

7 Integral Ecology

Pre-reading explanation of Integral Ecology:

The crucial principles running across the entire encyclical which are fundamental to understand the concept of Integral Ecology are:

1. the close relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet,
2. the conviction that in the world everything is connected,
3. the critique of the new paradigm and forms of power that arise from technology,
4. the invitation to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress,
5. the unique value of each creature,
6. the human sense of ecology,
7. the need for open and honest debate,
8. the grave responsibility of international and local politics,
9. the throw-away culture, and
10. the proposal for a new lifestyle.

At the heart of the Encyclical's proposal is an integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice, an ecology "which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings" (LS. #15).

Because we cannot understand nature as "something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live" (LS. #139). This applies to all that we live in different fields: the economy, politics, the different cultures – especially those most threatened - and in every moment of our daily life.

1.Environmental, economic and social ecology: everything is connected. Time and space, physical, chemical and biological components of the planet form one network that we do not fully understand. Fragmented and isolated knowledge should be integrated into a broader vision that considers " the interrelation between ecosystems and between the various spheres of social interaction" (LS. #141) and also invest at the institutional level, because " the health of a society's institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life" (LS. #142).

2.Cultural Ecology " Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense " (LS. #143). It is necessary to integrate the rights of peoples and cultures with the leadership of local stakeholders from their own culture, with "special attention to Aboriginal communities" (LS. #146).

3. Ecology of everyday life: the integral ecology also incorporates everyday life, to which the Encyclical gives special attention, particularly in the urban environment. Human beings have a great capacity for adaptation and " an admirable creativity and generosity is shown by persons and groups who respond to environmental limitations [...] learning to orient their lives amid disorder and uncertainty" (LS. #148). Nevertheless, real development presupposes an overall improvement to the quality of human life: public spaces, housing, transportation, etc. (LS. #150-154). The human dimension of ecology also implies " the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature " (LS. #155). Also " our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation "(LS. #155).

4. The principle of the common good: integral ecology "is essential for effectively attaining the common good" (LS. #158); in the contemporary world, in which " injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable", to strive for the

common good, means taking decisions in the name of solidarity and based on " a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters " (LS. #158).

5. Justice between generations: the common good is also relevant to future generations, "you cannot talk about sustainable development without solidarity between the generations" (LS. #159), but without forgetting the poor of today.

Check-in

Grace: That all my intentions, actions and operations are purely aimed to the service of caring for our common home.

Hymn: Video on the Encyclical *Laudato Si* available
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tYdOIqvpqg>

Scripture: Exodus (3: 2-7)

3 One day while Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain.

2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a flame coming from the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire but that it was not burning up. 3 "This is strange," he thought. "Why isn't the bush burning up? I will go closer and see."

4 When the Lord saw that Moses was coming closer, he called to him from the middle of the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!"

He answered, "Yes, here I am."

5 God said, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground. 6 I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." So Moses covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave drivers. I know all about their sufferings,

8 and so I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of Egypt to a spacious land, one which is rich and fertile.

Reflection questions

In the light of the concept of Integral Ecology of the Encyclical *Laudato Si* from the pre-reading and the scripture, what is most relevant and important to me? How does this concept relate to my own reality and my daily life? And how does this concept integrate into our CLC identity and vocation?

Prayer: a few minutes of silence

Closing Prayer: God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give God our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. God does not abandon us, God does not leave us alone, for God has united Godself definitively to our earth, and God's love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to God (LS. # 245).

On-going practice: Over the next fortnight look for any instances of what we do affecting any other aspects of the ecology. E.g. products we buy and the labour that produced them, driving your car etc.

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