

His Holiness Pope Francis
Casa Santa Marta
00120 Vatican City

26 September 2023

Your Holiness:

We write to you as Catholic priests who are troubled by the practice of bullfighting – a bloody spectacle which takes place in predominantly Catholic countries and which subjects tens of thousands of bulls each year to appalling cruelty.

In bullfighting arenas, animals are taunted, frightened, ridiculed, repeatedly stabbed, and eventually killed for the entertainment of a small minority of people. These spectacles cause immeasurable suffering and pain and stand in stark contrast with the message of love and compassion that Christ taught us.

In light of the recent news that Your Holiness will update the 2015 encyclical *Laudato si'* to reflect “current issues”, we hope you will use the opportunity to speak out against bullfighting, as it blatantly contradicts the principles of mercy and respect that you so thoughtfully advocate for with regard to the animals with whom we share the planet.

The inclusion of a condemnation of bullfighting in the updated encyclical would provide much-needed guidance to believers who may not realise that supporting or participating in such events wilfully causes God’s animals needless suffering. Most importantly, it would remind Catholic clergy that officiating at religious ceremonies in bullrings and ministering to bullfighters in chapels built inside arenas is forbidden by canon law under penalty of excommunication, as established by Pope Pius V in the 1567 papal bull titled “[Super Prohibitione Agitationis Taurorum & Ferarum](#)”. Since thousands of festivals involving the torture of animals honour Catholic saints or holy Christian celebrations, a strong message condemning bullfighting is needed to avoid any misapprehension that the Catholic Church supports such a cruel practice.

As billions of people around the world eagerly await your reflections on our responsibilities as stewards of God’s creation, the significance of your words regarding this crucial issue of bullfighting cannot be emphasised enough. By condemning the torture and violent slaughter of innocent bulls – and especially its association with the Catholic faith – countless animals will be spared and many faithful followers of Christ will find guidance in aligning their actions with the compassionate message of the Gospel.

With reverence and the hope that our plea will be heard, we remain in prayer for your wisdom and leadership.

In Christ's service,

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