



Vatican COVID-19 Commission

Executive summary: Ecology Taskforce



Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran/United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)

SEE: Framing the narrative

Towards an integral understanding of the different crises

The global scientific consensus is that societies and cultures cannot be healthy unless the planet and its ecosystems are healthy. The pandemic has revealed the extent of our vulnerability in an increasingly globalised, interdependent and ecologically constrained world.

The COVID-19 emergency is the most recent in a series of warnings indicating that we are approaching crucial bio-geographic and socio-economic tipping points. The crisis is aggravating an already unsustainable, unjust and fragmented world. We are witnessing sudden disruptions that exposes the fragility of our systems of production and care work. In the COVID-19 crisis, people with lower incomes, fewer access to benefits and fewer rights suffer disproportionately.

As Pope Francis explains, the pandemic exposes 'our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities'.

3 billion

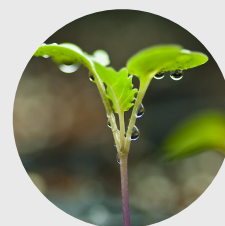
The number of people who do not have access to safe drinking water and/or sanitation – an example of vulnerable communities in our world today. (UNICEF)

There are many examples of vulnerable communities in our world today – such as the billions who do not have access to safe drinking water and/or sanitation. And as the recent resumption of logging after the Amazon and Australia wildfires illustrates, the erosion of laws and climate policies designed to protect ecosystems presents an urgent and pressing danger.

We need a fundamental systemic shift – based on scientific data – away from the economic, social and ecological crises that have both contributed to the pandemic and been exacerbated by it.



Pope Francis has asked the Vatican COVID-19 Commission to consider key issues arising from the pandemic and also to reflect on what new socio-economic-cultural approaches are needed to build a better future for everyone. This is the executive summary from Week 5 of the Commission's Ecology Taskforce.



All is connected

Laudato Si' notes: 'We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illness and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about.' (LS 140)

JUDGE: COVID-19 is not just a health crisis

Our deep dependence on healthy ecosystems has been laid bare

This health crisis is interconnected with the ecological crisis when we consider the decreasing availability of freshwater, the loss of biodiversity and climate change. These interrelated crises expose the deep injustices faced by people and planet, and can only be addressed through a united human effort that calls us to envision and live an integral ecology where all creation can flourish.



Photo by Scott Ableman

urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision' (LS 141).

Religious traditions offer wisdom and narratives that can help to discern proper and creative ways to move forward.

The compassionate call to care deeply for our common home naturally supports action towards structural reform of our institutions through policies, practices and political and economic models of well-being that advance an integral ecology. '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).

Protecting each other and the natural world is a loving relational response to the current crises.

As a human family, we have an opportunity to question the human systems we participate in and the models that damage life on this planet – to 'bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it' (*Laudato Si'*, 246). 'We

ACT: 'Integral ecology', outlined in Pope Francis's encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, provides a framework to understand, discern and respond to the emergency

We need an integral approach since, as Pope Francis reminds us, 'everything is closely inter-related and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crises' (LS 137). This novel Covid-19 situation calls for new responses that spark the human imagination and promote structural conversion for new integral, ecological models of life. Our proposals focus on communication:

- **Prepare blogs & interviews from experts** on about the pandemic, interconnectedness and the ecological, social and economic impacts on the most vulnerable – and also on the call for a recovery plan that involves systemic change rather than a return to the old 'normal' which created our crises.
- **Offer 'intra-generational' stories to the media** from different regions of the world and from the most ecologically, socially and culturally vulnerable communities in order to maintain a global perspective. This is a global emergency and it requires a global response – united to protect our common home.
- **Highlight the 'inter-generational' dimension** in a short video featuring young climate activists and Church leaders. 'Intergenerational solidarity is not optional but rather a basic question of justice' (LS 159). This would (a) contribute to a popular understanding of the interconnections between the climate, ecological crisis and COVID-19; (b) reinforce shared values in people of all ages around intergenerational solidarity and care; (c) shine a light on policy makers and investors and the choices they will make in coming months; and (d) activate viewers to ensure we do not revert to the systems that created these crises but rather build a better world. See the **full proposal**.