

# Laudato Si'

## EARTH BEATS

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Earth and Environment Commission Newsletter  
US Region



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Chapter Four of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Integral Ecology*, divided into five parts, is an ecological study of relationships. That is, of the relationship *between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. Since everything is closely interrelated, today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis.* (137)

### 1. Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology:

When we speak of the environment we mean the kind of relationship that exists between nature and ourselves, ourselves with one another, and the individual's relationship with one's self.



*Today the environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human family, work related and urban contexts, or from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment.* (141)

Francis writes of the vulnerability of the environment, and of humankind. *The protection of the environment is in fact an integral part of the developmental process and cannot be considered in isolation.* (141) How can we not feel called to look out for each other and our home? Because everything is one, because everything is so interrelated. Because *each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself* (140), and because society's institutions by their nature, directly impact not only the quality of human life but also of the environment as well. *Institutions develop to regulate human relationships with one another and with the environment. Anything which weakens those institutions has negative consequences such as injustice, violence and loss of freedom. . .* (142)

### Question for Reflection

***How does seeing everything as one change the way you see the world?***

## 2. Cultural Ecology:

Pope Francis reminds us that, along with the threat to the patrimony of nature, *there is an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony (143)* to be considered. There is a shared identity that is being lost.



In building and rebuilding our cities, *we need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place. Ecology involves protecting the cultural treasures* and, as we rethink our relationship with the environment, it is important that we remember that *culture is more than the past. It is a living, dynamic present reality.* Disappearing cultures are as serious as the disappearance of plants and animals. *Special care needs to be given to the indigenous communities. Remaining on their land they take the best care of it.* (146)

### Questions for Reflection

**Francis speaks of an “integral ecology” that combines environmental (138-140), economic (141), social (142), and cultural (143) ecologies. What does that mean? How does it work?**

## 3. Ecology of Daily Life:

Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life. This entails considering the setting in which people live their daily lives and through which we express our identities. *We make every effort to adapt to our environment, but when it is disorderly, chaotic or saturated with noise and ugliness, such overstimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.* (147)

As far as we know now, humans are the only organisms endowed with free will. We have the power to choose, but more than that, today we must choose responsibly in favor of the future. *Human ecology implies a profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment.* (155)



It is in this section where Pope Francis utters one of his most tender and hopeful beliefs: *Nonetheless, I wish to insist, that love always proves more powerful. Bonds of belonging and togetherness, (149).* . . . can be formed which can overcome the barriers of human greed, the desire for power, wealth and personal glory.

### **Question for Reflection**

***How does the environment of our homes, workplace and neighborhoods affect our quality of life?***

#### **4. The Principle of the Common Good:**

*Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good (156). The common good, is the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups . . . and each member of that group. . .relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.*

Three things would ensure that the common good and the individual's fulfillment can be achieved.



*First,*  
that peace would result for all.

*Second,*  
that the group's stability is not compromised.

*Third,*  
that a certain order would be established  
for the group and the individual.

*Whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good. (157)* While the state and society as a whole have the obligation to serve the common good, it is the individual's responsibility to make those kinds of choices that do likewise.

The principle of the common good is a summons *to solidarity with and a preferential option for the poorest of our sisters and brothers. . .it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in light of our deepest convictions as believers. (158)*

**Question for Reflection**

**In essence,  
what do you think Francis means by “the common good”?**

**5. Justice between Generations:**



The ancient questions humankind has been asking itself are “Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?” In this encyclical, written in 2015, given the global crisis of Earth, *our common home*, we are faced with at least one new question to add: “What kind of world are we building for the future.”

*When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning, its values. . .and if these issues are courageously faced, we are led to inexorably ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? (160)*

It is now a question of justice.

“The present is the past and the future to seven generations. (*Jan Phillips, No Ordinary Time*) “We are at that time when we cannot continue *to be motivated by rampant individualism, instant gratification and wasteful consumption.* (162) The younger generations are internalizing such behaviors as the norm. If they continue in this way what is being left of our lovely Earth for future generations is debris, desolation and filth.



*Now is the time to broaden the scope of our present interests, and to give particular consideration to those who remain excluded from development; nor can we only keep the poor of the future in mind, but as well today’s poor. . .There is also an urgent moral need for renewed sense of intergenerational solidarity (162)*

## Reflection

As Sisters of Holy Cross  
we choose together to commit ourselves to be mystics and prophets for today's world  
by developing a new consciousness.

We commit to a mysticism not about "human abandonment into the arms of the Divine," but a mysticism about immersing ourselves into Divine Mystery at the heart of all creation, where we dwell one with Earth, with the Cosmos and with all of life.



We commit ourselves, and the global community,  
to that new, prophetic world view  
based not on separation and a fall from grace,  
but on our call to rise to our full potential.

We  
*"put our hand to the work of resurrection"*  
bearing witness that Jesus is the physical and personal center of an expanding Universe. And we  
bear witness to that Spirit, sent by Jesus,  
who continues through us,  
each a co-creator meant to care for . . . *soul, society and soil;*  
*to become the growing tip of grace, light, love and joy.*  
*Teilhard de Chardin*

## A Prayer of Hope

### And so we pray:

May we know our oneness with all that has been brought forth in the Cosmos and on  
Earth.

May we be nourished this day with all that we need to live this hope deeply.

May we be forgiven our failures to love.

May the hurts of our hearts be healed.

*May we have the global wisdom to heal one another.*

May we let go of resentments and of all thinking  
and acting that separates us,  
one from the other.



May we perceive the call to full potential that comes to us daily  
from Love's Creative Impulse.

May we know the compassion and understanding of Jesus.

May we draw on the total compassion of the Spirit of Jesus that enfolds  
us in each moment, that dwells everywhere on Earth  
and in the Cosmos, forever and ever. Amen



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