously it depends. Answers to your question can be provided on a case by case basis. Moreover, all the contents of the Encyclical don't have the same doctrinal value with regards to our Catholic faith. E.g.: The means of "assessing the environmental impact of any project" (§ 35) are not directly related to the content of our faith; conversely, the messages on Scriptures (§ 65-75) are central. Note that Pope Francis makes it part of "the body of the Church's social teaching" (§ 15). Moreover, the Code of Canon Law states: "Can. 227 The lay Christian faithful have the right to have recognized that freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city. When using that same freedom, however, they are to take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the gospel and are to heed the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church. In matters of opinion, moreover, they are to avoid setting forth their own opinion as the doctrine of the Church". It may be useful, additionally, to note the counsel of Pope Paul VI in *Octogesima Adveniens* § 4.

Comments on the specific concerns

- (a) We invite you to consider that there is no contradiction between § 199 and 122. You wrote: "Being human, it is simply not possible not to place human beings at the centre (...)". But this is not the opinion expressed by the Holy Father in § 122 when He addresses relativism and the "misguided anthropocentrism". Your statement "it is simply not possible not to place human beings at the centre" should be nuanced by solidarity ("a new trajectory of thinking is needed in order to arrive at a better understanding of the implications of our being one family", *Caritas in veritate*, § 53) and by Transcendence. We suggest to consider the reflection on a Third Trajectory proposed by Mary Taylor in her article *A deeper ecology: a catholic vision of the person in nature* (*Communio* 38, winter 2011).
- (b) Economies of scale "end up forcing (...) " can be interpreted as: "economies of scale, if pursued to their maximal extent as being a stand-alone objective disconnected from an integral vision of business, will end up forcing (...) ". And, in fact, this is what is happening in several countries. Certainly, in several contexts, Catholic professionals or academics can promote economies of scale while safeguarding the dignity of workers or of local communities. For your information, the Pontifical Council published a booklet entitled *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection* (easily retrievable online).
- (c) The text of § 171 clearly says "can", "seems" and "may", consequently this paragraph is not expressing any intention of the Holy Father to "reject totally and unreservedly carbon trading" as you wrote. This paragraph should be interpreted as a warning against speculation in carbon market rather than addressing the real problem.
- (d) Referring to § 24, you wrote "Academically, carbon dioxide should not be viewed as a pollutant. It (...) would cause an environmental problem only if in excess, just like (...) drinking water". Your statement is not contradicting § 24, neither is contradicting the numerous academic papers which use the expression "carbon dioxide pollution". The Encyclical, here, is considering the contexts in which "carbon dioxide pollution" is already ascertained, and hence recognized as a problem.