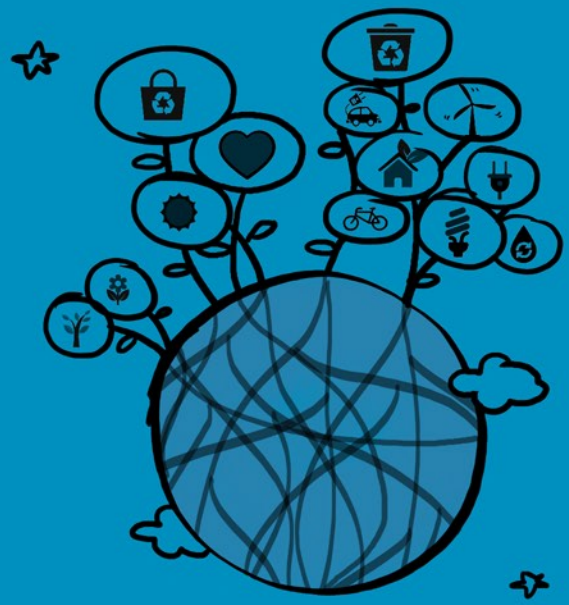
booklets

TOWARD AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY



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TOWARD AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY
THE ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY OF *LAUDATO SI'*

by Joan Carrera i Carrera
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Publisher: CRISTIANISME I JUSTÍCIA - Roger de Llúria 13 - 08010 Barcelona
+34 93 317 23 38 - info@fespinal.com - www.cristianismeijusticia.net
Printed by: Ediciones Rondas S.L. - Legal deposit: B 24361-2017
ISBN: 978-84-9730-404-7 - ISSN: 2014-6566 - ISSN (virtual edition): 2014-6574

Editor: Anna Pérez i Mir - Translated by Joseph Owens
Cover drawing: Roger Torres - Layout: Pilar Rubio Tugas
Printed on recycled paper - October 2017

PROLOGUE

> "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." [*LS* 139]

The intention of this booklet is to promote the values necessary for carrying out the project presented to us in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.[1] In the first part we offer three approximations, which explain the motivations that should impel us as Christians to take seriously the ecological question.

In the second part we examine the five key ideas of the encyclical. The encyclical focuses first on the need to forge a close link between the ecological question and the social question, and it also stresses the need to integrate both of these with the increasingly relevant question of cultural diversity. Second, the encyclical invites the reader to take contemplative view of the world in order to discover the intrinsic value of things, instead of yielding to the utilitarian and technocratic attitude that now prevails. Such contemplation, being holistic and sapiential, avoids all reductionist tendencies, and it engages all the disciplines used to analyze reality. Exercised separately, such disciplines can end up fragmenting reality, and this is often the case. Taking economics as an example, we insist that prosperity should not be identified with unlimited economic growth and mere increase in material wellbeing, and we resist the tendency to reduce human beings simply to potential consumers.

The third important idea is the encyclical's proposal that those who are more affluent adopt a modest way of life, one that avoids waste and acts in solidarity with people who have few resources.

The fourth idea focuses criticism on the general apathy of many people with regard to scientific reports about ecological questions, and it laments the scant repercussions that such reports produce among politicians and mass media journalists.

In its fifth and final idea, the encyclical summons believers to a conversion of heart on the basis of their belief in God. Such a conversion must rely on a spirituality of simplicity, that is, a spirituality which considers caring for the common good to be a central value and teaches the importance of living simply so that others can simply live.

After analyzing these key ideas, we examine the values proposed in the encyclical which will help us develop an ecological ethics and respond to the worldwide ecological crisis. While doing this, we will also offer a critique of the present economic system since such a critique is vital to obtaining this objective.

1. SOME INITIAL APPROXIMATIONS

Llorenç Puig

Every change of behavior (and more so every change of mentality) requires concrete motivation and a pedagogical path that we must constantly work on together.

The Pope himself expresses it quite clearly in the encyclical: "I would like from the outset to show how faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters" [*LS* 64]. And in the same paragraph he emphasizes the point even further: "Christians realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith." Thus, Christians are not allowed to escape from taking seriously the reflections offered in the encyclical. To understand the reasons for these clear statements made by the Pope, we will devote the first part of this booklet to examining the argument of *Laudato Si',* and we will do so using the method of the Spiritual Exercises, attempting to go beyond simple reflections and to follow a path that reaches our deepest spiritual levels.

1.1. First approximation: three calls, one testimony, and two ways of approaching reality

In the first approximation to the environmental problem described by Francis, we show that the problem cannot be resolved superficially, that is, without our profound personal involvement. Technology cannot be trusted to solve everything, nor can we expect that future generations will be content to live in the degraded, impoverished world that we will no doubt leave for them. Technology will at most alleviate the symptoms, but it will not go to

the heart of the problem; it is incapable of meeting a challenge of this magnitude. That is why the Pope proposes a very ambitious goal, one that involves not so much seeking technological solutions but achieving a "change in human beings."

And where should such a change be headed? First of all, toward a change in the way people relate to one another and to the world: it is a matter of "replacing consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, … an asceticism which 'entails learning to give' and not just giving up" [*LS* 9]. This most definitely means an internal insurgency, a Copernican revolution of the heart: the center of the universe is no longer myself and my desire to buy, to possess, to accumulate. The center is now other people, and I should be concerned not so much with what I can get from them as what I can offer them.

Second, along the same line but turning the bolt tighter for the sake of greater depth, the challenge is to learn to live in a different manner. We need to discover "a [new] way of loving and move bit by bit from what I want to what the world needs from God." We need to expand our hearts and thus stop living in the land of fear; we need to be less concerned about our own security and selfish desires and enter into a different territory. We need to inhabit the land of love, where we keep our eyes open, contemplate others with affection, and pay heed to that "world of God" that surrounds us and asks us to be committed to its needs.

Third, the Pope says more about this renewed vision and invites us to contemplate reality more profoundly: "It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet" [*LS* 9]. In other words, we must become aware, as he states later on, that "Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. We must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things" [*LS* 69]. What we are hearing here are echoes of the beautiful text of the Book of Wisdom which in prayerful dialogue with God recalls that "You love all beings that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it" (Wisdom 11,24). Nothing can remain in existence if it is not accompanied by the vivifying impulse of God the Creator and Giver of life.

> Human life is endowed with an even greater dignity: it is not simply a gift received but a responsibility assumed.

Regarding the concrete life of persons, then, the Pope says something quite striking: he reminds us that human life does indeed have meaning because it sustained by a sublime hope. "How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say

to each one of us: 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you' (Jeremiah 1:5)" [*LS* 65]. We therefore need to become more keenly aware that all reality is loved by the Creator and that human life is endowed with an even greater dignity: it is not simply a gift received but a responsibility assumed, as we will see further on.

After presenting us with this triple summons, the Pope cites the well-known testimony of a person who has experienced that threefold vocation in all its force and with all its consequences: Saint Francis of Assisi. The Pope sees Francis existing in profound communion with all living beings and all of nature: "He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them to praise the Lord" [*LS* 11]. The reason for such behavior is not an intellectual or rational process but something deeper; it belongs to the realm of the affective, the interior, the spiritual: "to Saint Francis each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection."

The testimony of Saint Francis shows us that the "ecological conversion" of which *Laudato Si'* speaks is something profound; it goes beyond the rational realm and even the realm of the purely affective. It is holistic and touches our way of perceiving and sensing the world, our very way of being in it.

In response to the facile criticism that Saint Francis might have been an example of "irrational romanticism," the Pope reminds us that the issue is not purely esthetic or affective, nor is it a fleeting pose. Rather, the example of the saint leads us to make decisive options affecting our lives, our behavior, our commitments, our priorities, and our way of viewing the world.

What, then, can we do to delve a little deeper into the dynamic with which we are presented here? To begin, we can show the truth of the situation in which we find ourselves. In the Spiritual Exercises Saint Ignatius proposes an exercise which helps us to gain spiritual clarity: he asks us to consider two opposed realities which are competing with one another to conquer the hearts of human beings. We are referring to the meditation on the Two Standards. One standard is characterized by exuberance, grandiosity, and bright lights to attract attention. The other standard, in contrast, is remarkable for its authenticity and harmony and for the silent beauty of its humble simplicity. This exercise may appear to us unhelpful because it shows things with a clarity that does not seem to exist in reality. Nevertheless, the exercise effectively unveils for us the forces in the world that bear the standard of non-life, while it also gives us the sensitivity we need to perceive the qualities of all the forces that lead to true life.

The encyclical presents us with an exercise similar to the Two Standards when it says that we should approach the natural environment with an "openness to awe and wonder" and with the fraternal solidarity exemplified by Francis of Assisi. For "if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously." On the other hand, if we approach nature and the world with the attitudes of "masters, consumers, or ruthless exploiters," we will find that such attitudes have no restraints, for those so disposed are "unable to

set limits on their immediate needs" [*LS* 11].

We are therefore presented with two alternatives which we need to compare in order to gain clarity and to unmask things that often seem to us unimportant. In reality there are no half-shades because the human heart seeks totality. The two perspectives are mutually exclusive: you're either on one side or the other. Thinking otherwise or believing that it is possible to reach a certain "compromise" can well be a form of self-deception.

1.2. Second approximation: considering the motivations of faith with the help of three perspectives

As we have mentioned, in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis returns to certain points repeatedly in order to view them from different perspectives. In the second chapter, as we saw, he shows believers why caring for the natural world forms part of the convictions of our faith. To do this he introduces three different perspectives: one considers the rupture produced by sin and self-centered attitudes; another envisions the ideal to which our world is called by God; and the third considers justice since care for the environment is intimately related to social justice.

1.2.1. The perspective of rupture

The story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the third chapter of Genesis reveals to us in figurative form the reality of sin and evil. It is a reality that provokes three ruptures in the essential relations of human beings: their relation with nature, their relation with one another, and their relation with God (the Creator and vital force that envelops us and sustains us).

The rupture of the relation with God is demonstrated when we see Adam and Eve hiding from God, who is "walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze" (Gen 3,8). We can imagine God strolling at sunset on a summer evening, enjoying the awesome beauty of the world he has lovingly created. It is of such a God that Adam and Eve are so terrified that they hide out of fear. Their relation with God should be one of confidence and communion; it should allow them to enjoy together the glories of creation, but the relationship has been broken by fear, by flight, by hiding from view.

The rupture of the relations among ourselves is made plain when Adam accuses Eve: "that woman you gave to be with me offered me fruit from the tree." Here Eve has no name; she is not "my beloved" but only "that woman." Moreover, she is presented as someone Adam did not desire: she is the woman "you gave to be with me." There is no name, no humanization, no joy in the other. What there is instead is blaming: "she offered me …"

The rupture of the relation between humankind and nature is symbolized by the attitude of fear and threat that is established between the serpent and the woman: "you will strike his head, and he will strike your heel."

In revealing the threefold rupture, this terrifying scene shows us in dramatic fashion that we live in a wound-

ed world and that our hearts are truly infirm. The Pope explains that there are many concrete examples of how these three ruptures work themselves out in our own world: "When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of 'might is right' has engendered immense inequality, injustice, and acts of violence against the majority of humanity" [*LS* 82]. In this way the Pope makes us aware that we are indeed in a situation which needs a "healing of that rupture" between humanity and nature.

1.2.2. The eschatological perspective

The second perspective we propose considers not just the present situation but the whole dynamic of our world, which is destined to grow in beauty and complexity –unless we prevent it from doing so. The encyclical expresses it this way: "The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things." The world's intrinsic dynamic leads it toward its ultimate destiny, but the Pope insists that "the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us." Of course, that does not mean that humankind has no role to play in the development of the world: "Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things" [*LS* 83].

Consequently, we must not "consume" the world. To the contrary, we are called to accompany this dynamic of evolution as the world progresses toward ever greater fulfillment. The Copernican revolution means that we need to cease being enemies set over against nature; we need to become instead the caretakers and "custodians"[2] of nature, its attentive companions.

On the other hand, this eschatological perspective, with its wide horizons, frees us from the disdain with which we often treat the natural realities of our world. Pope Francis strongly urges us to exercise the care for creation to which we are called by God: "Each creature has its own purpose, and none is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's boundless love and affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God" [*LS* 84]. How differently we would treat the forests, the animals, the rivers, the air, and even our urban spaces if only we kept this vision ever present before us!

Finally, to give us the push we need to undertake this conversion, the Pope uses two magnificent images that come from the best Christian tradition: the book and the chorus. In reality, he writes, "God has written a precious book, 'whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe'." These letters are all equally important, from the large capitals down to the smallest letters, with all their commas and hyphens. "No creature is excluded from this manifestation of God: 'From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe'" [*LS* 85]. This image reminds us that everything has its own significance: creatures are important in themselves but so are the rela-

tions they establish among themselves. "We need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships" [*LS* 86], the Pope insists; after all, letters cannot express anything except in relation to one another. The world appears mute if we forget those subtle relations between things.

The image of the hymn sung by creatures, which appears in the psalms and other biblical texts, is also meaningful in this context: "To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope." To perceive this harmony, however, we must tune our hearing, as the Pope goes on to say: "This contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us, since 'for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice'" [*LS* 85].

1.2.3. The perspective of justice

In a later section we will delve deeply into the perspective of "integral ecology" that Pope Francis expounds. Such an ecology is called "integral" because it integrates caring for natural creatures with caring for persons and peoples, especially the most vulnerable. That is why he states: "Certainly, we should be concerned lest other living beings be treated irresponsibly. But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst." And he describes the inequalities: "Some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions, vainly showing off their supposed superiority and leaving behind them such great waste that it would destroy the planet if everyone did the same" [*LS* 90].

The objective is to change our ways of perceiving reality and acting on it, both at the individual and the collective level.

As usual, Pope Francis goes to the root of the problem of inequality. It is not just that some people work more or have more luck or more merit, even though many people believe this in order to soothe their conscience. The reality is that "in practice, we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights" [*LS* 90]. This way of thinking is extremely difficult to change for those of us who are well-off and have influence and who want to keep things that way. Meanwhile the discarded masses are silenced and ignored, lacking even the power to make their voice heard.

All this should convince us that "many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." We return to the point that appears over and over again in the encyclical: we are caught an extremely difficult and radical crisis, and it present us with "a great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge" [*LS* 202]. The objective is to change our ways of perceiving reality and acting on it, both at the individual and the collective level.

We therefore need an exceptional educational endeavor, and that is precisely what this third section is about.

1.3. Third approximation: a change of direction which involves opting for a different lifestyle

Before considering the values involved in this change of lifestyle, we will conclude this section by examining 1) the life horizon proposed by the encyclical, 2) the role of education in reaching that horizon, and especially 3) the reason for not losing hope when we realize that education is a long-term project.

1.3.1. A life horizon

We have already commented on how we find in *Laudato Si'* certain echoes of Saint Ignatius's meditation on the Two Standards. Since another very Ignatian practice is "repetition," we find the Pope repeating, in the final part of the encyclical, his exposition of the two opposed ways of living.

On the one hand, there is the kind of life in which fear predominates: "the current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty, which in turn becomes 'a seedbed for collective selfishness'" [*LS* 204]. Such a situation leads to three descending levels of human degradation: 1) people become more self-referential and insatiable, isolating themselves in their own psyches; 2) the emptier their heart becomes, the greater is their need to buy, possess, and consume; 3) they recognize no reality which marks out limits, so that there exists for them no true common good. As a result people find themselves given over to "violence and destruction." On the other hand, there is a salutary way of life which endows people with "an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone" [*LS* 202] and which moves them act accordingly. Then arises from the Pope a passionate exclamation: "Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life!" [*LS* 207].

1.3.2. Not losing hope

Are we able to escape from the former kind of life, that in which fear predominates? Despite all the problems, the Pope enthusiastically proposes a new vision, and he wants to infect all of us with it so that we will awaken from our indolence and despair. He states: "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning." He then expresses himself even more forcefully: "No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts." And he concludes with a call which reminds us of our own value and potential: "I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity

which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us" [*LS* 205].

We should ask ourselves whether we sometimes let ourselves be fooled by the temptation to think that change is impossible. Do we believe that nothing can be done and so yield to skepticism that leads us nowhere?

1.3.3. The role of education

Since the Pope speaks to us of hope but not of miraculous processes, he spells out the means we can take in order to align ourselves with those who, moved by irrepressible hope and the ideal of human dignity, are walking in the direction of conversion.

The principal means is education, both at home and in school, that "plants seeds that will continue to bear fruit throughout life." Such an education should inculcate habits of loving life and caring for it; it should teach people to value others, ask permission, and be grateful. It should definitely undertake to "create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings" [*LS* 213], a culture that helps us to "see and appreciate beauty" and "to stop and admire something beautiful" [*LS* 215].

1.3.4. The horizon: being "mini-mystics"

To bring this section to an end, I would like to add that the Pope opens up an amazingly wide horizon for people: the horizon of being truly mystical persons. This is a horizon that should be offered to young people even during the educational process. How marvelous it would be if we could make full use of our capacity for awe, if we could pay close attention to small things and be grateful for them. We need to exercise the honest hope and amazement that we see in children before their hearts have become too filled with "things" and other substitutes for selfless love. Children have a disposition that easily makes them "mini-mystics." It is a shame that we do not know how to cultivate that capacity, which we possess from childhood on but which often gets lost or forgotten. We think of such ambitions as childish fancies not suitable for "big people."[3]

The aspects of the "mini-mysticism" to which we are called are these:

- "Attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next and which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full" [*LS* 226].
- Perceiving that "the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely," and then seeing that "there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face" [*LS* 233].
- Realizing how closely connected we are with others and with all reality, and being aware that "everything is interconnected; this invites us to develop a spirituality of global solidarity" [*LS* 240].
- Discovering that "love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of charity." A little further on the Pope shows that our experience of working for a culture of caring and

for a more just, fraternal society can be a profound mystical experience. Thus, "when we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us" [*LS* 231].

So we have no other alternative but to cultivate the values that we will present in the second part of this booklet.

2. TOWARD AN ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Joan Carrera i Carrera

After reviewing the key points of *Laudato Si'* in the first part of this booklet, we will delve deeper, in this second part, into the values embodied in the encyclical.

2.1. Some considerations for a "new" ethics

2.1.1. A particular way of relating to nature

Our first consideration involves becoming aware that the present ecological crisis results from the particular ways in which we relate both to nature and to one another as human beings. Certain values have taken priority over others, and they have created a mentality that is widely shared by many of the planet's inhabitants. The encyclical points out that the ecological problem is deeply rooted in what is called "technocracy"[4] –which is different from "technology"– and also in an excessively anthropocentric vision [*LS* 116], which results in practical relativism. "When human beings place themselves at the center, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative. …Everything is viewed as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests" [*LS* 122]. The encyclical states that "the basic problem goes even deeper: it is the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development *according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm*. This paradigm exalts the

concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery, and transformation." As a result, the relationship between humans and things is changed: "Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another" [*LS* 106]. We thus arrive at the ideas of unlimited growth and the infinite availability of the planet's resources. But difficulties arise when this paradigm prevails in economics and politics: all technological development is then undertaken only in function of return on investment, and no attention is paid to the negative consequences for human beings. Many decisions appear to be purely instrumental when in reality they are choices about the lifestyle that people want to develop.

Another aspect of this first consideration is the problem of technological specialization, which makes it difficult for people to get a sense of the big picture and to see everything as a totality. Such criticism does not mean returning to the stone age, as is claimed by some pundits who have much influence over public opinion. It is not a matter of going back to the past but of "slowing down and looking at reality in a different way. …Science and technology are not neutral; from the beginning to the end of a process, various intentions and possibilities are in play and can take on distinct shapes" [*LS* 114]. What the encyclical proposes, then, is that technology be oriented toward the solving of concrete problems and that its motive force be a desire to help others to live with more dignity and less suffering [*LS* 112].

2.1.2. Specificity is not exclusivity

A second consideration focuses on how the different ethical systems, including the religious traditions, contribute elements for creating the new culture proposed by the encyclical. The encyclical connects us with the always arduous and unfinished task of relating to nature, and it acknowledges that some millennial traditions have contributed solutions more harmonious with nature than those of our own Christian tradition. The encyclical thus borrows from other religious traditions, although this borrowing is not always explicitly reflected in the text. In this regard, we should recall an idea from Christian ethics that is often neglected, namely, that certain values of the Christian tradition are not exclusive to that tradition.

2.1.3. Constructing consensus

A third consideration aligns the encyclical with the proposition that, given the pluralism of the world, there is a need to achieve a broad ethical agreement. In other words, it is necessary to agree on a series of shared values that can guide the task of elaborating policies and behaviors. Each ethical tradition will contribute its specific values, but the existing pluralism will make it necessary to arrive at a general consensus in order to achieve effective legislative policy for the whole planet. This need for con-

sensus or agreement is indispensable since the ecological problem is a global matter which affects all the inhabitants of earth. It is therefore unrealistic to expect that the challenge can be met from just one ethical position or from a single geographical area of the planet.

The process for reaching this basic consensus about a shared ecological ethic will possibly be lengthy since it must be reached by means of dialogue. The encyclical itself speaks often of dialogue, as when it explains that the Church has no definitive answer to the ecological problem, and that there is need to promote an honest dialogue among scientists [*LS* 61] and to seek a worldwide consensus: "A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries" [*LS* 164]. The Pope also stresses the need for dialogue among religions "for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity" [*LS* 201].

2.2. The values of *Laudato Si'*

The encyclical enunciates a series of values which can help us respond to the ecological crisis. Some of these values are stated clearly and explicitly while others are only implied. Basic values for promoting a new ecological culture are proposed throughout *Laudato Si'*. They are found, for example, in the lines of action that the Pope recommends but also in the final section of the encyclical, which proposes spiritual values that arise from our faith in God. Here the Gospel is applied to our way of thinking, feeling, and living; though this element is basic, it often is not explicitly stated. The encyclical deals not only with ideas but with a form of mysticism that inspires us to be passionate about caring for the world [*LS* 216]. As we have already indicated, detecting and ordering the values proposed by the encyclical is not an easy task since some are more explicitly stated than others. Moreover, values dealing with structures are mixed together with values that belong rather to the personal sphere. The purpose of the encyclical is to stress the need for both personal and collective conversion to these values, so that a series of lasting structural changes takes place. While the more general values are found in a number of chapters, the final chapter treats of the values which are contributed by Christian spirituality but which are not exclusively Christian and so can be shared by others as well.

One point on which the encyclical lays particular stress is the role of education: people must be educated in the values that sustain the ecological culture. What is more, these values should be embraced by all humanity in a global consensus, for the present ecological crisis demands solutions in every sphere (technological, political, personal, etc.), and these solutions must be universal and not simply partial. We believe that all these values, which are already held by many traditions, form part of what we might call "eco-values." The encyclical does not go deeply into this question, however; it limits itself to acknowledging and accepting the contributions of other religions and traditions, such as Buddhist ethics.

*2.2.1. The ability to live wisely and to think deeply [*LS *47]*

This value is quite opposed to the noisy digital world and its superficial thinking. It seeks a type of knowledge that is not limited to mere accumulation of information. Closely related to this value is the ability to go forth from oneself toward the other; this is the quality the enables us to recognize the value of other creatures. The encyclical makes a clear statement in this regard: "Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment" [*LS* 208].

2.2.2. Expanding the concept of "neighbor"

While the precept of loving one's neighbor is certainly found in the golden rule of all the great religious traditions, there is a need to broaden its scope to include the future generations. We need to become more aware that our actions (and our inaction) will have consequences in the future, and they can end up mortgaging the lives of our descendents. The importance of taking future generations into account was explained some years ago by the philosopher of science Hans Jonas, who spoke of the ethics of responsibility.

Jonas taught that we should be extremely prudent regarding all actions which could have unpredictable future repercussions or which could burden future generations with a heavy economic and social mortgage. To do so would be to transfer to the future the need to solve the problems we ourselves are causing. The encyclical stresses this point explicitly: "The notion of the common good also extends to future generations." And it treats it as a matter of justice: "Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us" [*LS* 159]. Thinking of the coming generations meaning thinking beyond the "here and now"; it means introducing the future into our lives instead of living only for the present moment. The encyclical also sharply criticizes the short-sighted politics that fails to consider the long-term common good and seeks instead only short-term growth for the sake of winning elections [*LS* 178].

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We need to be very realistic in considering this value. If we find it difficult to express solidarity with our own generation (respecting the neighbors whom we see, and even those we don't see because they're on the other side of the planet), it will be even more difficult to extend this solidarity toward the neighbors of future generations. This will be all the more true if such

solidarity requires us to place limits on our present way of life, which we are loathe to do.

2.2.3. Actions which affect nature must be universalizable

This value is closely linked to Kant's idea of universality, as expressed in the categorical imperative. According to Kant, whenever we act, we must ask what would happen if all humankind were to act in the same way and with the same intensity. Such a consideration would force us to question both the present levels of consumption in rich countries and the levels of natural resource exploitation, such as mining, fishing, and logging. We can better understand the implications of this value by considering that, if the Chinese used paper at the same rate as in the United States, it would be simply impossible to meet the demand, for it would require us to cut down all the forests that now exist on the planet. We must conclude, then, the consumption of paper in the U.S. is not universalizable, nor are many other habits of consumption that we have in the so-called "Western" countries.

We find these ideas explicitly stated in the first chapter of the encyclical, where it speaks of "what is happening in our common home," namely: excessive consumerism, the throwaway culture, the models of production, etc.

2.2.4. Growth should be neither rapacious nor irresponsible

Eliminating reckless growth requires us to redefine the very concept of "progress." In this regard, the encyclical is clear and forthright: "It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress." The encyclical also criticizes talk of sustainable development, which "usually becomes a way of distracting attention and offering excuses. It absorbs the language and values of ecology into the categories of finance and technocracy" [*LS* 194]. This discourse of sustainability was introduced into the ecologist movement years ago, but it is now criticized for being insufficiently radical.

An idea closely related to sustainability is "decreased growth," which has different interpretations within the ecologist movement. *Laudato Si'* makes mention of this concept, arguing that "the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth" [*LS* 193]. Nevertheless, the encyclical limits itself to relating this important idea of decreased growth to the search for solidarity, without going into specific recommendations. It was perhaps aware of the different interpretations of the concept.

2.2.5. Becoming aware of interdependence

Another fundamental value is acknowleding the dependence of the human species on other species of our biosphere. All living beings exist in communion

with one another. Our cultural milieu encourages people to think only of themselves rather than to be conscious of how all living things are interdependent. Often we fail to take account of the ways in which our life from beginning to end depends on others; we fail to experience our life as a gift of others. Instead, we tend to treat other beings as mere objects. This is true not only with regard to animals and plants but also with regard to fellow members of our own species. We don't empathize with the feelings or thoughts or sufferings of others; we relate to them as if they were objects to be observed and manipulated and not as persons to whom we have obligations.

We have thoroughly internalized the idea that the "ego" needs nothing but itself in order to survive, or that if it does need others, it can treat them as objects and focus everything on itself. This self-centered attitude is revealed in diverse contexts, such as economics, social relations, and one's concrete understanding of reality. Accordingly, we have created an anthropocentric economy designed to benefit only the human species. Such an economy considers the natural environment solely in terms of human beings, without taking account of the other species. It relates to the world as if it were dealing with completely independent realities.

We continue to think and act according to the terms proposed in Mandeville's fable of the bees,[5] which teaches that pursuing one's own personal benefit is what best contributes to the social good of all beings and ultimately of the biosphere. In contrast, the idea of interdependence considers individual welfare and collective welfare to be inseparable. When we embrace the error of exalting personal benefit, we end up consigning three-quarters of humankind to suffering, and ruining nature itself in the process.

Laudato Si' points to the excessive anthropocentrism of our times as one of the deep roots of the ecological problem.

Our awareness of the interdependence of all beings should lead us to an ethics of universal compassion that assures a decent existence to all living beings, especially to those that are weakest and most threatened. Since only the human species can take leadership and responsibility for this endeavor, we should behave as if we were the conscience of the planet, responding compassionately to one another and to the whole biosphere. Many religious traditions formulate such mutual relationship through interdependence in terms of "communion among all beings." It is a communion that moves us to care for the weakest as if we were caring for ourselves since their suffering also affects us. Let us recall what the encyclical says in this regard: "The human person grows more, matures more, and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures" [*LS* 240].

Laudato Si' points to the excessive anthropocentrism of our times as

one of the deep roots of the ecological problem, and it acknowledges that an inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology has contributed to this anthropocentrism by falsely depicting the relationship between human beings and the world. When humans place themselves at the center, they end up giving priority to their own circumstances and convictions, and everything else is relativized by our relativistic culture, which drives people to take advantage of others and treat them like objects. We therefore need to recover a true anthropocentric perspective, but this should not make us fall into a biocentrism that in no way helps to resolve the problems before us. "Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued" [*LS* 118].

Thus, interdependence engenders another value: compassion toward other living beings, and responsibility for the most vulnerable creatures, whether they be human or non-human. The encyclical explains that many ecological problems are causing harm to the weakest and poorest populations of the planet [*LS* 48] but that "generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of these problems which especially affect the excluded." There is therefore a need "to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" [*LS* 49].

2.2.6. Experiencing and understanding our life as a gift

Since life is a gift we receive, we must care for it, especially when it is vulnerable or threatened. What we freely receive we should freely give to others: to our children, to our neighbors, and to other species. To give life means helping to create the conditions which allow life to develop and flourish. Besides understanding life as a gift, we should also understand nature as a gift that helps us to live –after all, it is the environment that makes it possible for life to give of itself. That is why nature must be cared for and not reduced to a mere object to be manipulated: "it would be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination" [*LS* 82].

2.2.7. Learning to appreciate the dimensions of happiness that are unrelated to having or possessing

Our society encourages a lifestyle that places great important on the symbols of possessions and status: expensive devices and clothing, certain types of houses or vehicles, certain forms of entertainment, etc. Our lifestyle is very individualistic, and our lives are fragmented and atomized. We really need to understand happiness more in terms of relationships with others. If we appreciate the relational dimensions of happiness instead of those tied to possessions, we will learn to live in more modest and simple manner. We will live only with what we really need, and we will restrain our voracious desires to possess things. In other words, we will live simply so that others can simply live. What this means is putting into practice not only the Kantian imperative of universality but also the Christian values of sharing and dis-

tributive justice. "Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things" [*LS* 222].

Without a doubt we must learn new norms for a type of consumption that is much more sustainable than our present practice. Recall the mythical formulation of the book of Genesis in which paradise, which represents complete harmony between human beings, nature, and God, is vitiated by the unrestrained desires of human beings. To reestablish that harmonious relationship, we need to convert the force of our human desires into forces of communion with others and with nature. We need to foster desires that are not egocentric and out of control. The encyclical tells us that "Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption." It also warns us against letting our desires drive us to compulsive consuming that prevents us from being happy: "A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment." On the other hand, "to be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfillment" [*LS* 222].

2.2.8. The precautionary principle

The Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, issued in 1992, was already applying the precautionary principle to ecology. This principle dictates that when serious and irreversible damage is a real possibility, there is no need to have absolute certainty before preventive measures are taken. This was a reversal of the principal that had previously prevailed, according to which it was necessary to prove conclusively that human activity was producing harm of such great proportions that preventive measures were obligatory. The new precautionary principle was clearly established, and the encyclical shows how it is related to the preferential option for the poor: "the precautionary principle makes it possible to protect those who are most vulnerable and whose ability to defend their interests and to assemble incontrovertible evidence is limited" [*LS* 186].

2.2.9. Closely uniting the social and the ecological

Various ecologist movements[6] have promoted a key value stressed in the encyclical: it is "environmental justice," which considers ecological integrity to be part of a new and more complex notion of justice. *Laudato Si'* adds still another dimension to this notion of justice by calling for respect for cultural diversity, a dimension that is in accord with the understanding of all authors who propose communitarian and multicultural perspectives.

The new vision proposed by the magisterium makes cultural diversity an integral part of the close relation between the social question and the ecological question. In other words,

the encyclical stresses the need to integrate social rights, the new environmental rights, and the rights of cultural minorities. The reason is that the poor and the cultural minorities are the ones who suffer most from the damaged environment. The encyclical states it thus: "Today we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" [*LS* 49].

Laudato Si' therefore speaks of "integral ecology" in an effort to unite all the dimensions of the ecological problematic. In other words, we are dealing with "a single crisis" but one with different aspects that require an integral solution: "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" [*LS* 139]. The notion of "integral ecology" includes the human ecology that is inseparable from the classical notion of the "common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics" [*LS* 156]. The encyclical draws on the principle of the "common good" as expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* 26, but it refines this norm of social morality further when it states that "in the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters." It goes on to assert that "this option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods" [*LS* 158]. In other words the encyclical calls into question private property, as social morality has already done, and it extends solidarity to the coming generations.

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For many years now, in the countries of the South the social struggles have been ecological struggles as well, even if they have not been expressed in those terms (we are referring to the conflicts over water resources, contamination levels, access to forests, etc.) The Human Development Reports of the U.N. for the years 2007 and 2008 issued warnings about how climate change was affecting the poorest countries and impeding their development. Also the 2016 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) departs from earlier reports in directly relating climate change closely to social factors. No one has much doubt about the particular vulnerability of many poor countries to the effects of climate change.

We should recall here some of the key factors demonstrating the close relationship between justice and the ecological challenge. Let us consider first the present-day wars that are in many ways concerned with control of petroleum, natural gas, minerals, or water rights. The scarcity of these resources aggravates the existing conflicts and generate new ones. Second, scientific evidence raises a question that is often absent from our reasoning: why is it that the North, whose ecological footprint is much larger than that of the South, suffers less than the South from the negative consequences of contamination and climate change? Is such an imbalance just? Is there a proper and proportional distribution of the burden toward those who contaminate most? Third, since the countries of the North had a dirty industrial revolution which used heavily polluting fuels like coal (and thought little about the residual effects), is it just for them now to require the countries of the South to industrialize without pollution and without any type of assistance? We should remember here the notion of the ecological debt that the North has with the South. The so-called "conditionalities" that the rich countries impose on the countries of the South, through agencies like the World Bank or the IMF, are really nothing more than neo-protectionist measures. Fourth, in the U.S. there has emerged a movement which shows the relation between environmental justice and racism, since there is much evidence that shows that in many cities the effects of contamination are far worse in poor neighborhoods than in wealthy ones. Fifth, it is evident that there are many struggles for justice around the world that involve ecological problems, even though the ecological aspect is often not expressly mentioned. For example, there are the struggles against toxic waste (heavy metals, dioxins, etc.) produced by the so-called "toxic imperialism" which seeks to send its contaminants to poor countries (thus violating the Basilea Convention of 1989). Another problem is bio-piracy, the illegal appropriation of the resources of indigenous communities without any recompense or any recognition of indigenous ownership. Movements have also been launched against the intensive cultivation of pineapples, the widespread planting of eucalyptus trees for paper production, the construction of huge river-blocking dams, the contamination of water by mining interests, the open-pit mining projects, the destruction of mangroves by prawn growers…, the list could go on interminably.

The encyclical takes note of all these aspects of the ecological problem and denounces the harm they are doing to the weakest inhabitants of the planet: "Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest."[7] The encyclical cites examples such as the problem of the exhaustion of fish reserves and the damage this does to the artisanal fishing industry, and it shows how water pollution affects the poorest people, who cannot afford to buy bottled water [*LS* 48].

The encyclical speak directly about the debt that the North owes to the South: "A true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial

imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time. The export of raw materials to satisfy markets in the industrialized north has caused harm locally, as for example in mercury pollution in gold mining or sulfur dioxide pollution in copper mining" [*LS* 51]. The encyclical also points out that there should be an equitable sharing of responsibility between the West and the countries of the South: "We must continue to be aware that, regarding climate change, there are differentiated responsibilities. As the United States bishops have said, greater attention must be given to 'the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests'" [*LS* 52].

Thus, the term "integral ecology" in the encyclical refers to the unification of the diverse aspects of the ecological problem so as to avoid a reductionist vision which concentrates only on certain aspects of the more general problem.

2.2.10. Believing in the value of biodiversity

Another important value of the ecological movement is the preservation of biodiversity whenever it is threatened by human causes. At the present moment we see signs of biological tension, such as diminishment of fish resources, extinction of species, deterioration of soils, massive deforestation, etc.

Of course, we can ask whether biodiversity is a good thing in itself. Since life began on earth, a great many species have become extinct, while others have evolved. On the macro level the biosphere does not seem to have been negatively affected. In recent years, however, evidence has shown that human activities are causing a diminishment of animal populations and an increase in the number of species in danger of extinction. We do not know whether the human causes can be compared with the natural causes that have been active in the course of evolution, but we do know that the human species has, in biological terms, becomes highly predatory. Precisely for that reason, the value of biodiversity is that it guarantees that at least some species will survive sudden climatic changes (droughts, temperature increases, etc.). A large genetic pool improves chances of survival in the midst of external changes. In view of the many uncertainties of our planet Earth, preserving biodiversity as much as possible is a good thing; indeed, it may become a factor that will help us humans survive in the future.

When speaking of cultural ecology, the encyclical includes the human dimension within biodiversity and therefore criticizes the homogenization of cultures. It warns us that "the disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal" [*LS* 145]. We might say that the encyclical broadens the concept of biodiversity by taking cultural diversity into account, and that it broadens the concept of justice by taking into account the rights of peoples and minorities, which are called "third- and fourth-generation rights."

2.2.11. Recovering the sacred dimension of nature

This value forms part of the less anthropocentric worldviews that are found in some of the ancient religious and philosophical traditions –Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Amerindian religion, etc.– which break with the pronounced subject-object duality that is typical of Western culture. This value is also expressed in the more pneumatological vision of Christianity mentioned in the encyclical. According to this vision, all reality is permeated by the Spirit, and all the earth deserves to be respected since nothing is strictly profane.

2.2.12. The return to simplicity and the ability to be happy while possessing little

This value of simple living allows us to appreciate what is small and to be thankful for the possibilities offered by life, without being attached to our possessions or sad about what we do not possess [*LS* 222]. This value is radically opposed to the "compulsive consumerism" which tries to fill the emptiness of the human heart [*LS* 204] and is "one example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals" [*LS* 203]. The value of a modest lifestyle is related to the fact that one cannot be happy with moderation unless one is at peace with oneself. "Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating" [*LS* 223]. This inner peace "is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because such peace, lived out authentically, is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. …Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them" [*LS* 225]. Such harried folk lack that inner peace described in this beautiful text: "We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, and which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full" [*LS* 226].

2.2.13. Appreciating the small daily gestures

The encyclical mentions this value when it points out that "an integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation, and selfishness" [*LS* 230], and when it speaks about the gesture of stopping to give thanks to God before and after meals [*LS* 227]. The encyclical reminds us that "love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." And it proposes "a 'culture of care' which permeates all of society" and infuses love into social life. The encyclical assures us: "We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inev-

itably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile" [*LS* 212].

2.2.14. Recognizing the celebratory dimension of life

Another value presented in the encyclical is that of contemplative rest, a receptive and gratuitous dimension that is different from simply not having possessions. Such rest "protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else." The Jewish Sabbath "is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others, and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the 'first day' of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality" [*LS* 237]. Thus, contemplative rest is a broadening of vision that allows us to recognize the rights of others.[8]

2.3. Criticism of the economic system

We have analyzed some of the values presented in the encyclical, without excluding many others that could contribute to an ecological ethics and respond to the worldwide environmental problem. We would now like to add a final point by way of an appendix. It is a point that the encyclical does not develop explicitly, but it is implicit in several parts, especially those that criticize the present economic system. We believe that there is a clear tension between many of the values promoted by this system and the ecological values the encyclical proposes. The question therefore rises whether the presently dominant economic system, which we could define as "neoliberal, globalized market capitalism," is compatible with the economic proposals that are in accord with an integral ecology.

The encyclical's criticism of the present economic system tends to be implicit, but it is in line with the analysis presented by Benedict XVI in the third chapter of his 2005 encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate,* where he criticizes the way globalization is taking place. We think it worthwhile to enumerate these criticisms, which are not extensively developed in *Laudato Si'*:

1) "By itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion" [*LS* 109].

2) No limits are placed on those who possess more resources and more financial power [*LS* 129].

3) If we recognize that "some economic sectors exercise more power than nations themselves" [*LS* 196], then it becomes clear that "politics must not be subject to the economy" [*LS* 189], for "economics without politics cannot be justified; this would make it impossible to favor other ways of handling the various aspects of the present crisis" [*LS* 196]. The encyclical also suggests that the failure of the various global summits on the environment is due to the fact that "that our politics are beholden to technology and finance" [*LS* 54].

4) Protection of the environment cannot be assured solely by calculating the financial costs and benefits. "The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces." We should therefore avoid a magical conception of the market, one which encourages people to believe that all problems can be resolved just by increasing financial returns for businesses and individuals. The encyclical then asks: "Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations?" [*LS* 190]. Or more simply, is it realistic to hope that the precautionary principle will prevail against enormous economic profits? The encyclical states that "the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment" [*LS* 195].

5) Bold proposals are needed as we attempt to redefine economic progress and its objective in order to correct its dysfunctions and distortions [*LS* 194]. The encyclical makes it clear that halfway measures will only delay the final collapse.

6) Since our present productive model and patterns of consumption are contributing to climate change, we need seek ways to change them [*LS* 26].

7) The encyclical reminds us that "the Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property" [*LS* 93]. Although the encyclical does not descend to particulars, we do well to note its criticism of the way water is marketed in many countries; it affirms that access to drinking water is a fundamental human right because it is essential for survival and is a basic condition for the exercise of all other rights [*LS* 30].

8) The encyclical observes that large transnational enterprises tend to operate one way in developed countries and another way in poor countries: "Often these businesses are multinationals. They do [in poor countries] what they would never do in developed countries or the so-called first world. Generally, after ceasing their activity and withdrawing, they leave behind great human and environmental liabilities such as unemployment, abandoned towns, the depletion of natural reserves, deforestation, the impoverishment of agriculture and local stock breeding, open pits, riven hills, and polluted rivers" [*LS* 51].[9]

3. BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

Laudato Si' is most definitely recommending a conversion and a cultural transformation, because a real change of mentality is needed in order to achieve the integral ecology which will assure us a common home. In this our shared *oikos,* the integral ecology will be founded on a solid economy, and it will heal the divorce between ecology and economy that began with the Industrial Revolution and became worse in the era of globalization.

We believe that the religious traditions can play an important role insofar as they move us toward the social change needed to assure the continuance of life on this planet. As do many of the ecological movements promoting environmental justice, the encyclical recognizes that the solution to the present crisis requires an integral approach. It must seek solutions not only for the ecological problems but also for the social problems, such as economic inequality, which deprive many people of human dignity and basic human rights. Technology can help resolve many of these problems, but it must be placed at the service of everybody, especially the most vulnerable. We must be aware that technology alone does not change the human heart. Technology should not serve an economy whose only goal is the maximization of profits. In other words, technology should not be made an end in itself, nor should it be allowed to consider human beings and natural resources as merely subordinate instruments or means.

It is true that we are becoming more conscious of the widespread ecological problems, but given the practical reality of most of the planet's inhabitants, these problems do not "trouble" us. In our daily lives we give priority to other values because we continue to believe, in our heart of hearts, that economy and ecology are two separate spheres

and not a shared *oikos* which manages our only home, the planet earth. Because of our exacerbated individualization, we fail to think beyond our particular tribe, and even this becomes ever more restricted, sometimes just to ourselves and our closest friends and family. Moreover, we remain committed to the belief that science and technology will save us from this crisis.

We end with these words of hope that the encyclical offers us [*LS* 205, 206, 207]:

> "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true, and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us.
>
> A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic, and social power.
>
> The Earth Charter (June 2012) asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed the universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: 'As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning… Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.'"

NOTES

1. Pope Francis released the encyclical *Laudato Si'* in May 2015. It was the first time that a Pope had dedicated an entire magisterial document as important as an encyclical to the topic of ecology. This is an indication of its relevance for the Catholic Church and also for the world as a whole. In Cristianisme i Justícia we realized that the Pope's highlighting of the ethical, moral, and justice dimensions of ecology was something new, and in a certain sense revolutionary. Accordingly, during the 2015-16 course period we conducted an internal seminar on *Laudato Si'.* The present text arose as the fruit of the reflections of the seminar and the work of the authors, who are members of the team.
2. Cf. *LS* 236 and especially the homily that Pope Francis gave at the inaugural Mass of his pontificate (19 March 2013).
3. *The Little Prince* of Antoine de Saint Exupéry.
4. By "technocracy" is meant the application of technology with a merely strategic mentality, so that there is no discussion of ends but only of means. With "technocracy," technology has become an end in itself.
5. The complete title of Mandeville's work spells out the idea that inspired Adam Smith's famous notion of the "invisible hand": *The Fable of the Bees, or How Private Vices Make for Public Prosperity.*
6. Some authors have given these movements various names, such as "ecologism of the poor" (Martínez Alier, 2000), "ecology of liberation" (Peet and Watts, 1996), or "ecologism of livelihood" (Garí, 2000). In the United States there is also the "movement against environmental racism." An interesting study of these movements is Joan Martínez Alier, *Ecologismo de los pobres* (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2002).
7. Citation from the 2012 document of the Bolivian Bishops Conference, *Carta pastoral sobre el medioambiente y el desarrollo humano*.
8. The Sabbath, or law of weekly rest, stated that even immigrants and slaves were to abstain from labor (cf. Exodus 23,12).
9. Citation from the Christmas message of the bishops of the Patagonia-Comahue region of Argentina, December 2008.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1 Why is “the ecological problem not only an economic or technological problem but a moral and spiritual problem as well”? (Declaration of Venice, 2002)

2 What are the personal values proposed in the encyclical that you feel you need to work on? What are the community values that you feel you need to work on?

3 Why does *Laudato Si’* join the social question with the ecological question? Show how these two issues are closely connected, and explain why they require a joint solution.

4 What habits of our lives we would have to change in order to create a truly ecological culture?

5 Even though the encyclical insists that personal conversion is needed to meet the ecological challenge, what structural changes are also seen as necessary?

6 What are the reasons for our resistance to ecological conversion, both in the personal sphere and in communal concerns?

7 What does the encyclical mean by “integral ecology”?

Cristianisme i Justícia (Lluís Espinal Foundation) is a Study Centre under the initiative of the Society of Jesus in Catalonia. It consists of a team of university professors and experts in theology and different social and human sciences, who are concerned with the increasingly important cultural interrelations between faith and justice.

The collection *Cristianisme i Justícia* introduces some of the findings of the seminars held by the Centre as well as some of the essays of its staff and contributors. The Foundation sends its booklets free of charge to those who ask for them.

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N. 165, October 2017

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