

30.09.2025

**His Holiness
Pope Leo XIV
Vatican City**

Your Holiness,

We offer our heartfelt congratulations on Your Holiness's election as Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church. We are especially encouraged by your commitment to the principles of integral ecology, and we welcome the continuation of this key work for the future of the world.

As members and leaders of organizations that advocate for animals, we write to humbly draw Your Holiness's attention to the deep longing in many of the faithful for the renewing of apostolic guidance on the moral responsibilities humans hold towards animals. We believe that an updated and compassionate teaching in this area is an essential element of the Church's care for all of creation.

With St. Francis of Assisi and other saints as our guides, we respectfully urge Your Holiness to initiate in the Church a process of reflection—one that clearly specifies the moral and spiritual duties of Christians towards animals—and to call people all over the world to eliminate cruelty, exploitation, and indifference in human–animal relationships. Such a teaching will serve the good of all life on Earth.

It has now been ten years since the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si'*, in which Pope Francis reminded us that animals possess an intrinsic and inalienable value given to them by God, and that humanity must reject a despotic domination in favor of respect for their nature. Scripture, Tradition, and Church teachings call us to treat animals with compassion and reverence. Yet despite these teachings, human indifference to harm towards animals remains widespread. People look away, unaware or unwilling to accept the truth hidden behind the walls of factory farms, slaughterhouses, and laboratories. And industry does everything to conceal the suffering and dire consequences of “animal production” on the environment, health, and social justice.

We assume that Your Holiness is aware of the immense suffering inflicted upon sentient animals in industrial agriculture, and transport, entertainment, scientific experimentation, and other human undertakings. These animals also are, together with people, victims of climate change and environmental destruction — being burned in forest fires, drowned in rising waters, or forced to escape from polluted habitats.

We know that the objectification of animals and the relentless growth of animal–product consumption are devastating for both humanity and the planet. According to the 2023 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report, food systems account for over one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions and are the leading driver of biodiversity loss. Intensive animal agriculture, largely producing to fulfil the needs of affluent societies, fuels hunger, food waste, pollution, and public health crises.

Leading climate experts warn that the global food system, as it stands, is the principal reason we have already crossed six of the nine planetary boundaries. It jeopardizes vital systems that support all life, from freshwater and soil health to air quality and pollinator populations. Many scientists agree that transitioning away from animal agriculture and towards plant-based food systems offers one of the most effective and immediate opportunities to mitigate the climate and ecological crises.

As followers of Christ, we are convinced that failing to act in the context of this knowledge and failing to react to what is being done to animals is a moral failure and our sin. We cannot keep animals any longer outside the circle of Christian compassion and real concern. If we want to strive for the ideal of being good stewards of God's creation, full of peace, as described in Genesis 1:26-30, live ethically and be responsible for the future of life on Earth, if we sincerely strive for salvation, we must urgently reconsider our relationship with animals. We also trust that it is the Holy Spirit Who is guiding us towards this realisation, through the development of science, our growing understanding of animal nature, and the technological solutions allowing us to be independent of using them for our needs.

Just as we advocate for every human life from conception to natural death, and we wholeheartedly want to respond to the cry of the poor of this world, we also are called to respond to the cry of sentient animals.

In your message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (2025), Your Holiness spoke of the need for "God's tenderness" to become visible in the world. We believe this divine tenderness extends also to all animals — and not only sparrows (Luke 12:6), but also those pigs, cows, chickens, fish, and countless others, who suffer in silence.

But ethical development requires education and spiritual renewal — one that helps the faithful see animals as fellow creatures of our Heavenly Father.

We respectfully request that Your Holiness establish a commission of theologians, ethicists, scientists, and other relevant experts to explore this issue in depth and to develop updated Catholic teaching on human–animal relationships that reflects contemporary scientific knowledge and will help shape people into the image of a loving and compassionate God.

Without a moral awakening — one that recognizes the inherent value of animal life, and is guided by mercy, empathy, and justice also for them — we will be unable to halt environmental destruction, overcome violence, or alleviate human poverty. More importantly, we will also fall short of imitating God's love on our journey to the harmony of the Kingdom of God. We deeply believe that Christ, were he to walk among us today, would stand with the defenseless animals.

We therefore earnestly appeal once again to Your Holiness to open in the Church a new chapter of moral reflection and teaching that will include animals within the circle of compassion and justice. Just as the Church has played an important role in advancing environmental protection, now it has a chance to lead in healing our relationship with animals. "The whole of creation waits with eager longing for the children of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19).

Our organizations stand ready to offer the data, knowledge, and experience to support the Church in this important theological, moral, and civilizational endeavor.

With deep respect and hope,

Members of the organizations and individuals (theologians, biblicists, priests, ethics, zoologist, ecologists, etc.) listed below:

All Creatures.org (USA) - Tams Nicholson, Executive Director <https://www.all-creatures.org/>

AnimaTerra -Prendre soin de la Terre et du Vivant (France) - Christine Kristof www.animaterra.fr

Catholic Action for Animals and St. Barnabas Laudato Si' Group (UK) - Virginia Bell ; Virginia Bell
<https://catholicactionforanimals.wordpress.com/>

Christian Animal Rights Association (USA) - Matthew A. King, President
<https://christiananimalrights.com/>

Christian Vegetarian Association (USA) - Stephen R. Kaufman, MD, Chair
<https://www.christianveg.org/>

Christians for Animals (Poland) – Barbara Niedźwiedzka, PhD www.opowiedzwierze.pl f.
<https://www.facebook.com/ChrzescijanieZwierzeta>

ChristInnen für Tiere (Germany) - Gabriella Perotto, gabriperotto@hotmail.com

Fraternité pour le Respect Animal (France) – Estela Torres [www. https://fra-respect-animal.org/](http://www.https://fra-respect-animal.org/)

Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC) - Colm Fahy, Ecology Advocacy Officer <https://jesc.eu/>

Pan-Orthodox Concern for Animals – President dr Christina Nellist,
panorthodoxconcernforanimals@gmail.com <https://panorthodoxconcernforanimals.org/>

Vegan Catholic Christian (USA) - Daniel Mascarenhas, S.J. vegancatholic.org ;

among others:

John Berkman, Ph.D. Professor Ordinarius of Moral Theology, University of Toronto (Canada)
Elizabeth Johnson, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Theology Emerita, Fordham University (USA)
Christopher Steck, Professor in Ethical Issues, and Theology, Georgetown University (Canada)
Kurt Remele, professor of Catholic theology, ethicist, Karl-Franzens Univ. in Graz (Austria)
Catherine Vialle, Professeur d'Ancien Testament, Lille (France)
Marcin Majewski, Professor of Bible Studies at Uniwersytet Papieski Jana Pawła II (Poland)
Richard Chartier, o.f.s., M.Sc., franciscain séculier. Laval – Quebec (Canada)
Robert Culat, priest, Diocese of Avignon (France)
Roman Batorski, Parish Priest, Słubice (Poland)
Marek Kurkierewicz, pastor w Kościół Chrystusowy, Koszalin (Poland)
Terry Martin, priest of the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton (UK)
Andrzej Stefański, priest, Aartsbisdom Mechelen-Brussel (Belgium)
Henryk Cisowski ofm cap, Ministry Director Capuchin Community Services, Milwaukee (USA)
Lucille C. Thibodeau, Sister, Ph.D., Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics (France)
Dorota Probuska, Ph.D. Professor, and The Chair of Social Ethics Dept of the University, Chief Editor of the journal Ethical Education (Poland)
Margarita Carretero González, PhD, Lecturer and Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics (Spain)
Ruby Alemu, PhD, Independent Scholar in Theological Ethics (UK)
Barbara Gardner MBE, Animal Interfaith Alliance (UK)
Juan Carlos Vila Alonso, Philosophy and Secondary and University Teacher (Spain)
Jorge Antonio Jiménez Carrero, University Professor of Administrative Law (Spain)
Zbigniew M. Karaczun, Dr hab. Professor of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), CEO of the Climate Coalition (Poland)
Piotr Skubala, PhD, Professor of University of Silesia, Institute of Biology, Biotechnology and Environmental Protection (Poland)
Sébastien Doane, Professeur agrégé, FTSR, Université Laval, Québec (Canada)
Ewa Zgrabczyńska, zoologist, Director of Zoo in Poznań in 2016–2024. (Poland)

Signatures are being collected, and can be seen here:

English: <https://chng.it/cgtZNBqNTX> ; ; Français: <https://chng.it/DKMWpQ9GJ5>; Polish: <https://chng.it/jkcQ8QsrZk> ; Spanish: <https://chng.it/mHNzL88r5Z>; German: <https://chng.it/F7HgZP7mQ7> ; Italian: <https://chng.it/j2gXwNPjrB>