

## OUR COMMON HOME

It is worthwhile to explore the riches of the pope's chosen term for Mother Earth—Our Common Home. The word 'home' stirs up in us a world of memories and emotions. If you have had a happy childhood, home is the place for which you feel the greatest affection: it blended good relationships with the particularities of the place where you began your life. As Elvis Presley has it, *Home is where the heart is*. The lyrics run: 'My heart is anywhere you are; anywhere you are is home'. This resonates with the saying, 'It takes hands to build a house, but only hearts can build a home'.

The pope says: '*Our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life, and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us*' (1).

It is hard to imagine a more heart-stirring name for the world than 'our common home'. 'Our planet is a homeland and humanity is one people living in a common home' (164). We must rediscover what our ancestors enjoyed—a deep and loving sense of relationship with Planet Earth and all its inhabitants. As children we shared what was perhaps a small home; now we share a planet, and like St Francis of Assisi of old we in our time are charged with the task of protecting and repairing it. '*Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness*' (53). It's all about renewing relationships—with other members of the human family, but with the wider non-human family too, so that Earth may become 'home, sweet home' to all its inhabitants. '*The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, with us and through us, all creatures are moving towards a common point of arrival, which is God, where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. We are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator*' (83). *Even now we are journeying towards our common home in heaven. We come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast*' (243).

Together we are entrusted by God with this work. The labour of collaboration begets community among us, and that is already a blessing even if our work seems to show little fruit otherwise. Community in our home is God's intention.