



Colloquium: **“LAUDATO SI’, THE CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME”**

The Earth, our common Home: Challenges and Hope!

“The Key Concept of ‘Integral Ecology’ and its Evolution in the Church’s Social Teaching.”

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Introduction:

Dear Director-General, Madame Bokova, please accept my deep gratitude to you and the UNESCO staff for hosting this conference. I want also to express my sincere thanks to Mgr. Follo and the Permanent Mission of the Holy See for organizing the event.

Excellences, membres du corps diplomatique, chers représentants des autorités et du clergé français, représentants d’autres religions et du monde associatif et culturel, chers Professeurs, Mesdames et Messieurs, c’est un plaisir d’être parmi vous pour discuter certains aspects et thèmes de l’Encyclique sociale de Pape François, « Laudato si, sûr la Sauvegarde de la maison commune. »

It is truly a pleasure and a privilege to be at UNESCO’s headquarters to reflect on the Encyclical, *Laudato si, the care for our common home*. At your invitation this afternoon, I wish to present the theme of *integral ecology*, so central to the encyclical, and its evolution in the social teaching of the Church, as a concept which helps us appreciate how the encyclical treats the challenges and hope facing the earth, our common home.

Pope Francis’s Encyclical letter “*Laudato si: ‘on Care for Our Common Home’*” was released in June 2015 and no longer requires an introduction or comprehensive presentation. It has been

received and analysed in many sectors and disciplines: academia, international organizations¹ and NGOs, scientific and popular organizations, religious institutions of different faiths, media and think tanks, Governments and parliaments, and the business sector at the national and multinational levels.

One leitmotif of the Encyclical is that “everything is interconnected”². This point has made a strong impression on all who read the full document. More than one year after its publication, after the first wave of enthusiasm and analysis, it is very meaningful and important to reflect on this interconnectedness here at UNESCO’s headquarters! The structure of UNESCO, its diverse branches and programs and the variety of its activities clearly reflect this interconnectedness – maybe more than any other single international organization. UNESCO also provides an appropriate base from which reflections can grow and spread about technology, about our relationships with others and with nature – these concerns are expressed in Chapter 3; and about two of the three pillars – namely culture and education – deemed necessary in Chapter 6 in order to sustain “the long path of renewal”³ sketched for us by the Holy Father.

Indeed, as Madame Bokova explained in an inspiring article on *Laudato si’*, “*L’UNESCO fut créée (...) dans l’idée que la paix ne peut être durable qu’à la condition de s’ancrer dans l’esprit des hommes et des femmes, par l’éducation, les sciences et la culture. Mais pas n’importe quelle éducation, et pas n’importe quelle culture – car celles-ci, pour inspirer la paix, doivent s’appuyer à leur tour sur la promotion de l’éthique, du respect et de la tolérance, en vue de construire la solidarité intellectuelle et morale des peuples*”⁴.

We need not take time here to repeat the alarming situation of our common home: “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (§ 49), the dominance of misleading paradigms (cf. § 53, 106-109, 203), such as the *globalization of a technocratic paradigm*, and the effects of a misguided anthropocentrism (cf. § 115-123). These elements are what make Pope Francis’ see an *urgent challenge to protect our common home* (§13). They should be taken as givens, they should already be clear in our minds.

¹ Last year, I presented *Laudato si’* in New York in the ECOSOC chamber and at UNICEF, in Paris at OECD, in Rome at FAO. Last December during the UN climate conference COP21, several Ministers quoted the Letter. In September 2016, a Seminar on *Laudato si’* organized inside the Vatican was attended by the heads of IPCC and CBD.

² Cf. *Laudato si’*, § 70, 120, 138, 240.

³ *Laudato si’*, § 202.

⁴ *L’encyclique Laudato si’ sur le rôle de l’UNESCO sur les questions environnementales*, article of Irina Bokova published in *Culture e Fede*, December 2015.

Instead, let us look together at the evolution of the one concept that is characteristic of this encyclical, and which helps us appreciate the challenges and hopes *Laudato si* addresses.

I shall offer my remarks in three parts:

1. Looking back, I would like briefly to review Catholic social teaching and how it addresses the environment in its fullest sense. For as we know, authentic teaching has a very long pedigree. I shall draw this material from the pontificates of Pope Leo XIII, Blessed Paul VI, St. John Paul II and Pope *emeritus* Benedict XVI. All of these Popes have contributed significantly to a deepened understanding of the human person in his/her world: the relationship between natural and human ecology.
2. Secondly, I shall introduce some brief contributions that Pope Francis has made to the legacy of the Church's teaching on natural and human ecology.
3. Then, turning to *Laudato si*, we can appreciate his teachings on *integral ecology* with all their contemporary relevance, urgency and signs of hope.

Ecology in the Social Teaching of the Church

Our account of Catholic social teaching begins 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, addressing a challenge. 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".⁵

Blessed Paul VI

A milestone was the Encyclical *Populorum progressio* of Pope Paul VI. Issued in 1967, it treated many facets of the development of peoples. Two of its key ideas are 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.⁶ 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."⁷

⁵ Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, Leo XIII (15 May 1891), § 22.

⁶ Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, Paul VI (26 March 1967), §76-78.

⁷ *Populorum progressio*, §25.

In his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens* (May 1971), Pope Paul VI further addressed the inseparable relationship and interdependence between human life and the 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). Paul VI also expressed worries about how the concern to control nature through science could put the human dimension under a parallel, but inappropriate control (§38); about the "new positivism" of "universalized technology" (§29); and about notions of "progress" (§41) that embrace rampant industrialization that could turn persons into "slave(s) of the objects" that they make (§9). The combination of themes in this Apostolic Letter makes it a true precursor of the focus on *integral* thinking of his successors.

In November of the same year and just before the Stockholm Conference (1972) launched the *UN Program on the Environment* (UNEP), Paul VI convoked a Synod on *Justice in the World*, which first gave prominence to the link between *justice* and *ecology*. Its line of thought suggested a close link between *concern for the poor* and a *concern for the earth*, essentially the *cry of the poor* and the *cry of the earth*, and adverted to the *culture of waste* of the rich.⁸

Saint John Paul II

In his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, on the human person, John Paul II warned about the threat of pollution to nature.⁹ Later, in his social encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), on the 20th anniversary of *Populorum progressio*, he focussed on the nature of authentic human development and its moral character. In this regard, he centred on 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*).

The first consideration is about *connectedness*. "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."¹⁰

⁸ *Justice in the World*, §70 (<http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/synodjw.htm>)

⁹ *Redemptor hominis*, §11.

¹⁰ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §34.

The second consideration is that natural resources are **limited**, and not all are renewable. If we treat them as inexhaustible and use them with *absolute dominion*, then we seriously endanger their availability in our own time and, above all, for future generations.

Thirdly, certain models of development in industrialized areas cause **pollution** of the environment, with serious consequences for people's health.¹¹

These considerations form a clear moral message: the demands of morality are a *sine qua non* for the wellbeing of humanity. According to John Paul II, our fundamental conception and application of morality extends to *natural ecology*—the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources, and the consequences of haphazard industrialization.

In 1991, on the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, John Paul II promulgated 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: this being 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.¹²

To correct these faulty ideas, John Paul II pointed out that all of us human beings, 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 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.

Going beyond the *natural environment*, the Holy Father also drew attention to 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. The important "Green" movement is rightly concerned for 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 (life) too is God's gift to us—indeed, it is the greatest gift. For this reason we must respect

¹¹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §34.

¹² Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II (1 May 1991), § 37.

the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The encyclical applies this thought to the serious problems of modern urbanization; it calls for proper urban planning which is concerned with how people are to live, and for attention to a *social ecology* of work.¹³

Based on this expanded social thought on the ecological question, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states that "the relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity",¹⁴ and that the cry of the earth and that of the poor are related.¹⁵ In his *World Day of Peace Message* (1990), 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."¹⁶ This message inspired the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to also write/teach that "ecological harmony cannot exist in a world of unjust social structures; nor can the extreme social inequalities of our current world order result in ecological sustainability."¹⁷

To sum up the contribution of John Paul II on our topic of (environmental) ecology: In Catholic social teaching, respect for the *natural environment* and the *human environment* are inseparably and 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 demands that the *human environment* be respected above all.

Pope Benedict XVI

In the new millennium, Pope Benedict XVI, in his Message for the World Day of Peace (2007), described 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*

¹³ *Centesimus annus*, §38.

¹⁴ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Press, 2005 (reprint 2010), #452

¹⁵ *Idem*, cf. #481-484.

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, "*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*", World Day of Peace Message, 1990, 11.

¹⁷ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops: "*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*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City 2002. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *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. Note the list of studies and pronouncements of other Bishops' Conferences and local Churches.

ecology and *human ecology*. The *ecology of peace* is comprised of peace with creation and peace among men, which presupposes peace with God.¹⁸

The example of energy supplies illustrates the close connection between *natural ecology* and the *human ecology* and the consequences for *peace*. Increased industrial production in recent years has led to increased energy needs. The subsequent unprecedented race for available resources has caused, on an overall basis, a rise in energy prices. Benedict XVI expressed serious concern for those affected, namely, for those suffering in the less developed countries who were excluded, as well as the injustices and conflicts that may be provoked by the race for energy resources. He affirmed the urgent need in international relations for a commitment to *human ecology* that can favour the growth of an *ecology of peace*; and this, he said, can occur only when the human family is guided by a correct understanding of the human person, that is, an understanding that is not prejudiced by ideology or apathy.¹⁹

The following year, during his Apostolic Visit to Australia, Benedict XVI drew attention to the beauty of the *natural environment* created by God. But this natural environment, he went on to observe, now bears scars as well, including erosion, deforestation and the effects of devastating drought. At the same time, the world's mineral and ocean resources are being squandered and water levels are rising.²⁰ He also drew attention to the *human environment*, the highpoint of God's creation, and the genius of human achievement such as advances in medical sciences, the wise application of technology, and creativity reflected in the arts. But the *human or social environment* also has its scars, such as alcohol and drug abuse, the exaltation of violence, sexual degradation and depravity, 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. To this end, according to Benedict XVI, we make our choices and exercise our freedom, knowing that there we find happiness and joy.²¹

In his landmark social encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, Benedict XVI dedicates the entire fourth chapter to the issue of the environment and human existence: "*The Development of Peoples, Rights and Duties, The Environment.*" Fundamentally, "*the way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa.*"²² The relationship between human life, and the natural environment which supports it, is inseparable. It is "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".²³ Furthermore, the *Book of Nature* is one and indivisible, and that it includes not only the environment, but *also*

¹⁸ Benedict XVI *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 January 2007), 8.

¹⁹ *Message* (1 January 2007), 9-11.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Benedict XVI *Address*, Barangaroo, Sydney Harbour (17 July 2008).

²² *Caritas in veritate*, (2009) §51.

²³ *Caritas in veritate*, §50; cf. *Message*, World Day of Peace 2008, §7.

individuals, the family and social ethics. Accordingly, our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person.²⁴ But the "*decisive issue*", in the relationship between man and his world: natural and human ecology, "*is the moral tenor of society*".²⁵

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.²⁶

So the Holy Father called for an *integral understanding* of the world and the human person: one that respects both the created world and the highpoint of creation that is the human person.

Pope Francis on Integral Ecology

Elected three years ago, Pope Francis has rooted his own teaching deeply in the teachings of his predecessors on the relationship between natural and human ecology. He has promoted care for creation, integral human development, and concern for the poor and the aged in his homilies,²⁷ addresses and messages²⁸ at various audiences and events, and in his *Evangelii Gaudium*.²⁹ All this culminated in *Laudato si'* released in mid-June 2015. The second half of 2015 was decisive for our topic: in July, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, in September, the U.N. General Assembly on the Sustainable Development Goals running until 2030, and in December, the COP21, the Climate Change Conference in Paris.

Pope Francis himself offers us the core message of *Laudato si'* in a short video. Let us watch it now.³⁰

The key take-aways from the *Laudato si'* video are clear:

- 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. We have tilled too much and kept too little – with dire consequences for the poor and the planet

²⁴ *Caritas in veritate*, §51. Cf. too, *World Day of peace Message* (2010).

²⁵ *Idem*.

²⁶ Cf. Francis George O.M.I., "Legislation creating 'same-sex' marriage: What's at stake?" Chicago: *Catholic New World*, 6-19 January 2013.

²⁷ The homily of the inaugural mass of his Petrine Ministry, Piazza San Pietro, 19 March, 2013; . *Saint Peter's Square XXVIII World Youth Day: Palm Sunday, 24 March 2013*, §2; "Evangelium vitae" Day, 16 June, 2013 etc.

²⁸ Eg. UN World Environment Day, 5 June, 2013; Pope Francis' meeting with indigenous people during visit to Brazil: http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/27/in_brazil_pope_francis_speaks_out_on_the_amazon_environment_and_indigenous_people.htm

²⁹ *Evangelii gaudium*, § 56, 215-216

³⁰ Spanish: <http://thepopevideo.org/es.html> English: <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/pope-video/>

- And so it is urgent that we change our sense of progress, our management of the economy, and our style of life. This coherent and sustainable approach to life is what we call *integral ecology*.

The foundations of *Laudato si'* are found in the biblical narrative. Genesis teaches us that “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself” (§66). Regarding the relationship with the earth, Pope Francis turns to His Eminence Bartholomew I for his prophetic teaching: “For human beings ... to destroy the biological diversity ... by causing changes in its climate,” by contaminating “the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins” (§ 8), as are ruptures in our relationship with God and with our neighbour. And when one of these relationships is broken, the others are broken too, and our insertion in the universe is no longer integral—it is fractured, fragmented and partial.

On this biblical basis, the path of *Laudato si'* unfolds in great and inter-related detail. The following six points help to convey its essential message:

- All human beings are affected, and everything in nature too, by the crises of climate change, misuse of natural resources, waste and pollution, and attendant poverty and dislocation.
- Everything is interconnected; we cannot understand the social or natural world or any parts of them in isolation.
- Everyone must act responsibly to save our world—from individuals who recycle and use energy sparingly, to enterprises reducing their ecological footprints, to world leaders setting ambitious targets to reduce the use of carbon (as they did at COP21 in Paris), and the effectively implementing and enforcing these deep reforms.
- We must be truthful; let no one hide or distort facts in order to gain selfish advantage.
- We must engage in constructive dialogue; genuine, trusting and trustworthy engagement of all parties is required to succeed where all is at risk.
- We must transcend ourselves in prayer, simplicity and solidarity.

By bringing these perspectives together with their impact on concrete human experience, *Laudato si'* wishes to persuade the world that the moral dimension must be omnipresent. As all the Popes since Paul VI have insisted in various ways, there are no morally neutral decisions about the economy, production, commerce and trade. Such decisions affect both the natural world which is our common home, and all of us inhabitants of that common home.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis lays out five aspects of the great effort needed in order *to reduce our footprint and reverse the deterioration of the natural and social environment*, and so to reshape and assure the future of our planet:

- a. to identify the industrial age's short-sighted confidence in technology and finance. This technocratic paradigm is the conviction that all reality – including human life – consists of objects which people can endlessly manipulate for the sake of profit and without the slightest ethical consideration. This alliance between technology used as a means of power, and an economy obsessed with the short-term maximization of profits, is spread everywhere by globalization and tends to prevail over the political dimension.
- b. to propose a social teaching of the Church that creates awareness about the immensity and urgency of the challenge of the present situation of the world and its poor: the two fragilities which lie at the heart of Pope Francis' *integral ecology*.
- c. to stimulate major shifts in our thinking and commitments—indeed, a self-transformation or conversion of every individual and of groups and institutions at every level, from local communities to global humanity.
- d. to make an urgent appeal for *ecological conversion*, for an *education in ecological citizenship* and for *ethical and spiritual itinerary*. and
- e. with his profound faith and trust in humanity's ability to work together to build a common home, to encourage humanity to respond to the urgent appeal of *Laudato si'*.

Thus, the Encyclical proposes “an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (§15). The paradigm of integral ecology is an inclusive, dynamic proposal to articulate the fundamental relationships of each person with God, with other human beings, and with creation:

When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it... It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions that consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems (§ 139).

Integration is the opposite of fragmentation and isolation: “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live” (§139). Rather than think of our relationship with the natural environment as separate from other spheres of human interest and activity, let us see nature as an integral part of a greater whole which includes the social, political and spiritual, material goods, the economic sphere and so on.

In this Pope Francis resonates loudly the sentiments of his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi "who shows just how inseparable is the bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace". He is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically” (§10).

Then recalling Francis of Assisi' view about the kinship of the human family with nature, Pope Francis asserts that our integration with the universe is inbuilt: “We ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters... We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (§2, 139). From conception to the moment of death, the life of every person is integrated with and sustained by the awesome panoply of natural processes. Humanity must reciprocate – we must nourish and sustain the earth that nourishes and sustains us.

Francis of Assisi points to the integration of the human and the natural, and so does the word *care* in the encyclical's title. The terminology of *stewardship* appears only twice, but *care* comes up dozens of times. This bespeaks an intimate relationship that goes beyond jobs and accountability. Stewards can work within the boundaries of their responsibilities, and not deal with what falls outside those boundaries. This is to operate within a silo. But if I *care*, I look to the objects of my care – my children, my community, my world – and I see no absolute boundaries to my engagement. I might even die for them!

“Everything is closely interrelated,” says Pope Francis, “and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” (§137). Therefore, “we urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics” and science (climate science) etc. “in the service of a more integral and integrating vision.” (§141)³¹ When we embrace *integral ecology*, we avoid silo thinking in favour of interconnection and holism. Only interconnection will let us “find adequate ways of solving the more complex problems of today's world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor; these problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests” (§110). No branch of science, no form of wisdom -- including culture, religion and spirituality -- should be neglected (cf §63). “Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, and of how individuals relate to themselves.” (§141).

Building on this core idea, Pope Francis explores integral ecology in several areas of application. It comprehends “our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings”, in the varied aspects of our life, in economy and politics, in various cultures, in particular those which are most threatened, and in every moment of our daily lives.

³¹ Cf. How Pope Benedict XVI encourages dialogue between *faith and* reason. The anniversary of the Assisi Day of Prayer in 2013 was celebrated as a pilgrimage: “faith and reason in pilgrimage for truth.”

In the contemporary world, where “injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable”, working for the common good means to make choices in solidarity based on “a preferential option for the poorest” (§158).

The common good also regards future generations: “we can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity” (§159). Here, in the context of integral ecology, Pope Francis invokes *care for our children* to formulate his pivotal question about the environment: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (§160).

Conclusions

In conclusion, let me observe: As we confront the threat of an environmental catastrophe on a global scale, I am confident that a shaft of light has already begun to break through the many heavy clouds about ecology, and to bring us what Pope Francis describes as the warmth of hope! Most importantly,

- as we gathered in Addis Abeba to consider how together we can pool resources to promote sustainable development,
- as we gathered in New York, at the Plenary Assembly of the UN, to adopt a global agenda (SDG's), centered on people and on the planet,³²
- as we gathered here in Paris (July 2015) at a conference to awaken "*consciencences for climate*", and went on to agree (in an accord) at the COP21 (December 2015) to contain temperature rise within 1.5° to 2°, and then went on to show our commitment, appending our signatures at the UN early this year,
- as we gather again in Marrakesh (November 7-18) for the implementation of COP21,

we become ***together*** revolutionaries of tenderness and sympathy, overcoming the world's pervasive indifference and inequities with *care for the earth, our common home, and its poor*. Thus, if *hope generates energy which stimulates the intellect and gives the will all its dynamism*,³³ then the Encyclical Letter: *Laudato si, on the care for our common home* is itself the ***hope*** that initiates a millennium of respect for life, of our care for God's creation, of our care for the poor in solidarity and justice, and, particularly, of peace.

³² It was about protecting the human rights of people and the ecosystem of the planet. The SDGs were presented as "*the road to dignity*" by the UN secretary General. As he said: "[We] have an historic opportunity and duty to act, boldly, vigorously and expeditiously, to turn reality into a life of dignity for all, leaving no one behind. The SDGs are a reaffirmation of the UN's faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, and taking the world forward to a sustainable future. It is, then, about making a life of dignity a reality for all: a compelling and a principled narrative, based on human rights and dignity. (Cf. Ban Ki-Moon, *Synthesis Report, The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet*, UN general Assembly, New York, 4 December 2014).

³³ Pope Benedict XVI, Address, Presidential Palace, Cotonou 19/11/2011 (Meeting with Government Members, Representatives of State Institutions, Diplomatic Corps and Major Religions).

"We received the earth as a garden from the hands of the Creator, let us not pass it on to those who come after us as wilderness, a desert! "

Thank you all for your kind attention!

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
President