

October 5, 2023

## **A Communique from The Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology (ENA)**

### **The Ecclesial Networks Alliance enthusiastically welcomes “*Laudate Deum*”**

Yesterday’s release of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, “*Laudate Deum*” has been received by The Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology (ENA) “as a most positive encouragement for ENA’s mandate and ministry,” said ENA Convenor, Father Rigobert Minani Bihuzo.

The Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology (ENA) is a platform for biome-based territorial ecclesial networks around the world to respond to the needs of vulnerable communities. The networks bring together faith-based grassroots movements and local churches grounded in Catholic Social Thought in actions that address the pursuit of justice, peace, and urgent environmental challenges. Some 45 representatives of more than a half-dozen of these networks met in Rome in the Vatican’s San Calisto offices in early July.

ENA is most appreciative that “*Laudate Deum*” updates Pope Francis’ concerns for our common home since 2015’s ground-breaking encyclical, “*Laudato Si.*” As Pope Francis so clearly stated, nation states have failed to undertake necessary actions to achieve even the limited goals set at the Paris COP of that same year. This was starkly confirmed just last month, at the UN’s Climate Ambition Summit, when Secretary General Antonio Guterres told world leaders that humanity’s addiction to fossil fuels had “opened the gates to hell.”

“*Laudate Deum*” helpfully reiterates the urgency of the climate emergency that we face, noting how Creation is being crucified today as politicians, businessmen – and even some church people – fail to act. It is inspiring that Pope Francis set the climate crisis as the *locus theologicus* of our times.

Both ENA and the pope agree that the climate crisis cannot be resolved at the expense of populations who have historically been excluded from, and exploited by, global economic structures. The ecclesial networks involved in ENA prioritize accompaniment of Indigenous peoples’ struggles for territorial integrity that allow them to define their own futures. “*Laudate Deum*” #38 describes this as “a multilateralism from below.” The dynamics of an unjust economy based on extractivism at the expense of marginalized peoples cannot be allowed to colonize even the atmosphere.

In the pages of “*Laudate Deum*” ENA hears the cry of the Earth, the cry of the Poor, as well as the Good News outlining how the church can and must act. “*Laudate Deum*” #69 reminds us all that “solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.” For Francis, and for ENA, ecological and ecclesial conversion are interconnected.

As the Synod on Synodality process unfolds, ENA reiterates our desire to continue “walking together” with the vision of Pope Francis. The peripheries need to become the center of this synodal journey where networks of those who have seldom been heard are becoming new ecclesial subjects – subjects that ENA rejoices to see at the center of “*Laudate Deum.*”

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