

LAUDATO SI': ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Encyclical Letter

Pope Francis

Chapter Four: Integral Ecology

READ:

Pope Francis presents and considers the concept of integral ecology which: » Asserts (and this appears throughout) that “it cannot be emphasized enough how everything [in creation] is interconnected” (§138). This, he says, is true of all creation of which humanity is a part, as well as the various aspects of human life: academics, economics, health, governance, culture and every part of “daily life” (§139-155) Reiterates that care for creation is intimately connected to the promotion of a preferential option for the poor since those with the least are most harmed by ecological degradation (§158) Affirms that in light of ecological degradation and climate change, justice and solidarity i.e. commitment to the common good must be understood intergenerational”(§159) **INTEGRAL ECOLOGY** (This summary is adapted from Joe Carter’s Action Institute Power Blog

I. ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society that lives in it. We ourselves are a part of nature. Therefore, the social and environmental crises are intertwined.

We need an “economic ecology” capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality. The analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the “analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment.” Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment.

II. CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Ecology also involves protecting the “cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense.” But our consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today’s globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety that is the heritage of all humanity. We must look for solutions that include local people from within their proper culture. We must show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. The disappearance of a culture can be as serious as the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems.

III. ECOLOGY OF DAILY LIFE

Authentic development must take into consideration the settings in which people live their lives. We must keep this in mind when designing buildings, cities, public spaces, etc.

Human ecology also includes the relationship between human life and the moral law. Also, we must value our “own body in its femininity or masculinity.” It is not a healthy attitude which would seek “to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it”.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMON GOOD

Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. Because current injustices, the common good requires solidarity with and a preferential option for the poor.

V. JUSTICE BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. Our approach to environmental problems must take this into account.

Reflect:

What does this chapter of Laudato Si' call forth in you? What emotions and feelings rise up within you? What will you reflect on in your private meditation time?

Act:

What changes, if any can you try to make within your living situation? What is rising up within you? Will your life change for the better or remain the same?

Closing Prayer:

Provident God, thank you for this time of information and reflection. Give me the courage to make a difference for the sake of our common home – Mother Earth. I pray this in the name of You, the Source of All Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. Amen.