

Vatican City, 2 February 2024

### Press Note

#### **Laudato si' Centre for Higher Education: a year of commitment to ecological change**

On 2 February 2023, the Holy Father instituted the Laudato si' Centre for Higher Education (CeAF-LS), a scientific, educational, and social activity body, tasked with offering formation of the integral person and respect for the principals of the Encyclical Laudato si', with particular regard for the young and those who live in conditions of vulnerability (cf. Statutes, Art. 1).

In fulfilment of this task, as indicated by the chirograph of 2 February 2023, in its first year of existence the CeAF-LS undertook to develop the "Borgo Laudato si'" project with the aim of making the principles set out in the Encyclical Laudate si', taken up even more explicitly in last October's Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum, applicable.

The CeAF-LS, assisted by top national and international experts, has first of all outlined the three main pillars of the "Borgo Laudato si'" ("Laudato si' Village") project: education for integral ecology, the circular and generative economy and environmental sustainability.

The project involves 55 hectares of the extraterritorial zone of Castel Gandolfo, divided into 35 hectares of wonderful gardens and 20 hectares of agricultural and livestock land, greenhouses and service buildings. The actual take-over of the entire perimeter by CeAF-LS took place on 15 January 2024, and the staff previously employed in the 55 hectares passed to CeAF-LS. This work was carried out in cooperation and dialogue with the Governorate of Vatican City State and the Directorates concerned.

The implementation of this first project is planned in two major phases. The first phase concerns the garden area and the second the agricultural and livestock area.

With regard to the first phase, the plan is constructed on the basis of the marvellous natural, historical, and artistic patrimony of the Pontifical Villas, 35 hectares of beauty. The activities, which have already been undertaken in recent days, relate firstly to the conservation, maintenance and care of the heritage entrusted to the CeAF-LS, which has undertaken to protect and develop it also using new techniques and technological innovations that permit the best stewardship of the inestimable richness of the place, and the preservation of its integrity for future generations.

Against this privileged backdrop, a series of training activities will soon be launched, all of which can be ascribed to the heading of education for integral ecology. Firstly, there will be continuity in the opening of the gardens for public visits, an activity already begun in past years to fulfil the Holy Father's desire to open his House to everyone. The basic idea is to offer visitors the opportunity to combine centuries of history, unique natural and artistic beauty and an immersive Laudato si' itinerary in a single experience. Visitors will be able to learn about the principles of the Encyclical Letter Laudato si', experiencing their implementation in an area, thus acquiring an existential awareness that can promote a true ecological conversion. Great importance is given to the inclusiveness of these courses, so that even the most vulnerable categories can have access to them. 18/04/24, 15:56 Press Note: Laudato si' Centre for Higher Education: a year of commitment to ecological change <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/info/2024/02/02/240202a.html> 2/2

Secondly, vocational training courses will be launched, initially in the areas of green maintenance, pruning, gardening, arboriculture. The training courses will be addressed in particular to people who live in situations of vulnerability: migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors, women survivors of violence, unemployed young people and adults, differently-abled people and ex-detainees. All vocational training courses will involve placement in the world of work and personal accompaniment during the first year of employment.

Thirdly, educational activities aimed at children and young people will be organized, diversified according to age, all focusing on integral ecology. For the youngest – elementary, middle and high school – guided tours and educational events will be offered, with the possibility of activities and workshops adapted to the various ages. For young university students, summer schools, training courses and study days on the themes of *Laudato si'* will be organized.

Fourthly, as a response to an emerging need, courses, seminars and retreats on the fundamental themes of *Laudato si'* will be offered to entrepreneurs and business technicians. Indeed, many of them, regardless of their religious faith, have expressed their interest in deepening their knowledge of the recommendations and suggestions contained in the Encyclical, with a view to possible application in their business contexts.

The second phase, which will be launched in the second half of 2024, relates to the 20 hectares of the agricultural and livestock farming area. In this zone, some preparatory activities are already being carried out with a view to a reorganization and development of the production activities which have characterized the papal farms of Albano for years. To make the project more sustainable, CeAF is developing a circular economy model based on sharing, reuse, repair, reconditioning and recycling. Part of the project is the creation of an energy community based on renewable sources. In all activities, great importance will be attached to the preservation of biodiversity and the harmonious interaction between humans and nature.

For the Jubilee, a fully-fledged "*Laudato si'* Village" should be ready, a place of full immersion in the integral ecology promoted by Pope Francis, a place where it will be possible to learn and touch first-hand the rudiments of the stewardship of creation.