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| The Green Pope: A man after my own heart Copyright November 2015 | Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer® www.thecluttercrew.com |
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When I read this headline, I had to smile: “The Green Pope: Francis is putting the full weight of the papacy behind efforts to curb climate change.” My whole business of professional organizing is based on being green, recycling, and simplifying the home and lives we lead. After being glued to the television for the Pope’s entire visit to the United States (I was painting my bedroom at the same time), I couldn’t help but feel a connection to this man who believes in some of the same ideals I do as it relates to the environment and my business. The purpose of this column is to explain that strong feeling of solidarity.

In my former career I worked at Alvernia University for 24 years in administration. The Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, who founded Alvernia in 1958, are members of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. When Francis was elected as the next Pope, I knew the sisters at Alvernia would be thrilled. Although I am not Catholic, Alvernia became my “church” and I participated in Mass and in all of the food, clothing and turkey drives that were a constant part of the fabric of the University. After the Pope’s visit, I did some research and two documents written by the Pope stood out.



The first document was published on June 18, 2015, when Pope Francis released the encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home*. In this document the Pope calls on all nations and peoples to address urgent environmental concerns, including climate change. Francis reported that this encyclical was not really an environmental document, but about the developed world’s indifference to the destruction of the planet as they pursue short-term economic gains. The Pope states “Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years.” When I work with a client to set up a recycling center that is worthy of the significance it represents, it feels good.

The second document released by the Pope was *The 15 Diseases of the Curia*. The Curia Romana is the papal court, or the people that assist the pope in the government and administration of the church. Pope Francis explains that these ‘diseases’ do not only concern the Curia “but are naturally a danger to every Christian, every curia, community, congregation, parish and ecclesiastic movement.” Number 13 on the list is the disease of hoarding. In layman’s terms: A person tries to fill an existential void by accumulating materials goods, not out of need but only in order to feel secure and as a result burdens the soul. We see this every day as shopping is the national pastime and anyone can accumulate goods 24/7 by using the internet and television. My clients call me when they become overwhelmed and some of their possessions become CRAP (Clutter that Robs Anyone of Pleasure).

Finally, my hope is that no matter what our religious preference, we all take the words of Pope Francis to heart and be responsible stewards of our planet: our first home.

Clutter Quote: “*Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.*” Pope Francis