

In encyclical, Francis tackles climate change

by [Rosie Scammell](#) in the [Jul 22, 2015](#) issue

Climate change is a mostly human-made phenomenon worsened by rich countries whose people keep feeding their “self-destructive vices,” Pope Francis said in the first papal letter dedicated to the environment.

In the encyclical, titled *Laudato si'*, or “Praise be” (taken from a hymn by St. Francis of Assisi), the pope wrote that climate change requires a “bold cultural revolution” in humankind’s thinking. The 192-page document was translated from Spanish into seven other languages.

“Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation, or blind confidence in technical solutions,” the pope said. “We require a new and universal solidarity.”

He has found such solidarity in Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, leader of the Orthodox Church and a longtime advocate of environmental protection, who is mentioned at length in the papal letter for his work on the environment.

Speaking at the June 18 launch of the encyclical, Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, representing the Orthodox Church, said, “This encyclical comes at a critical moment in human history.”

In the letter, the pontiff urges people to overcome a “culture of waste” and change their consumption habits, suggesting climate change skeptics are merely trying to maintain their lifestyles. “As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear.”

The pope singles out rich countries for their “disproportionate use of natural resources” in the Global South, particularly in African countries, which has led to drought and a “devastating” impact on agriculture.

Francis also invited a leading climate change scientist, John Schellhuber, founding director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, to the official Vatican presentation of the document. “If faith and reason work together, hand in hand, we

can overcome this crisis,” Schellhuber said. —Religion News Service

*This article was edited on July 6, 2015.*