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Lucia A. Silecchia

The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law

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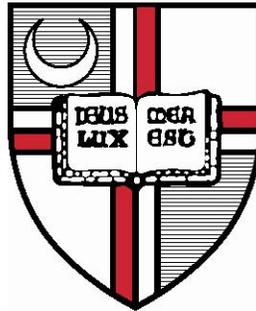
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Laudato Si' and the Tragedy of the “Throwaway Culture”

Lucia A. Silecchia

Throughout *Laudato Si'*,¹ Pope Francis decries what he calls the “throwaway culture.” (LS16). At first blush, given the over-arching ecological theme of *Laudato Si'*, this may seem to be solely a critique of wasteful consumerism. However, it is far more than that. It is a critique of a mindset and world view that discards people, promises, values and community bonds when they seem to lack immediately obvious or quantifiable value in the eyes of the world. Although this is a profoundly personal moral critique, it also provides a lens through which all laws and public policies might be viewed.² *Laudato Si'* asks readers to contemplate whether public attitudes toward utilitarianism shape laws and public policies in dangerous, even tragic, ways, as treasure may be blithely discarded.

This chapter will begin by addressing Pope Francis' explication of the many facets of the “throwaway” culture – both in and beyond *Laudato Si'* – as he sees this problem as a pervasive one. It will then look at its implications for various fields of law. It will also explore what it may mean for law and policy-making if the “throwaway” culture is rejected – and what might replace it.

The Throwaway Culture in *Laudato Si'*

The critique of a “throwaway culture” is a consistent theme in *Laudato Si'*. This should be no surprise. After all, careless consumption is a factor that can lead to the generation of waste to be thrown out and discarded – causing blight and a range of difficulties associated with the disposal of unneeded waste products.³ Thus, throughout *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis criticizes the

“throwaway” culture in this very literal, ecological, and physical sense. In a graphic, frequently quoted passage from *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis says:

Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources. The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. (*LS* 21).⁴

In this critique, he looks upon the physical harm that can be done to the world when selfishness, carelessness or ignorance can lead to wasteful discarding and throwing away and the blurring of the distinction between needs and wants. In particular, he laments the way in which profligate wastefulness can exist at the same time that much of the world is mired in want. He warns:

We fail to see that some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea what to do with their possessions, vainly showing off their supposed superiority and leaving behind them so much waste which, if it were the case everywhere, would destroy the planet. In practice, we continue to tolerate than some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights. (*LS* 90).⁵

However, concerned as he is with the physical, environmental impact of the “throwaway culture,” Pope Francis devotes far more of *Laudato Si'* to a problem more serious and pernicious – the way in which the impetus to throw away *things* can easily lead to the analogous discarding of unwanted, undervalued, and unloved *people*. As he says, the throwaway culture “affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish.” (*LS* ____). He certainly views these problems as intimately and inextricably intertwined with each other.⁶ He says, “[b]oth are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless.” (*LS* 6).⁷ The reason he sees these problems as

interrelated flows from his view of the human person. He sees human life as shaped by three critically important relationships, all of which are harmed when one is damaged.⁸ He writes:

[H]uman life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. (LS 66).⁹

As a result, *Laudato Si'* is laced with examples of situations in which vulnerable people are discarded because the “throwaway” mentality of individuals and communities allows or even encourages it. Pope Francis first points to the way in which young human life in the womb can be discarded or thrown away in violation of the truth that “human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement.” (LS 5).¹⁰ He says:

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? (LS 120).

In this way, Pope Francis acknowledges the importance of the human person when he or she is most vulnerable, most dependent, and most likely to be discarded precisely because of that vulnerability.¹¹ He then expands this concern with “throwing” young persons away to include the way in which other vulnerable groups are treated. He says, “[w]hen we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.” (LS 117).

Pope Francis’ specific concern for those with disabilities hearkens back to his concern about the ways in which anyone who is vulnerable is in danger of being discarded with

disrespect. The discarding of those who are poor is mentioned as well in many other places throughout the encyclical.¹² Pope Francis also expresses concern throughout *Laudato Si'* for those who are “thrown away” through human trafficking,¹³ degrading living conditions,¹⁴ refugee status,¹⁵ unemployment,¹⁶ and myriad other reasons in which people may find themselves excluded from the social arena.¹⁷ This “throwing away” is both a tragedy in its own right and a symptom of a larger problem for humanity.

In diagnosing the mentality that leads to the discarding of human persons, Pope Francis identifies the root cause as a systematic failure to recognize the innate human dignity of the human person – a dignity that is unique to the human person,¹⁸ created in the image and likeness of God.¹⁹ In response to critics who would say that this perception of the humanity’s unique status can lead to misguided permission to ride roughshod over the rest of creation, Pope Francis argues that, paradoxically, it is the unique status of the human person that increases, rather than decreases, responsibility to care for creation. He teaches that it is “[b]y virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, [that] we are called to respect creation.”²⁰ Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si'* contains many statements about the intrinsic worth of all of creation – a worth that exists separate and apart from the known utility of creation for human needs.²¹ Yet, at the same time, the human person’s unique dignity gives rise to a responsibility to care for creation that is shared with no other part of that creation.

Thus, while the failure to care for the physical and natural world dominates the discussion of *Laudato Si'*, its attack on the “throwaway” culture may be its most stinging critique of modern life and the attitudes that can lead to the destruction of human lives in myriad ways.

The Throwaway Culture Beyond the Scope of *Laudato Si'*

While *Laudato Si'* is, certainly, an eloquent presentation of the danger of the “throwaway culture,” it is by no means the only time that Pope Francis has expounded on this theme. If it were, the phrase might easily be relegated simply to a rhetorical flourish in a single encyclical – albeit, a widely publicized one.²² However, for Pope Francis, the notion of the “throwaway” culture is an over-arching theme in his general social, political and economic critique with respect to the morality, *vel non*, of modern life. He addresses nearly all social and moral issues through the lens of the “throwaway culture” and the dangerous threats posed by a mindset that views all through that lens.²³

Throughout his papacy he has spoken often and passionately of the “throwaway culture” that can affect vulnerable people at all stages of the life cycle. He expresses profound fear that that “paper and leftovers aren’t all that’s thrown away. People are thrown away.”²⁴ The fact that laws and public policy can, if misused, enshrine the “throwaway culture” in society, this critique should be particularly troubling to those with responsibilities in these sectors.

He speaks of how the very youngest of children, those in the womb, are “thrown away” when he laments the way in which abortion throws away a nascent human life. This is a particularly poignant point, given that all too often it has been leaders in the environmental movement who have enthusiastically espoused population control strategies – often coercive ones – that undercut the dignity of human life. Pope Francis emphasizes that it cannot be this way and that the horror of abortion is incompatible with the care of our “common home” that he envisions.

Then, he mourns the ways in which slightly older children can easily be discarded when they live childhoods where they are not loved, protected or cherished in societies that sees their burden and needs but not their dignity and promise. He laments, “Children are thrown away in that they are not educated or are not wanted. The birth rate in some developed countries is alarming.”²⁵

Further along in the continuum, he speaks of the way in which young adults can also be “thrown away” by unemployment, saying that “now there is a new castoff, a whole generation of young people without work in undeveloped countries. A generation of young people is being thrown away.”²⁶ Traditionally, unemployment of the young may not appear to be a “throwing away.” Yet, Pope Francis sees this as a “throwing away” of hope, talent, and the dignity of work done to support oneself and others in a manner that satisfies basic needs.

Then, even further along the continuum at the end of life, Pope Francis laments the discarding of the elderly when “the elderly are thrown away ... in that this system of hidden euthanasia that has been established. That is, the social services cover you up to this point, then you can die.”²⁷ Relatedly, he fears that the ill at any stage of life are also at risk of being discarded.²⁸ He recounts a story of a seriously ill man who was taken to the hospital by a parish priest, and Pope Francis says, “[t]he man had been discarded. If he would have gone alone, he would have been discarded and he would have died.”²⁹ As the population around the world ages, the demographics suggest that absent profound conversion, this fear anticipates a harm that will be exacerbated in the years to come.

Pope Francis speaks often of the “throwaway culture” in the context of migrants,³⁰ pleading that “[m]igrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity.”³¹ He warns:

[a] change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.³²

He also comments on the ways in which victims of war can be thrown away since he believes “[e]very conflict and war is emblematic of the throwaway culture, since people’s lives are deliberately crushed by those in power.”³³ Certainly, this can happen during and in the aftermath of violent military strife. When he speaks of war, Pope Francis does not define this solely in the narrow military context. Rather, he notes that “[p]eace is also violated by trafficking in human beings, the new slavery of our age, which turns persons into merchandise for trade and deprives its victims of all dignity.”³⁴ More broadly, any form of unnecessary violence can contribute to the cheapening of human life and, thus, the “throwaway culture.”

Pope Francis speaks, in a particular way, of how those who are materially poor can easily be discarded, calling those who live in poverty “victims of this throwaway culture.”³⁵ Ironically, he also believes that the throwaway culture he condemns can also be precisely what leads to this victimization.³⁶ The particular poverty of discrimination is yet another way in which Pope Francis says people are discarded. He says “[D]iscrimination is a way of throwing away: these people are discarded. And the image of the castes comes to mind. This can’t go on. Today, waste seems almost normal. ... Yes, yes, we’re here, and over there, are those thrown away.”³⁷

In addition to the “throwing away” of individual persons, Pope Francis has also commented on the tragedy of discarding other treasures such as the family. He has said that “the family itself is not infrequently considered disposable, thanks to the spread of an individualistic and self-centered culture which severs human bonds and leads to a dramatic fall in birth rates, as well as legislation which benefits various forms of cohabitation rather than adequately supporting the family for the welfare of society as a whole.”³⁸ While *Laudato Si'* touches on these themes, it is inherent and more fully developed in Pope Francis' other writings as well. He has even gone further to critique the discarding of other precious institutions through “a model of globalization which levels out differences and even discards cultures.”³⁹ While *Laudato Si'* seems to be more centered on the political and economic impacts of globalization, Pope Francis fears the loss of intangible values in the course of globalization.

Perhaps most poignantly, he says “[o]ne of the things that is lost when there is too much wealth or when values are misunderstood or we have become accustomed to injustice, to this throwaway culture, is the capacity to weep. This is a grace we must ask for. ... We Christians must ask for the grace to weep.”⁴⁰

Certainly, concern for creation is not new and it has been a theme in the writings of Pope Francis' immediate predecessors. In recent years, Pope Paul VI,⁴¹ Saint John Paul II,⁴² and Pope Benedict XVI⁴³ each spoke, in his own way, of the moral obligations of responsible stewardship.⁴⁴ They also linked care for creation to care for each other and for human life in direct and tangible ways. However, the “throwaway culture” theme is a unique way in which Pope Francis links the discardability of physical things to his fears about the growing “discardability” of human life in so many varied ways.

Impact on Public Policy and Law

If taken seriously, Pope Francis' critique of the "throwaway culture" could have a broad impact.⁴⁵ Indeed, if every law, policy, and public program was viewed through this lens, it would force modern society to ask hard questions about every new law: Who does the law "discard?" Who does it treat as less worthy of protection or dignity? Who does it attack and, equally important, who does it ignore? Who does it devalue? Who does it deprive of hope? Who will suffer as a result of it? Is that suffering avoidable? Whose opinions mattered in the decision-making process, and whose were thrown away? Pope Francis posits that when we do not ask such questions, we risk losing our humanity and, in so doing, we will inevitably throw others away through "the idolatrous system of the throwaway culture."⁴⁶ He says:

When man loses his humanity, what can we expect? What happens is what I would call in common parlance: a policy, a sociology, a 'throwaway' attitude. One discards what is not needed, because man is not at the centre. And when man is not at the centre, another thing is at the centre and man is at the service of this other thing. The aim therefore is to save man, in the sense that he may return to the centre: to the centre of society, to the centre of thought, the centre of reflection. To bring man once again to the centre.⁴⁷

It is necessary to add the caveat that bringing man "to the centre" cannot mean displacing God at the center of all! But with respect to the practical affairs of this world, the human person must be protected from all that would undermine dignity discarding of the weak and vulnerable. Unfortunately, *Laudato Si'* offers no simple guidance as to how this is to be accomplished – because there is none. However, in the years of his papacy, Pope Francis has offered some guidance on the task.

First, he has expressed the need for personal conversion as a safeguard against the throwaway culture. Although it is easy to focus on (and lay the blame on others for) such a

deadly culture arising from public policies, laws and institutions, the “throwaway culture” has its roots in the human heart itself. Thus, he exclaims: “We must never, never allow the throwaway culture to enter our hearts! We must never allow the throwaway culture to enter our hearts because we are brothers and sisters. No one is disposable!”⁴⁸ Accordingly, before looking to “fix” the institutions of society that may lead to the tragedy of the throwaway culture, it is foundationally important to look inward first and to see in the honest depths of our hearts where the temptation to discard the vulnerable may have its deep, unnoticed roots.⁴⁹

Second, he urges that the focus of a solution has to begin with a renewed emphasis on the individual person. In a modern, complex world, the individual may risk being overlooked in the interest of efficiency or in the tendency to become so overwhelmed by large problems that the impact of problems and their solutions on individuals can easily be lost. In all things, Pope Francis reiterates that the focus on the individual and the personal encounter with him or her is vitally important to avoid intentionally or inadvertently “throwing away” the weak and vulnerable:

A better world will come about only if attention is first paid to individuals; if human promotion is integral, taking account of every dimension of the person, including the spiritual; if no one is neglected, including the poor, the sick, prisoners, the needy and the stranger; if we can prove capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance.⁵⁰

Moving beyond personal conversion and a focus on the individual, Pope Francis has taught that it is next important to focus on the bonds between groups and to develop those in such a way that to discard each other would become unthinkable. Rather than beginning with a teaching about what this might mean for law, he has focused on what this may mean for the more intangible social bonds between people instead. He notes, “it is very important to strengthen the bonds: social, family, personal bonds. Everyone ... need[s] an appropriate setting, a truly

human habitat, with suitable conditions for their harmonious personal development and for their integration into the greater habitat of society.”⁵¹ It is only through strong and vibrant local, community, and familial bonds that there can be multiple safety nets to prevent the weakest among us from being discarded intentionally or inadvertently. It is this form of solidarity between people that Pope Francis says is essential “so as to counter the throwaway culture... [a] culture that always leaves people out of the equation: it leaves children out, it leaves young people out, it leaves the elderly out, it leaves out all who are of no use, who do not produce. ...”⁵²

With respect to what this may mean for substantive law, Pope Francis proposes the ancient Beatitudes as a way in which the throwaway culture can be avoided and a way in which the dignity of others can be advanced. As a framework for reviewing laws, policies, and programs, this may, at first, seem naïve and counterintuitive. Yet, it is precisely this contradictory nature that recommends them. He says:

[T]he Beatitudes of Jesus are new. In fact, they are revolutionary. They present a model of happiness contrary to the logic of this world. Those whom Jesus proclaimed blessed are regarded as useless, or ‘losers’. What the world glorifies is success at any cost, affluence, the arrogance of power and self-affirmation at the expense of others.⁵³

Thus, *Laudato Si*’ may be read through many lenses. In its pages, the lawyer, the architect, the theologian, the economist, the politician, the scientist, the builder, the diplomat, the saint, and the sinner can all find many challenges. However, perhaps no challenge posed within *Laudato Si*’s pages is more urgent and profound as this: to move forward toward a future in which the tragedy of the throwaway culture is itself discarded and replaced with hope for a more dignified, loving future for all.

¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, May 24, 2015 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) [hereafter "*Laudato Si'*"].

² See Dale Jamieson, *The Pope's Encyclical and Climate Change Policy Theology and Politics in Laudato Si'*, 109 AJIL UNBOUND 122 (2015) (calling *Laudato Si'* "primarily a work of moral theology focusing on the human relationships to God and Nature."); Daniel Bodansky, *The Pope's Encyclical and Climate Change Policy: Should We Care What the Pope Says About Climate Change?*, 109 AJIL UNBOUND 127 (2015) ("[A]lthough *Laudato Si'* covers all of the analytical bases, with sections on the scientific, economic, and political dimensions of the climate change problem, it sees climate change primarily as an ethical and spiritual problem. ..."); John Copeland Nagle, *Pope Francis: Environmental Anthropologist*, 28 REGENT U. L. REV. 7, 8-9 (2015) ("Francis laments the rise of pollution, waste, and the throwaway culture ..."); *Id.* at 10 (calling *Laudato Si'* "an encyclical about humanity."); Stephen Schneck, *Review, Pope Francis' Laudato Si': On Care of Our Common Home*, 37 ENERGY L. J. 79 (2016) (characterizing *Laudato Si'* as "a sweeping assessment of how the contemporary world's understanding of the meaning and purpose of human life in relation to creation and the Creator has gone astray, and the consequences of that straying for our home and life in that creation."); and Alessandro Spina, *Reflections on Science, Technology and Risk Regulation in Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'*, 6 EUR. J. RISK REG. 579 (2016) (stating that *Laudato Si'* has a "profound and ambitious goal: it aims to discuss the relationship between man and nature.").

³ There is no shortage of commentary on the physical consequences of wasteful disposal. See, e.g., Ben Cosgove, "Throwaway Living:" *When Tossing Out Everything Was All the Rage*, TIME (on-line) (May 15, 2014) (available at <http://time.com/3879873/throwaway-living-when-tossing-it-all-was-all-the-rage>) (discussing the history of using disposable products with abandon); Dana Gunders, *NRDC Issue Paper: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill* (August 2012) (available at <https://timedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/wasted-food-ip.pdf>) (chronicling the high percentage of food that is thrown away in the United States); Rebecca Fromer, Comment, *Concessions of a Shopaholic: An Analysis of the Movement to Minimize Single-Use Shopping Bags from the Waste Stream and a Proposal for State Implementation in Louisiana*, 23 TUL. ENVTL. L.J. 493, 510-11 (2010) (describing increase in the solid waste generated per person per day).

⁴ See also *Laudato Si'*, ¶ 2 ("The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air, and in all forms of life.").

⁵ See also *Laudato Si'*, ¶ 50 ("To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized."). Indeed, this critique of consumerism has been embraced even by observers who are otherwise critical of *Laudato Si'*. See, e.g., W. David Montgomery, *The Flawed Economics of Laudato Si'*, THE NEW ATLANTIS, Fall 2015, 31, 42 ("In spite of the flaws in its economic and policy reasoning, *Laudato Si'* provides a much-needed moral case against consumerism, arguing for the kind of spiritual transformation that would support action on behalf of the poor and of our common home.").

⁶ See 'Everything is Connected,' COMMONWEAL, July 10, 2015 at 5, commenting that Pope Francis believes that the "ecological crisis" should be viewed as:

Part of a larger ethical failure that also involves the way we treat the poor, the disabled, the unborn, and the future generations who will inherit the world we're destroying. Extending a basic element of the church's social teaching, Francis calls for "intergenerational solidarity," as well as solidarity with other creatures. The careless habits of mind and heart that allow us to pollute and waste also allow us to treat other human beings as disposable.

⁷ See also *Laudato Si'*, ¶ 49 ("[A] true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.").

⁸ See also Nagle, *supra* note _____, at 10 (“Francis stresses the relational character of environmental issues that turn on the relationship between the natural world, human cultures, humanity, and God. Environmental harm ... results when we misunderstand or abuse those relationships.”).

⁹ See also *Laudato Si'*, ¶ 70 “To cultivate and maintain proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered.”).

¹⁰ See also *Id.*, para 20 (“Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity.”).

¹¹ See also Charles C. Camosy, *Abortion, Down Syndrome and the Throwaway Culture: Why the Left Has to Grapple with Pope Francis*, WASHINGTON POST, June 25, 2015.

¹² *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 25 (“Our world has a grave social debt toward the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.”); *Id.* ¶ 48 (“The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor ...”); *Id.* ¶ 49 (“[T]here is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. Yet they are the majority of the planet’s population. ... [T]hey are mentioned in international political and economic discussion, but one often has the impression that their problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way.”).

¹³ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 91:

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted.

¹⁴ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 44 (“We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.”) and *Id.* ¶ 46 (“Frequently, we find beautiful and carefully manicured green spaces in so-called ‘safer’ areas of cities, but not in the more hidden areas where the disposable of society live.”).

¹⁵ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 25:

[C]hanges in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever... Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.

¹⁶ See *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 46 (“The social dimensions of global change include the effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression.”).

¹⁷ See *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 66 (“This is a far cry from our situation today, where sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars the various forms of violence and abuse the abandonment of the vulnerable, and attacks on nature.”) and *Id.* ¶ 52 (“We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.”).

¹⁸ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 15 (advocating “an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings.”); *Id.* ¶ 65 (“Those who are committed to defending human dignity can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this commitment. How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles!”); *Id.* ¶ 90 (“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. ...”); *Id.* ¶ 81 (“The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object.”); *Id.* ¶ 118 (“There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology. When the human person is considered as simply one being among others, the product of chance physical determinism, then ‘our overall sense of responsibility wanes.’”); *Id.* ¶ 90 (“This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails.”); *Id.* para 205 (“I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us.”) and *Id.* ¶ 119:

Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures; it this inculcates esteem for each person and respect for others. Our openness to others, each of whom is a ‘thou’ capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility of human persons. A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the ‘Thou’ of God.

¹⁹ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 65 (“[E]very man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness. ... This shows us the immense dignity of each person.”).

²⁰ *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, ¶ 69. He cites the example of St. Francis who did not view the unique dignity of the person at odds with concern for creation. *Id.* para 10 (“St. Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.”). *See also Id.* para 78 (“This rediscovery of nature can never be at the cost of the freedom and responsibility of human beings who, as part of the world, have the duty to cultivate their abilities in order to protect it and develop its potential.”) and *Id.* ¶ 228 (“Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do or us.”).

²¹ *See generally* Sean McDonagh, *Laudato Si' Extends Concern to All Creation*, NTL. CATH. RPTR. July 29 – August 11, 2016.

²² Indeed, *Laudato Si'* inspired the remarkable resolution, “The Senate stands with Pope Francis.” 161 CONG. RECORD NO. 126, S6403 (August 5, 2015).

²³ Others have noted the centrality of this theme in the work of Pope Francis. For conference proceedings on this theme, *see generally* Georgetown University Initiative on Catholic Social Thought & Public Life, *Resisting the “Throwaway Culture”*: *Protecting Human Life and Dignity*, April 12, 2016 (available at <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/resisting-the-throwaway-culture-protecting-human-life-and-dignity>).

²⁴ Pope Francis, *In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from the Philippines to Rome*, January 19, 2015 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150119_srilanka-filippine-conferenza-stampa.html) [hereafter “*Philippines Flight Press Conference*”]. *See also* Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to the U.N. System Chief Executives Board for Coordination*, May 9, 2014 (available at http://m2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco_20140509_consiglio-nazioni-unite.html) (urging the United Nations’ leaders to serve the world’s vulnerable by “challenging all forms of injustice and resisting the ‘economy of exclusion,’ the ‘throwaway culture’ and the ‘culture of death’ which nowadays sadly risk becoming passively accepted.”).

²⁵ Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the International Meeting of Directors of “Scholas Occurrentes”*, Sept. 4, 2014 (available at

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/september/documents/papa-francesco_20140904_direttori-scholas-occurrentes.html) [hereafter “*Scholas Occurrentes Address*”]. See also *Id.* (“I see the face of so many children and young people whom I nurture in my heart, because I know that they are potential thrown-away material.”). See also Pope Francis, *Interview of Pope Francis with Journalists During the Return Flight from the Holy Land*, May 26, 2014 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco_20140526_terra-santa-conferenza-stampa.html) [hereafter “*Flight from the Holy Land Interview*”] (“[Y]ou throw away children – the birth rate in Europe is not very high! Children are discarded.”) and Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis at the Conclusion of Luncheon with the Participants in the International Seminar on the Pope’s Proposal “Towards a More Inclusive Economy” Made in the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, July 12, 2014 (available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/july/documents/papa-francesco_20140712_seminario-economia.html) [hereafter “*Inclusive Economy Address*”] (“Children are thrown away because the birth rate – at least here in Europe – everyone knows it.”).

²⁶ *Scholas Occurrentes Address*, *supra* note _____. See also Pope Francis, *Meeting of the Holy Father Francis with the Journalists During the Flight to Brazil*, July 22, 2013 (available at http://m2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130722_gmg-intervista-volo-rio.html) [hereafter “*Flight to Brazil Meeting*”] (“[W]e have all these young people with no work, they too are suffering the effects of the throwaway culture. We must rid ourselves of this habit of throwing away. No! The culture of inclusion, the culture of encounter, making an effort to bring everyone into society.”); Pope Francis, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, January 12, 2015 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150112_corpo-diplomatico.html) [hereafter “*2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*”] (“[T]he young are thrown away when they are denied concrete prospects of employment to build their future. Indeed, there is no poverty worse than that which takes away work and the dignity of work.”); *Flight from the Holy Land Interview*, *supra* note _____ (“[Y]oung people are being discarded and this is something serious. It is extremely serious. ... [T]here is an entire generation which is ‘neither-nor:’ they neither study nor work, and this is something really serious! A generation of young people is being thrown away. For me, this throwaway culture is extremely serious.”); *Inclusive Economy Address*, *supra* note _____ (“A generation of young people is being thrown away, and this is the most serious! They don’t study because they don’t have the means, they don’t work because there are no jobs. More waste.”).

²⁷ *Scholas Occurrentes Address*, *supra* note _____. See also *Flight to Brazil Meeting*, *supra* note _____ (“[W]e do the elderly an injustice, we set them aside as if they had nothing to offer us; they have wisdom, life’s wisdom, history’s wisdom, the homeland’s wisdom, the family’s wisdom. And we need all this! We have become somewhat accustomed to this throwaway culture: too often the elderly are discarded!”); *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____ (“The elderly encounter rejection when they are considered a ‘burdensome presence’”) and *Flight from the Holy Land Interview*, *supra* note _____ (“The elderly are discarded: old people are not useful; in the present situation, at this moment, we visit them because they are retired and needy, but it is a matter of the present situation. The elderly are also discarded with situations of hidden euthanasia in many countries. In a word, they are given medical care to a certain point, and then”). *Inclusive Economy Address*, *supra* note _____ (“[T]he elderly are thrown away, because they are of no use.”).

²⁸ *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____ (“I think in the first place of the way the sick are treated; often they are cast aside and marginalized like the lepers in the Gospel.”).

²⁹ *Philippine Flight Press Conference*, *supra* note _____.

³⁰ See generally Pope Francis, *Message of Pope Francis on the Occasion of the “Mexico/Holy See Colloquium on Migration and Development,”* July 14, 2014 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140711_messaggio-movilidad-humana.html).

³¹ Pope Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World*, August 5, 2013 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20130805_world-migrants-day.html) [hereafter “*Towards a Better World*”].

³² *Towards a Better World*, *supra* note _____. See also *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____ (“Together with lives thrown away because of war and disease, there are those of numerous refugees and displaced persons. Once again, the reality can be appreciated by reflecting on the childhood of Jesus, which sheds light on another form of the throwaway culture which harms society and causes the breakdown of society.”).

³³ *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____.

³⁴ Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to the Council of Europe* (November 25, 2014) (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141125_strasburgo-consiglio-europa.html) [hereafter “*Council of Europe Address*”].

³⁵ *Philippines Flight Press Conference*, *supra* note _____.

³⁶ For a fuller explanation of this anomaly see Archbishop Bernardito Auso, *Intervention of the Holy See at the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Agenda Item 25: Agriculture Development, Food Security, and Nutrition*, October 28, 2014 (available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2014/documents/rc-seg-st-20141028_ausa-second-committee_en.html) (“[C]urrent levels of world food production are sufficient to feed everyone. . . . This paradox is also due to a throwaway culture in affluent societies, to deliberate large-scale destruction of food products to keep prices and profit motives high, as well as to other policies that override the common objective of food security for all.”). See also *Council of Europe Address*, *supra* note _____ (“Indifferent individualism leads to the cult of opulence reflected in the throwaway culture all around us. We have a surfeit of unnecessary things, but we no longer have the capacity to build authentic human relationships marked by truth and mutual respect.”).

³⁷ *Philippines Flight Press Conference*, *supra* note _____.

³⁸ *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____.

³⁹ *2015 Diplomatic Corps Address*, *supra* note _____.

⁴⁰ *Philippines Flight Press Conference*, *supra* note _____.

⁴¹ For example, Pope Paul VI’s papacy corresponded with the Stockholm Convention on the Human Environment, and he addressed a message to its participants. See generally Pope Paul VI, *A Hospitable Earth for Future Generations: Message to the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment*, June 1, 1972 (available at <http://www.kateri.org/paul%20vi.htm>).

⁴² Although Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’* was the first papal encyclical devoted to ecological questions, Saint John Paul II wrote the first papal document entirely devoted to the environmental issues of his day. See generally Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation*, January 1, 1990 (available at <http://www.kateri.org/john%20paul%20ii%20peace%20with%20god.htm>).

⁴³ To mark the twentieth anniversary of Saint John Paul II’s *Peace with God the Creator*, Pope Benedict issued his own World Day of Peace message for 2010 and devoted it to environmental themes. See generally Pope Benedict XVI, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, January 1, 2010 (available at <http://www.kateri.org/pope%20benedict%20peace.htm>).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Christiana Z. Peppard, *Pope Francis and the Fourth Era of the Catholic Church’s Engagement with Science*, 71(5) BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS 31, 32 (2015) (“Moral obligations to care for creation and for the poor have been consistently invoked and amplified in formal Vatican documents for several decades, even while their prominence may not have been readily apparent to many American Catholics.”); Schneck, *supra* note _____, at 80 (“*Laudato Si’* emerges from a hermeneutic of continuity and is not a revolutionary manifesto.”); and *Id.* (“*Laudato Si’* is not new theology and its provenance in continuity lends powerfully to the document’s gravity and significance.”).

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Jamieson, *supra* note _____, at 125 (“[V]alues have public dimensions and that’s what makes them values rather than preferences. The sharp distinction often drawn between public policy and private morality is a false one. Values inform our policy and create the soil which makes it possible for policies to be enacted.”).

⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *Homily of Pope Francis on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, December 12, 2014 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141212_nostra-signora-guadalupe.html).

⁴⁷ *Inclusive Economy Address*, *supra* note _____. See also *Id.* (“[M]an is the king of the universe! And this is not theology, it is not philosophy, it is human reality.”).

⁴⁸ Pope Francis, *Visit to the Community of Varginha: Address of Pope Francis*, July 25, 2013 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-comunita-varginha.html).

⁴⁹ I have explored some aspects of this need for personal conversion and the ways in which it relates to public obligation in Lucia A. Silecchia, “*Social Love*” as a Vision for Environmental Law: *Laudato Si’ and the Rule of Law*, 10 LIBERTY U. L. REV. 371 (2016) (available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2813256).

⁵⁰ *Towards a Better World*, *supra* note _____. This sentiment is echoed by Pope Francis’ representatives as well. See, e.g., *Address Given by H.E. Archbishop James Patrick Green, Apostolic Nuncio and Head of Delegation Before the Plenary of the High-Level Segment of the United Nations Climate Conference*, December 10, 2014 (available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2014/documents/rc-seg-st-20141210_green-lima_en.html) (“There is no room for the globalization of indifference, the economy of exclusion or the throwaway culture denounced by Pope Francis.”); *Id.* (“The current lifestyle with its throwaway culture is unsustainable and should have no place in our lives.”); Archbishop Bernardito Auza, *Statement of the Holy See to the U.N. at the General Debate of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee*, October 8, 2014 (available at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/20/0776/01640.pdf>) (“The Catholic Church ... is committed to ... fighting both extreme want and a throwaway culture in rich societies.”); Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Message to Hindus on the Occasion of the Feast of Deepavali 2013*, October 28, 2013 (available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20131028_deepavali-2013_en.html) (“Sadly, with the increase of materialism in society and a growing disregard for deeper spiritual and religious values, there now exists a dangerous trend to accord the same value to material things as to human relationships, thereby reducing the human person from a ‘someone’ to a ‘something’ that can be cast aside at will.”) and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, *Address of His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Francis at the 69th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, September 29, 2014 (available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/parolin/2014/documents/rc_seg-st_20140929_69th-un-general-assembly_en.html) (critiquing “a financial system governed only by speculation and the maximization of profits, or one in which individual persons are regarded as disposable items in a culture of waste”).

⁵¹ *Scholas Occurrentes Address*, *supra* note _____.

⁵² Pope Francis, *Interview with Pope Francis for the Radio of the Archdiocese of Rio*, July 27, 2013 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-intervista-radio.html).

⁵³ Pope Francis, *Message of Pope Francis to Dutch Young People on the Occasion of the National Catholic Youth Festival Celebrated in the Abbey of Marienkroon in Nieuwkuijk*, June 28-29, 2014 (available at http://m2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140625_messaggio-gioventu-cattolica-olandese.html) [hereafter “*Message to Dutch Young People*”]. See also *Id.* (“Say no to an ephemeral, superficial and throwaway culture, a culture that assumes that you are not strong, that you are not capable of facing great challenges in your life! Think big!”). See also Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to the European Parliament*, November 25, 2014 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141125_strasburgo-parlamento-europeo.html):

To tend to those in need takes strength and tenderness, effort and generosity in the midst of a functionalistic and privatized mindset which inexorably leads to a 'throwaway culture'/To care for individuals and peoples in need means protecting memory and hope; it means taking responsibility for the present with its situations of utter marginalization and anguish, and being capable of bestowing dignity upon it.

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