

FAITHFUL EARTH STEWARDSHIP

Resources for Care of Creation

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Cardinal Turkson Generates Keen Response at OSU

Nearly 1,500 OSU and Columbus community members gathered to hear His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson on Monday night, Nov. 2, at Mershon Auditorium, and witnessed a rousing dialogue that joined the perspectives of the Cardinal, OSU President Michael V. Drake, and an OSU Gospel choir to reflect on the Pope's recent [environmental encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*](#).

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As someone fortunate to be in the audience, multiple images remain in my mind.

As we finished taking our seats, OSU gospel singing group African American Voices focused the audience with a bright rendition of *Call Him Up*. The song's repeated refrain "**Can't stop praising His name,**" evoked the title of Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* (translated: Praise Be To You), and the energy of the music made me think of the passion and gratitude of *Laudato Si*'s exemplar, St. Francis of Assisi, whose exultant [Canticle to the Creatures](#) from which the encyclical takes its name expressed the saint's profound gratitude in light of the gifts of creation.

OSU Vice-President for Agricultural Administration and Dean of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Bruce McPheron, welcomed the crowd and introduced Dr. Drake, who introduced Cardinal Turkson to a standing ovation.

The enthusiasm that greeted Cardinal Turkson reminds me of the spirit of my students in [ENR 3470, Religion and Environmental Values in America](#) (a GE Cultures and Ideas course) and other students at Ohio State majoring in environment and other sustainability disciplines. Their vision, creativity, and energy will be a crucial ingredient if present and future generations are to rise to the challenges of caring for our common home, and much of the progress

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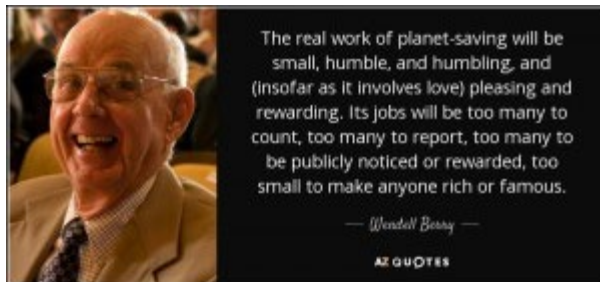
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made in [sustainability at Ohio State](#) follows from our students' interests.

Cardinal Turkson's lecture struck me with a related insight when he described that *Laudato Si'* only uses the word "stewardship" twice. This was surprising to me, since my field is religion and ecology, and I know that in the United States, the word "stewardship" is the most resonant term related to care of the Earth. Pope Francis's choice of language, Turkson said, was intentional, opting instead to mostly use the word "care," since a person might perform acts of stewardship without caring, and it is precisely *the care that sources from one's heart* that will be the basis for a successful human response to sustainability challenges.

Agrarian essayist Wendell Berry shares similar thoughts when he says that a sense of "duty," though helpful, will not be sufficient to motivate our actions to save the planet; in the end, only love will suffice, the same force that empowers new parents to arise, sleep deprived, and care for their infant child in the middle of the night, the force that fuels all those efforts made against convenience for the good of what we love. It is love, affection, and care that ultimately provide the enduring power to bring peace and flourishing to our common life.



This tone of care and affection was echoed in the fireside chat between Dr. Drake and Cardinal Turkson that followed the lecture. Drake and Turkson were asked to say more about why they personally care about the environment.

Drake shared the impact of going trout fishing in the mountains as a youth and being struck by the crystal clear waters cascading over rocks as he fished. Experiencing

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April 2017
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August 2016
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March 2016
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such a pristine setting of integrity and harmony inspires the impulse to care for that precious gift, and echoes the powerful themes that motivated America's preservation and conservation movements that saw the creation of National Parks in the United States. [A recent podcast](#) by environmental historian Mark Stoll highlights how some of these themes demonstrate the religious roots of care for nature in America.

Cardinal Turkson's own account provided a jarring contrast to Drake's experience of pristine nature. Turkson grew up in a large family in Ghana, and the "back yard" he and his peers played in was around the huge pit of a manganese mine, where destruction of the land from human economic interests was only too plain to see.

This stark reminder of the deep challenges that remain in humanity's quest for sustainability provided an apt lead-in to the closing song of the night, the social change classic "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," which suggests to us that no simple response will suffice to meet the challenges of our era. It will take sustained and collaborative efforts – our best efforts – for a long time to come, and so, as the song says, we'll need to "keep on talking, keep on walking, marching up to freedom land."

Similarly, as Cardinal Turkson emphasized, *Laudato Si'* encourages all of the world's people to see that their actions matter, that everyone's voice and effort is needed, and that even (and maybe especially) in our *small, daily actions*, such as being thankful for our food, we begin to make the changes needed to care and live together in our common home.

As a final note, I think this event was an outstanding occasion of dialogue, and it also will spark further engagement: thanks to the sponsorship of OSU's School of Environment and Natural Resources and the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, 100% of ticket proceeds were donated to support 4-H clubs working

on food security and urban agriculture in Columbus and in Accra, Ghana, which has yielded more than \$4800 of support for the work of youth to address food deserts in Ohio and Ghana. Stay tuned to this site for future updates!

Concern for the environment
thus needs to be joined
to a sincere love
for our fellow human beings
and an unwavering commitment
to resolving the problems society.

Pope Francis
*Laudato Si':
On Care For
Our Common Home*



**Digital and Social Media Coverage compiled by OSU
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental
Sciences Marketing and Communications team:**

Photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/osucfaes/sets/72157660828377421/>

Short overview video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sxdbAiz2J0&feature=youtu.be

Full recording of Mershon
event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1nz-ChNses&feature=youtu.be>

Storify summary of
#TurksonChat: <https://storify.com/CFAESComm/cardinal-peter-turkson-visit-to-ohio-state-univers>

Social media reach

Twitter 174,147 accounts reached by #TurksnChat
<https://tweetreach.com/reports/15240851>

Facebook 9,046 accounts reached, 225 new stories
created through sharing

Additional Coverage:

Columbus Dispatch (11/3/15): [Concern for Earth must be priority, Cardinal from Ghana tells central Ohioans](#)

National Catholic Reporter (11/2/15): [Turkson's visit to Ohio State a watershed event...](#)

The Lantern (11/3/15): [Cardinal Turkson speaks on global sustainability...](#)

Credits:

Full live stream video:

<http://livestream.com/WOSU/CardinalPeterTurkson>;

Wendell Berry

image: <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1276326>; Pope Francis

image: <http://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2015/06/18/laudato-si-an-invitation-to-solidarity/>

Posted by [Gregory Hitzhusen](#) at 10:01am

Posted in [Laudato_Si](#), [News](#), [Official Religious Environmental Statements](#), [Uncategorized](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

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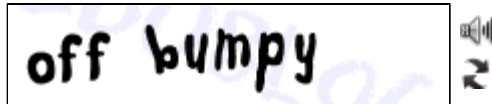
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