

JPIC of FRANCISCANS IN TERRA SANTA CONFERENCE ON:

***THE INTEGRAL ECOLOGY OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE
SAFEGUARDING OF OUR COMMON HOME***

"An Integral Ecology for an Integral Society: the great challenge of our time"

Notre Dame Centre, Jerusalem (12/03/18)

Introduction

Your Excellencies, Very Rev. Fathers, Religious Women and Men, Distinguished Invited Guests: I bring you the warm greetings of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development; and on its behalf, I wish this Conference great success. I also want to thank the many organizing partners of this event for their kind invitation to our Dicastery to be part of this event to reflect on how *integral ecology* generates an *integral society*, or how *integral ecology* is connected with an *integral society* and what challenges ensue from this relationship.

Talking about "society", it is worth noting the observation of Pope Francis that all civil society is founded on the sense of responsibility for our fellow man and women. For society responds to man's naturally good desire to relate and to associate with others, and to man's God-given calling to participate in creating and ordering the world around us for the good of all. Thus, fundamental requirements of human coexistence in society are respect for rights that flow from the dignity of all persons, as creatures of God, and their vocation to live in relationship for their wellbeing and common good. But also affecting society's life are several factors, such as, governance and politics, economics, labour, health, food, peace and conflicts, urbanization, poverty and exclusion, inequity and religion.

Method of Presentation:

As a method of presentation, I shall trace out the evolution of the concept of *integral ecology* in the teaching of the recent Popes (from Pope Leo XIII) and in the Church's Social Teaching. Then, with the sense of society above, ie. as man's vocation for coexistence for its common good, I shall refer to Pope Francis' teaching that *everything is interconnected*, to show how the evolution of the concept of *integral ecology* entails that of *human ecology* and, accordingly, that of an *integral society*. I shall then zero in on some broad features of *integral society*, and then conclude with a mere mention of some challenges that the sense of an *integral society* poses.

The Evolution of the Concept of Integral Ecology in the CSD/DSC & Implications for Human Existence:

As you all know, the Encyclical takes its name from the invocation of St Francis of Assisi: “*Laudato si’ mi’ Signore*” “Praise be to you, my Lord”, which in the *Canticle of Creatures* calls to mind that the earth, our common home, “is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (n. 1). The reference to St Francis also indicates the attitude upon which the entire Encyclical is based, that of prayerful contemplation, which invites us to look towards the “poor one of Assisi” as a source of inspiration. Still significantly for Pope Francis and as the Encyclical affirms, St Francis is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an *integral ecology* lived out joyfully and authentically. [...] He shows us just how inseparable is the bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace” (n. 10). And this is the concept that I need to explore with you this morning, especially its rootedness in the magisterium of the Church and the Popes. But as you can already see: *Integral ecology is inseparable from integral society, understood as a concrete form of integral human development!*

Ecology in the Social Teaching of the Church

It is customary to begin the account of Catholic social teaching with the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII, issued in 1891. While that Encyclical focussed on the conditions and rights of workers, it also contained some seeds of current ideas about our natural environment. For example, it stated that those who receive God's bounty in the form of natural resources or property should exercise their responsibility "as the steward of God's providence, for the benefit of others".¹

Pope John XXIII would be the first to introduce the idea of "*integral development of the person*" in the Encyclical Letter, *Mater et Magistra* (1961). He taught about the need for "Christian education" to be "integral" and encompassing every kind of duty. This meant that a Christian should behave as a Christian in all the areas of his life: at work, in family and as a parent, in the fields of economics or politics being a responsible citizen, in the social activities too.

But it was Vatican Council II that inspired a committed study of the relationship between man and his environment. Having formulated for herself the task/mission of showing solidarity and respectful affection for the various experiences/problems of man as he/she journeys through history, the Church of the Vatican Council II and post-Vatican II displayed a sharp and a keen interest in the role and the place of the environment/nature in man's response to and pursuit of his vocation to develop. Thus, the Apostolic Constitution, *Gaudium et spes* (1965), speaks of an "integral vocation of man", the "integral perfection of the human person" and an "integral culture".

Against this background, Pope Paul VI would articulate the scope/place of nature in human development in his Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progressio* (1967). That Encyclical Letter taught that "authentic development must foster the development of each man and of the whole man", thus promoting a full-bodied humanism and the fulfillment of the whole man².

¹ Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, Leo XIII (15 May 1891), 22.

² Cf. *Populorum progressio*, § 14 and 42.

Two of its key ideas were that *development* is the *new name for peace*, and that we need some *effective world authority* to cope with the scale of challenge in the environmental and financial realms.³ And it includes this very positive remark: “By dint of intelligent thought and hard work, man gradually uncovers the hidden laws of nature and learns to make better use of natural resources. As he takes control over his way of life, he is stimulated to undertake new investigations and fresh discoveries, to take prudent risks and launch new ventures, to act responsibly and give of himself unselfishly.”⁴

In *Octogesima Adveniens* (May 1971), Pope Paul VI further addressed the inseparable relationship/interdependence between human life and natural environment, saying: "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace - pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity - but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable" (§21). Similarly, and with reference to St. Pope John XXIII, he warned against ideological threats to the *nature of man* deriving from positivist thinking of his day, saying: "But outside of this positivism which reduces man to a single dimension even if it be an important one today and by so doing mutilates him, the Christian encounters in his activity concrete historical movements sprung from ideologies and in part distinct from them. Our venerated predecessor Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* already showed that it is possible to make a distinction: 'Neither can false philosophical teachings regarding the nature, origin and destiny of the universe and of man be identified with historical movements that have economic, social, cultural or political ends,....'" (§ 30).

In November of the same year and just before the Stockholm Conference (1972) launched the *UN Program on the Environment* (UNEP), Pope Paul convoked the Synod on *Justice in the World*, which first gave prominence to the link between *Justice* and

³ Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, Paul VI (26 March 1967), 76-78.

⁴ *Populorum progressio*, 25.

ecology. Its line of thought suggested a close link between *concern for the poor* and an *concern for the earth*, the *cry of the poor* and the *cry of the earth*, and adverted to the *culture of waste* of the rich.⁵

I offer you these historical touchstones to demonstrate that our current Popes have always built their contemporary perspectives on ecology on earlier foundations. Another reason is to assure you that Catholic social teaching offers a rich storehouse for further exploration of these topics.

Saint Pope John Paul II

In his first encyclical on the human person (*Redemptor Hominis*), St. Pope John Paul II already warned about the threat of pollution to nature.⁶ Later, in his social encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), on the 28th. anniversary of *Populorum progressio*, he focussed on the nature of authentic human development and its moral character. In this regard, he adverted to the need for individuals and communities to have full respect for the nature of the human person, whose origin and goal are found in God. He called attention to the need to respect the constituents of the natural world, which the ancient Greeks referred to as the “cosmos” (*an ordered system with beauty*). Such realities demand respect by virtue of three considerations that may be summed up in the three words *connection*, *limitation* and *pollution*.

The first consideration, he wrote, is the need for greater awareness “that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate – animals, plants, the natural elements – simply as one wishes, according to one’s own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos.”⁷

The second consideration is the realization that natural resources are limited. Not all resources are renewable. If we treat them as inexhaustible and use them with absolute

⁵ *Justice in the world*, §70

⁶ *Redemptor hominis*, § 11.

⁷ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, § 34.

dominion, then we seriously endanger their availability in our own time and, above all, for future generations.

The third consideration reminds us of the effects of a certain type of development on the quality of life in industrialized areas—the sort of development that causes pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of populations.⁸

When we take these considerations together, I believe they suggest a clear moral message from St. Pope John Paul II. We readily understand that the demands of morality are a *sine qua non* for the wellbeing, not only of the environment, but also of humanity. We should extend our fundamental conception and application of morality to *natural ecology*—the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources, and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - and to the life of man (*human ecology*).

A few years later, on the one hundredth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, St. Pope John Paul II expanded further on this theme in his social encyclical *Centesimus annus*. With regard to the nature of private property and the universal destination of material goods, he drew attention to what he termed *the ecological question* and its connection with the problem of consumerism. Here he referred to a widespread anthropocentric error, namely, our failure to recognize that our capacity to transform and in a certain sense re-create the world through human work is always based on God's prior and original gift of all that exists. Man might imagine that he can make arbitrary use of the earth and subject it without restraint to his will. Rather than carry out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God. The final outcome is a rebellion on the part of nature which is more tyrannized than properly governed by him.⁹

To correct these faulty ideas, St. Pope John Paul II pointed out that all of us humans, as individuals and in our community, must respect the created world and be conscious of our duties and obligations toward future generations. Certainly, the things

⁸ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 34.

⁹ Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II (1 May 1991), 37.

that God has created are for our use. However, they must be used in a responsible way, for man is not the master but the steward of creation.

The Holy Father did not stop at the *natural environment* when he drew attention to the ecological question. He focused as well on the destruction of the *human environment*. Here he introduced the concept of *human ecology*. Yes, damage to the natural environment is serious, but destruction of the *human environment* is more serious. We see people concerned about the balance of nature and worried about the natural habitats of various animal species threatened with extinction. But meanwhile, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic *human ecology*. Not only has God given the earth to humanity, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but the human being too is God's gift to us—indeed, it is the greatest gift. For this reason we must respect the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The encyclical applies this thought to the serious problems of modern urbanization, calling for:

- ✓ proper urban planning which is concerned with how people are to live, and for
- ✓ attention to a *social ecology* of work.¹⁰

With these teachings, St. Pope John Paul II expanded the Church's Social Thought on the ecological question, leading to the teaching in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* that "the relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity",¹¹ and that the cry of the earth and that of the poor are related.¹² In his *World Day of Peace Message* (1990), St. Pope John Paul II wrote: "The proper ecological balance will not be found without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty that exist throughout the world";¹³ and this inspired the Canadian Bishops' Conference to teach that "ecological harmony cannot exist in a world of unjust social structures; nor

¹⁰ *Centesimus annus*, 38.

¹¹ *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Press, 2005 (reprint 2010), #452

¹² *Idem*, cf. #481-484.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, "*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*", *World Day of Peace Message*, 1990, 11.

can the extreme social inequalities of our current world order result in ecological sustainability."¹⁴

To sum up the contribution of Pope John Paul II to our topic:

In Catholic social teaching, respect for the *natural environment* and the *human environment* are inseparably/closely linked. On the one hand, man must respect the *natural environment* by not abusing it. On the other hand, the *human environment* receives the even greater respect it deserves when we respect the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The more we respect our natural and moral structure, the more we respect others and also the created world. The *natural environment* and the *human environment* have a close relationship, and for the *natural environment* to be respected, the *human environment* must be respected above all.

Pope Benedict XVI

In the new millennium, Pope Benedict XVI recalled the teaching of his immediate predecessor and elaborated further on the nature of ecology. In his Message for the World Day of Peace (2007), he pointed to four variants of *ecology*: the *ecology of nature*, and alongside it, a *human ecology* which, in turn, demands a *social ecology*, and, finally, the *ecology of peace*. For peace to be effected in the world, we must be conscious of the relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology*. The *ecology of peace* is comprised of peace with creation and peace among men, which presupposes peace with God.¹⁵

He affirmed the urgent need in international relations for commitment to a *human ecology* that can favour the growth of an *ecology of peace*, and this can occur only when it is guided by a correct understanding of the human person, that is, an understanding not

¹⁴ Canadian Bishops' Conference: "You love all that exists.... all things are Yours, God lover of life", 17. Cf. too, Marjorie Keenan, RSHM: *From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical Overview of the Concern of the Holy See for the Environment 1972-2002*, Pont. Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City 2002. United States Catholic Bishops' Conference: *And God saw that it was good: Catholic Theology and the Environment*, 1996 (with pastoral letters of US Bishops and other Conferences); John McCarthy SJ., "Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology, Fact Sheet" on: http://www.ecojesuit.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CST_ENG.pdf NB. list of studies and pronouncements of other Bishops' Conferences and local Churches.

¹⁵ Benedict XVI *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 January 2007), 8.

prejudiced by ideology or apathy.¹⁶ ...(.cf. to be baptized by Pope Francis as *Indifference*.)

The following year (2008), during his Apostolic Visit to Australia, Pope Benedict drew attention to the beauty of the *natural environment* created by God. But, as he noted, that the beauty of the *natural environment* bears scars too, such as erosion, deforestation and the effects of devastating drought. Likewise, the world's mineral and ocean resources are being squandered and water levels are rising.¹⁷ But the *social environment* also had its scars, such as alcohol and drug abuse, the exaltation of violence and sexual degradation, and the false notion that there are no absolute truths to guide our lives. He affirmed the true nature of human life that entails a search for the truth, the good and the beautiful, that to this end we make our choices, and that for this we exercise our freedom, knowing that there we find happiness and joy.¹⁸

In his landmark Social Encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI dedicates an entire chapter (4) to the issue of the environment and human existence: "*The Development of Peoples, Rights and Duties, The Environment*". Because "the way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa",¹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI speaks of an inseparable relationship between human life and the natural environment which supports it as "that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying".²⁰ This bond between man and his world paves the way for the very famous teaching of Pope Benedict XVI that *the Book of Nature is one and indivisible*, and that it includes not only the environment, but *also individuals, family and social ethics*. Accordingly, as he goes on to teach, our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person.²¹ But, for Pope Benedict XVI, the

¹⁶ *Message* (1 January 2007), 9-11.

¹⁷ For example, strip mining which reduces agricultural lands or forests to hillocks of rock-waste and gaping craters, contaminates rivers and springs with mercury, zinc and cyanide.

¹⁸ *Benedict XVI Address*, Barangaroo, Sydney Harbour (17 July 2008).

¹⁹ *Caritas in veritate*, (2009) §51.

²⁰ *Caritas in veritate*, §50; cf. *Message*, World Day of Peace 2008, §7.

²¹ *Caritas in veritatis*, §51. Cf. too, *World Day of peace Message* (2010).

"*decisive issue*", in the relationship between man and his world: natural and human ecology, "*is the moral tenor of society*".²² *Whence the redemption of man implies the redemption of creation which groans* (Rom 8:22-24).

During his Apostolic Visit to Germany in 2011, the Holy Father elaborated further on the importance of respecting both *natural ecology* and *human ecology*. There he drew attention to the fact that, in the ecological movement in Germany in the 1970s, "young people had come to realize that something is wrong in our relationship with nature, that matter is not just raw material for us to shape at will, but that the earth has a dignity of its own and that we must follow its directives." Yes, he affirmed that the importance of ecology was no longer to be disputed. But, he quickly tagged on to the ecology of nature, the ecology of man, saying: "Yet I would like to underline a point that seems to me to be neglected, today as in the past: there is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled."²³ Human ecology must be rooted in genuine Christian anthropology.

What Pope Benedict affirmed here is a mutual relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology*: that we must respect the created world and that we must respect the way in which the human person has been created, for only in this way will we be able to fulfil our freedom. Such an affirmation, moreover, is not a religious claim but the statement of a natural fact.²⁴ Cf. Benedict's list of *sickness of the spirit*.

Thus the Holy Father calls for an *integral understanding* of the world and the human person, one which respects both the created world and the highpoint of creation which is the human person.

²² Idem.

²³ Benedict XVI *Address to the Bundestag, Reichstag Building, Berlin* (22 September 2011).

²⁴ Cf. Francis George O.M.I., "Legislation creating 'same-sex' marriage: What's at stake?" Chicago: *Catholic New World*, 6-19 January 2013.

If we look at recent Papal Messages on the annual World Food Day, we see how *natural ecology* and *human ecology* need to be inseparably interrelated in order for integral development to take place. In 2011, for example, Pope Benedict called attention to the tragic famine in the Horn of Africa. Improvements cannot come unless “the agricultural sector has a level of investments and resources capable of giving stability to production and hence to the market.”²⁵ But this will require changes in human behaviour and decisions if the good of society is to be favoured. In his Encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, the Pope spoke of the “*moral tenor of society*” as the decisive issue. Here, he calls for the cultivation of “an interior attitude of responsibility, capable of inspiring a different style of life, with necessary sobriety in conduct and consumption;” and this, he observes, is for the good of society and “also for future generations, for their sustainability, protection of the goods of creation, distribution of resources and, above all, the concrete commitment to the development of whole peoples and nations.”²⁶ What is needed, in other words, is the interior transformation of persons in order to promote an integral development which respects the goods of creation and brings about authentic human development.

Integral Ecology in The Holy See Interventions:

Postponing momentarily the contributions of Pope Francis to the Church's teachings on the issue, I wish to turn now to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that took place in June 2012. Representatives of the international community came together to discuss many concerns regarding the environment and the need for common commitment on the part of the international community to chart a course forward to address these issues in a sustainable manner. This process had begun in Stockholm in 1972 and had two high points, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 at the so-called “Earth Summit” and at Johannesburg in 2002. Now, they once again came together at Rio+20 to discuss sustainable development and the interplay of the three

²⁵ Benedict XVI *Message* on World Food Day (17 October 2011), § 3.

²⁶ *Idem*.

acknowledged pillars of such development, namely, economic growth, environmental protection, and the promotion of social welfare.

During the initial preparations for the Conference, the Holy See noted that unanimous consensus had emerged in the international community:

- first, that protecting the environment means improving people's lives; and
- second, that environmental degradation and underdevelopment are closely interdependent issues needing to be approached together, responsibly and in a spirit of solidarity.

It then focused on the first principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which had been adopted at the 1992 Conference—the principle that “human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.”²⁷ Expanding upon this fundamental theme, the Holy See called for the discovery of an art of living together—one that respects the *covenant* between human beings and nature, without which the human family risks dying out. The Holy See explained that there exists a stable and inseparable *covenant* between human beings and nature in which the environment conditions the life and development of human beings, while human beings in turn perfect and ennoble the environment by their creative, productive, and responsible labour.²⁸

Indeed, the term *covenant* has a rich history in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this context, *covenant* is not a public contract between God and man but rather a gift given by God to man. *Covenant* is not a pact built on reciprocity, but is rather a gift, a creative act of God's love.²⁹ Applied to the relationship between human beings and the environment, it becomes increasingly clear that what we have in view is the fact that creation has been given to man as a gift by God. For this reason, humans must use this gift for its purpose,

²⁷ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), 12 August 1992, Annex I.

²⁸ Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, III Preparatory Committee Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, 13-15 June 2012, 2.

²⁹ Cf., Joseph Ratzinger, "The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22, no. 4 (1995), 636.

not taking advantage of it, not abusing it, but using it wisely for integral human development and thus for the present and future generations.

During the negotiations of what would become the outcome document of the Conference, the delegation of the Holy See regularly drew attention to principles that underpin the protection of human dignity. They called for the following:

- (a) responsibility, even when changes must be made to patterns of production and consumption in order to ensure that they reflect an appropriate lifestyle;
- (b) promoting and sharing in the common good;
- (c) access to primary goods, included such essential and fundamental goods as nutrition, education, security, peace and health, which stems from the right to life;
- (d) a universal solidarity capable of acknowledging the unity of the human family;
- (e) the protection of creation which in turn is linked to inter-generational equity—and inter-generational solidarity;
- (f) intra-generational equity, which is closely linked to social justice and which requires taking into account the ability of future generations to discharge developmental burdens; and
- (g) the universal destination not only of goods, but also of the fruits of human enterprise.³⁰

These seven principles were the contribution of the Holy See Delegation to shaping the Rio+20 position; and they merit reflections and practical action in pursuit of sustainable development.

Sustainable development

³⁰ Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, 3.

As we have seen, the Catholic Church affirms that there is an essential relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology* and that ignoring one will be to the detriment of the other. She also affirmed a link between *sustainable development* and *integral human development*, because every economic decision has moral premises and consequences. For this reason, the Holy See Delegation argued that consideration must be given to the ethical and spiritual values that guide and give meaning to economic decisions and to technological progress. Development must be considered not simply from an economic point of view but from an integrally human point of view, that is to say, one which necessarily takes into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of development and is based on the dignity of the human person.³¹

It followed, for the Holy See Delegation that any neo-Malthusian approach to development must be totally rejected. Such views hold that people are an obstacle to development. The solution to global poverty cannot be to eliminate the poor.³²

Instead, people are the drivers of development. As the *Rio Declaration* had rightly pointed out in its first principle, *people* are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.³³ Accordingly, during negotiations, the delegation of the Holy See regularly drew attention to the inherent dignity of the human person and thus the role of the family in integral development and resisted efforts to impose language suggestive of population control.³⁴

In the outcome document of Rio+20, entitled *The Future We Want*,³⁵ Member States agreed to launch a process to determine a set of *sustainable development goals*.

³¹ Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, 5.

³² Cf., Peter K.A. Turkson, *Statement*, Summit of Heads of State and Government on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 20 September 2010. www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/debate/VA_en.pdf

³³ Cf., in this regard, also the *United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development* (A/RES/41/128) esp. at Article 1, 1: "The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized"; and Article 2, 1: "The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development."

³⁴ In this regard, the delegation of the Holy See and like-minded delegations successfully resisted efforts by some developed countries to insert in the text the term "reproductive rights" which can be interpreted to include abortion and artificial contraception.

³⁵ Cf., A/RES/66/288.

While much discussion surrounded what these goals would be like, agreement was reached during negotiations that they would be “action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities”.³⁶ For the Holy See Delegation, then, whatever *sustainable development goals* are finally agreed upon by Member States, such *goals* must not ignore, but must fully take into account, the dignity of the human person—from conception onwards to natural death—and this includes the needs of the poor, the aged and of future generations. (cf. Ban-Ki-Moon: SDGs are human dignity narrative, that leaves no one behind)

Pope Francis on Integral Ecology: The Encyclical, LAUDATO SI', ..

Pope Francis himself offers us a quick review of the core message. Let us watch his short video now – it takes just a minute and a half!³⁷

Let me please suggest the take-aways, to keep in mind throughout today’s discussions:

- ✚ Our nature is created by God and surrounded by the gifts of creation
- ✚ Our failures are that we over-consume and that we do not share the gifts of creation
- ✚ This has dire consequences for the poor and the planet
- ✚ And so it is urgent that we change our sense of human progress, our management of the economy, and our style of life.
- ✚ Such change is going to require major shifts in our thinking and commitments – indeed, a conversion of groups and institutions at every level, from local communities to global humanity.

These take-aways represent the major strokes of *Laudato si'* in which Pope Francis does three essential things:

³⁶ A/RES/66/247.

³⁷ <http://thepopevideo.org/en/video/care-creation.html>

- a. He links the vulnerability of the poor and the fragility of the environment. In response to these immense inter-twined challenges, he proposes the social teaching of the Church in the form of a new *integral ecology* to reduce our footprint and reverse the deterioration of the natural and social environment.
- b. He makes an urgent appeal for a *new dialogue* about how to shape the future of our planet. Such dialogue must include ecological conversion, an education in ecological citizenship and an ethical and spiritual itinerary.
- c. He shows profound *trust* in humanity's ability to respond and expresses real *hope* that we can work together to rebuild our common home.

Implications of the Concept-Evolution of Integral Ecology for Integral Society:

The Catholic doctrine of creation does not regard the world as an accident. Our planet, indeed the universe, is an intentional act of God that is provided to human beings as a gift. Creation is not just passing from nothing to many things, a lot of “stuff” getting made. Rather, creation is the first step in the great vocation of man: creation, incarnation, redemption.

Humanity is not an afterthought. God did not have two agendas: first, the world and then, humanity. Man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God, they are an intrinsic part of the universe, and their vocation is “to till and to keep” it all. But tilling and keeping cannot include domination and devastation -- *lest we till too much and keep too little!* These make a mockery of dignity and respect *of God's gifts*. We are called to participate in ongoing creation and in its ongoing *redemption*.

In this light, we should find it easy to understand the concerns of Pope Francis for the poor and for nature. He is not offering worldly advice on how to be prudent and practical, although his message has immense practical consequences. Rather, he is reminding us of:

- a) the *basic consequence of creation, which establishes a three-fold level of relationship for the human person:*
- *with God the Creator,*
 - *with other human persons in a bond of fraternity. and*
 - *with the world as the garden-home for our existence, and*
- b) the basic demands of our vocation to participate in God’s work as *co-creators*, and so
- c) our responsibility for the work of God who does not hide his face from any aspect of creation, poor or rich, natural or human.

This brings Pope Francis to certain virtues and attitudes that are most appropriate to our relationship with creation. Being so connected to all living things, we must accept that “every act of cruelty towards any creature is ‘contrary to human dignity’” (§92). Moreover, “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” (§91; also §2 and §217). What is needed is the awareness of a universal communion: All are “called into being by the one Father. All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect” (§89).

Pope Francis proposes that we think of our relationship with the world and with all people in terms of *caring*. As Jesus does when he calls himself the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11-15). Caring for our common home requires, as Pope Francis says, not just an economic and technological revolution, but also a cultural and spiritual revolution—a profoundly different way of living the relationship between people and the environment, a new way of ordering the global economy and global ties..

To speak in this way locates *Laudato si’* in the great tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. 125 years ago, Pope Leo XIII responded to the *res novae* or “new things” of his time, when the industrial economy was only a century old and posed many dilemmas,

especially for workers and families. Similarly, 50 years ago, in the era of newly independent nations emerging in the 1960s, Pope Paul VI took up the issue of the development of the human person and nations, whole and entire, in his encyclical letter, *Populorum Progressio*. Development, for Blessed Paul VI, was the new name of peace! So too, Pope Francis is responding to the “new things” of our day, when a post-industrial, globalized economy is posing many challenges for humanity and for the planet. He proposes an integral ecology for integral human development and integral society; and these are some features of such an integral society:

- The world’s economy must meet the true needs of people for their survival and integral human flourishing. This is a matter of *respect for* human dignity and a *recognition* of the common good. We must make objective moral judgments in this regard. This is especially important in today’s globalized economy. It seems as if no argument is permissible against allowing capitalism free rein to achieve monstrous wealth-accumulation rather than human dignity and the common good.

- How does capitalism relate to the common good? In fact, neither *Evangelii Gaudium* nor *Laudato si’* mentions *capitalism*. Instead, Pope Francis joins Blessed Paul VI, St John Paul II and Pope *emeritus* Benedict XVI in asking deeply, “What is development? What is progress?” He also examines many *market* issues, and these point to common good versus narrow interests.

If participants in the market were truly moral actors, motivated by the pursuit of virtue, and if trade was fair and free, they would promote healthy competition, creativity and innovativeness. They would have the happiness and flourishing of people as their goal.³⁸

Now, however, “Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products,” Pope Francis says, “people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending... When people become self-centred and

³⁸Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). See also Thomas Jefferson.

self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume." (§203-4) And so, for Pope Francis, "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast" (§217).

- How do technologies contribute to the common good? The Encyclical gratefully acknowledges the tremendous contribution of technologies to the improvement of living conditions. Yet it also warns about the misuse of technology, especially when it gives "those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world" (§104). Moreover, markets alone "cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion" (§109). There is a great need for solidarity!

- Solidarity with all, especially the marginalized and the poor, is a hallmark of our Holy Father's papacy, and it marks the Encyclical as well. The text speaks with great compassion of dispossession and devastation suffered disproportionately by the poor, vulnerable and *those who are* unable to protect themselves or escape. Pope Francis embraces all people. "Let us not only keep the poor of the future in mind, but also today's poor, whose life on this earth is brief and who cannot keep on waiting" (§162).

- Solidarity must also apply between generations: "we can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity" (§159). The Pope's key question for humanity is put in those very terms: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (§160).

- Human dignity underpins the extensive treatment of "The need to protect employment" (§124-29). Work is a noble and necessary vocation: "Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and

personal fulfilment” (§128). Work is how human dignity unfolds while earning one’s daily bread, feeding one’s family, and accessing the basic material conditions needed for flourishing every day. Further, it should be the setting for rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God.

In the reality of today’s global society, it is essential that “we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,”³⁹ no matter the limited interests of business and economic reasoning that excludes the human and social costs (§127). It is wrong when some businesses simply replace workers with machines on the basis of efficiency and utility, viewing human beings as interchangeable with machines as mere factors of production. Clearly, the *drive* is to gain still more profit, but at the cost of less and less decent work. Do individuals thrive from being unemployed or precariously hired? Of course not. Does society benefit from unemployment? Of course not. In fact, we everywhere witness far too many people who cannot find worthwhile and fulfilling work. We should not be surprised when unscrupulous people with demented fantasies recruit such idle individuals into criminality and violence.

- God has exercised subsidiarity by entrusting the earth to humans to keep, till and care for it; this makes human beings co-creators with God. Work should be inspired by the same attitude. If work is organized properly, and if workers are given proper resources and training, their activity can contribute to their fulfilment as human beings, not just meet their material needs. It can uphold the full human dignity, the integral human development, of workers. The principle of subsidiarity is a mirror of God’s relationship to humanity.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Caritas in Veritate*, §32.

⁴⁰ See *Respect in Action: Applying Subsidiarity in Business*, UNIAPAC & University of St Thomas, 2015. <http://www.stthomas.edu/media/catholicstudies/center/ryan/publications/publicationpdfs/subsidiarity/RespectInActionFINALWithAcknowlCX.pdf>

- Proper *exercise of care* (practices of stewardship) keeps the natural environment and human systems *sustainable*. The problem, Pope Francis notes clearly, is that the logic of competition *can* promote short-termism, which *can* lead to financial failure and devastation of the environment. “We need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals” (§190).

- God is the Creator of all—the entirety of creation, all people, all goods. Justice requires that the goods of creation be distributed fairly. This has the status of a moral obligation, even a commandment, for Pope Francis. “Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labour is not mere philanthropy,” he said last July in Bolivia. “It is a moral obligation. For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment. It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right. The universal destination of goods is not a figure of speech found in the Church’s social teaching. It is a reality prior to private property. Property, especially when it affects natural resources, must always serve the needs of peoples.”⁴¹

To sum up, *care* integrates these principles and applies them to our global economic, environmental and social situation. Last week at the United Nations, I presented the Holy See’s views on the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The Holy See believes that the 2030 Agenda needs more than public financing. It also requires financing and investment in accordance with value-based criteria of private investors, as a necessary complement to public finance. All stakeholder need to engage in ethical financial activity to eliminate social inequality and to develop an ambitious new agenda to better “*care for our common home*”. Indeed, we are called “*to care*” even when dealing with finance. *Ethically irresponsible financial activity produces social inequalities*. When we cast aside anything precious in the world, we destroy part of ourselves too, because we are completely connected. By caring, we are inspired to

⁴¹Pope Francis, *Address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015, §3.1

practice responsible finance and promote value-based investing in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.⁴²

Challenges:

It is clear how the evolution and the development of the concept of *integral ecology* is inseparably related with the experience of an *integral society*, based on *integral human development*. And in the light of the characterizations of *integral society* above, one may readily identify the follow as its chief challenges:

- The lack of inclusion and communion
- Inequity
- The pervasive culture of indifference or a globalized indifference
- The lack of solidarity and a sense of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence
- The prevalence of violence, done to nature and to persons.

Thank you all for your kind attention!

Card. Peter K. A. Turkson

⁴²P. Turkson, *Statement of the Holy See* in the High-Level Thematic Debate on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, New York, 21.04.2016.