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“When we fail to acknowledge... the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities...it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself.”

—*Laudato Si*, No. 117

## CONSUMERISM, CONSUMPTION, AND THE POOR



Many of the Earth's natural resources are used faster than they can be replaced, whether that is because of consumer desires, emerging technologies, or the design of the manufacturer. When resources are consumed in this way, the poor often suffer the most. Specifically, Pope Francis:

- Warns against excessive consumerism.
- Challenges Catholics to consider those in difficult economic circumstances.
- Dismisses the idea that a reduction in the birth rate is the solution, which only legitimizes the continuance of excessive consumption and waste (*no. 50*).



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POPE FRANCIS

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack...concern for our fellow human beings.”

—*Laudato Si*, No. 91

The teaching on consumption in *Laudato Si* is challenging and countercultural. Americans are encouraged to acquire newer and better goods, without considering if those things give “meaning and joy to the human heart” (*no. 209*). Society espouses the idea that community needs are important, but only if they do not clash with personal desires, an attitude which leaves vulnerable neighbors behind. The Church, on the other hand, reminds Catholics that by reducing dependency on material goods, greater happiness may be achieved. Pope Francis emphasizes this point, saying “happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us” (*no. 223*). •

## TECHNOLOGY AND THE ECONOMY



*Laudato Si* addresses the role of science and technology in society, recognizing that “when well directed,” the two can work together to improve people's lives (*no. 103*). Yet the Holy Father warns against society separating technology from ethics; against the economy using advances in technology to prioritize profits above all else, especially people; and against people believing so strongly in the power of technology to address every problem that its impact on environmental deterioration is dismissed. The pontiff acknowledges that society cannot and should not return to the Stone Age. However, as a society, it is beneficial to ask: “is this the right way forward?” (*no. 114*). Treating technology as the savior to everything—without considering its direction, goals, and social implications—is dangerous, often ignoring the root causes of the problem or the larger impact on those who are marginalized. •

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“[Each community] also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.”

—*Laudato Si*, No. 67