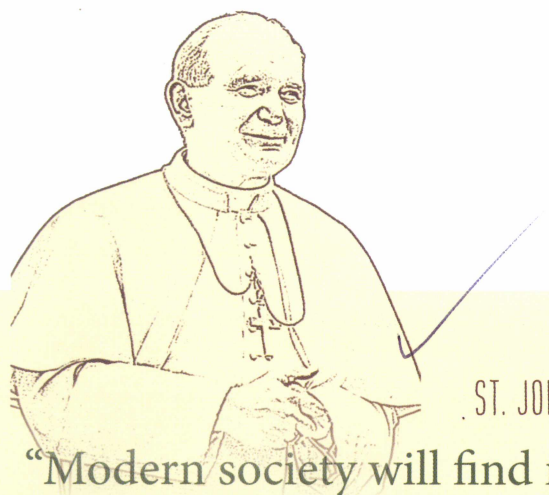


- The loss of animal and plant life
- The breakdown of society
- An information overload produced by constant digital updates
- Global inequality

In recent years, the State of Michigan has experienced numerous environmentally based concerns that have drawn parallels to the thoughts articulated by Pope Francis. The Flint water crisis, ongoing difficulties regarding access to clean and affordable drinking water in Detroit, the presence of PFAS contamination<sup>2</sup>, and lingering environmental questions around the distribution of oil and gas through the Straits of Mackinac are but a few of the many issues present today. Their impact on low-income and vulnerable populations—including many of whom are members of minority communities—are consistent with the concerns advanced by the Holy Father. In addition to these concerns, Michiganders have witnessed the connections between the environment and health care, agriculture, and other industries highlighted in *Laudato Si'*. •

“The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home.”

—*Laudato Si*, No. 155

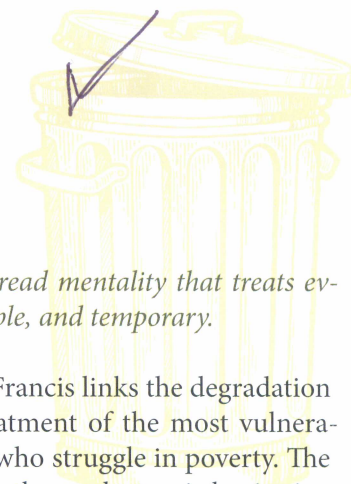


ST. JOHN PAUL II

“Modern society will find no solutions to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle.”

—1990 World Day of Peace Message

## THE THROWAWAY CULTURE



**Throwaway Culture:** A widespread mentality that treats everything as disposable, replaceable, and temporary.

Throughout *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis links the degradation of the environment to the treatment of the most vulnerable in society, especially those who struggle in poverty. The Holy Father writes that “the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (no. 21). This decay has occurred, he writes, because of a developing “throwaway culture” in society (no. 22). Items that have outlived their usefulness are discarded, rather than being reused or recycled. Pope Francis initially cites this concept in relation to pollution, overconsumption, and waste that have harmed the environment and the health of individuals. However, he also points out that the throwaway culture “affects **the excluded [person]** just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish” (no. 21, emphasis added). Relationships are easily abandoned, and for many in society, an individual’s worth is viewed as inextricably linked to their achievements or perceived usefulness. This type of attitude is troubling, as it ignores the inherent dignity that each person is afforded because he or she is a child of God. For the faithful, respecting the value of each person—from conception until natural death—is an integral part of the daily lives of Catholics. The ability to practice this respect in every encounter with others will inevitably impact the way human beings treat the environment, as the natural world is a gift from God. •



POPE BENEDICT XVI

“The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit.”

—*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007