November 3, 2021

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

As I mentioned during my inauguration remarks in September, climate change is one of the three great challenges we face as a society. Its impacts are already evident around us, and we can no longer discuss it as a future threat. As a Jesuit and Catholic university, Seattle University is committed to caring for the Earth, our common home, in alignment with the universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus. This commitment calls us to respond to the challenge in a unique way.

One step we've taken is joining Pope Francis' *Seven-Year Journey Towards Integral Ecology*. This commitment puts concrete action behind the goals outlined by the pope in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Sí: On Care for Our Common Home*. As a university dedicated to sustainability and environmental justice, this initiative aligns with our mission and the impact we aim to have. Being among the first institutions of higher education to take this step is a natural extension of our mission.

Over many years, Seattle University has distinguished itself as a leader in sustainability, including our recent #14 ranking in *Sierra* magazine's list of Cool Schools. Under the direction of our Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability and the President's Committee for Sustainability, we continue to reduce our environmental impact while integrating sustainability into our curriculum. For example, this year we will achieve Scope 1 carbon neutrality, addressing our direct emissions. Over the next two years, we will reimagine our curriculum as part of the Reignite Strategic Directions process, focusing on making climate change and sustainability central to the Seattle University educational experience.

To lead Seattle University's participation in the Journey Towards Integral Ecology, I have appointed Dr. Jeanette Rodriguez as chair of our Laudato Sí Action Platform Steering Committee. A distinguished theologian and director of our Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, Dr. Rodriguez brings a wealth of scholarly expertise to the role. She has assembled a committee, whose members are listed below, to lead these efforts.

The Laudato Sí Action Platform Steering Committee will integrate Seattle University's Jesuit and Catholic mission with our ongoing leadership in sustainability. Specifically, the committee will guide efforts to achieve the following goals of *Laudato Sí*:

- Respond to the Cry of the Earth
- Respond to the Cry of the Poor
- Foster Ecological Economics
- Adopt a Sustainable Lifestyle
- Offer Ecological Education
- Develop Ecological Spirituality
- Support Local Communities

I look forward to the committee's work, and Dr. Rodriguez will be sharing updates on our progress.

Respectfully,

Eduardo M. Peñalver

President