



## Learning to Care for Creation

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The Holy Father Francis in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi has expressed his grave concerns for the care of our common home, the earth or the ‘earthy community’ in this encyclical. He is not telling us something radically new, but has mirrored and amplified the feeble voices that were unheard: the concerns from the earth, the ecology and the place of humanity in all creation. He talks at a time when we today are trapped in our human-made urban technological complex, built on a reductive science that narrows life to a materialistic and consumeristic way of life.

Pope Francis reminds us that this whole creation existed before us and will continue to exist after us and yet creation acted as womb to birth humanity and consciousness. He asks the very primal question that each generation asks: Why does creation exist in this first place? Why do we exist at all? Does our urban technological complex have the answers? Stephen Hawking in his studies of the Big-Bang, was perplexed by these same questions. He even asked: “Why do we exist in the first place?” Then he added: “What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?” We today have very many equations for life but have quenched the fire of our souls to breathe back life into them. It is time now to rediscover the moral foundations of our world, creation and humanity.


The Pope describes our contemporary reality and its human condition. He talks about poverty and gross inequalities which wastes human potential, weakens the entire community and puts

the whole family at risk, diminishing their hopes for better lives, and make them insignificant throughout the world. This world today has great technology that has created the possibilities of globalization, but what we are, in fact, globalizing is the free market, structural unfreedom, greed, competition, poverty and inequality. It has no space for the poor, marginalized, the vulnerable. What exists is the addictive consumeristic market and the few rich. Today we have the technology for a global positioning system which helps us to find our way in time and space, but in other ways it has made us unable to find our ethical coordinates and the spiritual vision that would help us find a place in human solidarity. The Pope has summoned us to this commitment, to generate the “interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity” (216). He holds that “the external deserts in the world are growing because the internal deserts have become vast. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion” (272), a change in our lifestyle in which we learn to care, love and befriend each other and the whole creation as brothers and sisters. The figure of St. Francis of Assisi makes us realize that a healthy relationship with creation can bring about healing to our wounded civilization (219). It is a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works. It entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion” (220).

Early in the 1960’s Lewis Mumford voiced the same concerns as the present Pope when he said that for an effective salvation, humankind will need to undergo a spontaneous religious conversion: one that will replace the mechanical pictures of the world with an organic world picture and the human personality as the highest known manifestation of life. Such a view will respect a thinking which is ecological and organic and which adopts the needs for not only humans nor of any one generation, but of all organic partners and all of their habitat. Such a new

organic mode of ecological associating and self-organisation, is what the Pope calls for.

As the world has become less organic and more dependent on techno-fixes for problems created by early technologies, humans have substituted new world-views for the earlier one, which was filled with clean streams, animals, the sky, the stars. This was the world-view of people working together with a sacred purpose. Now we need a collective psychological and spiritual process to heal us, technological people, who through a mechanical culture have lost touch with their essential humanity.

Finally, the Pope in this encyclical resonates with the sentiments of the Tamil Siddha poet: “The rich build temples, but the poor sadhaka turns his body into a temple.” .

### Quotes from *Laudato Si'*

- “Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness.” (230)
- “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (14).