

## INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND THE DAUGHTERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This article has been written during the context of the worldwide spread of the virus Covid19 and the impact it has had on our lives. Then, there is the ever-present reality of racism with the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis US followed by the worldwide protests which highlights the urgent need to tackle prejudice and promote the dignity of every person. On a positive note, the worldwide celebration with joy and appreciation, of the fifth anniversary of the encyclical Laudato Si. It was appropriate that this letter addressed to every person living on our planet was signed by Pope Francis, on the feast of Pentecost 2015 since the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life.

These “events” can be seen as a Wakeup Call to Repent! To turn our lives around, to have a new mind and heart- a conversion -” an integral ecological conversion”.

Laudato Si - Praise be to you...” God of our ancestors, God of mercy, You who made all things by Your Word and in Your wisdom have established us to care for the creatures produced by You, in holiness and justice, and to render judgement in integrity of heart”. Wisdom 9:1-3

There is a wealth of psalms, songs, poetry, reading, images which could be used to reflect and praise the wonder and beauty of our world, “our sister Mother Earth”, our common home. However, I have chosen a song that always moves me, and I feel a tingle of a smile each time I hear it. It is sung by the legendary Louis Armstrong (listen to it if you can) It simply expresses the wonder of our world with its beauty and harmony.

*I see trees of green, red roses too.*

*I see them bloom for me and for you*

*And I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

*I see skies of blue, clouds of white*

*Bright blessed days, dark sacred nights*

*And I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

*The colours of the rainbow so pretty in the sky*

*Are also on the faces of the people walking by*

*I see friends shaking hands saying, "How do you do?"*

*They're really saying "I love you"*

*I hear babies cry; I watch them grow*

*They'll learn much more than I'll ever know*

*And I think to myself what a wonderful world*

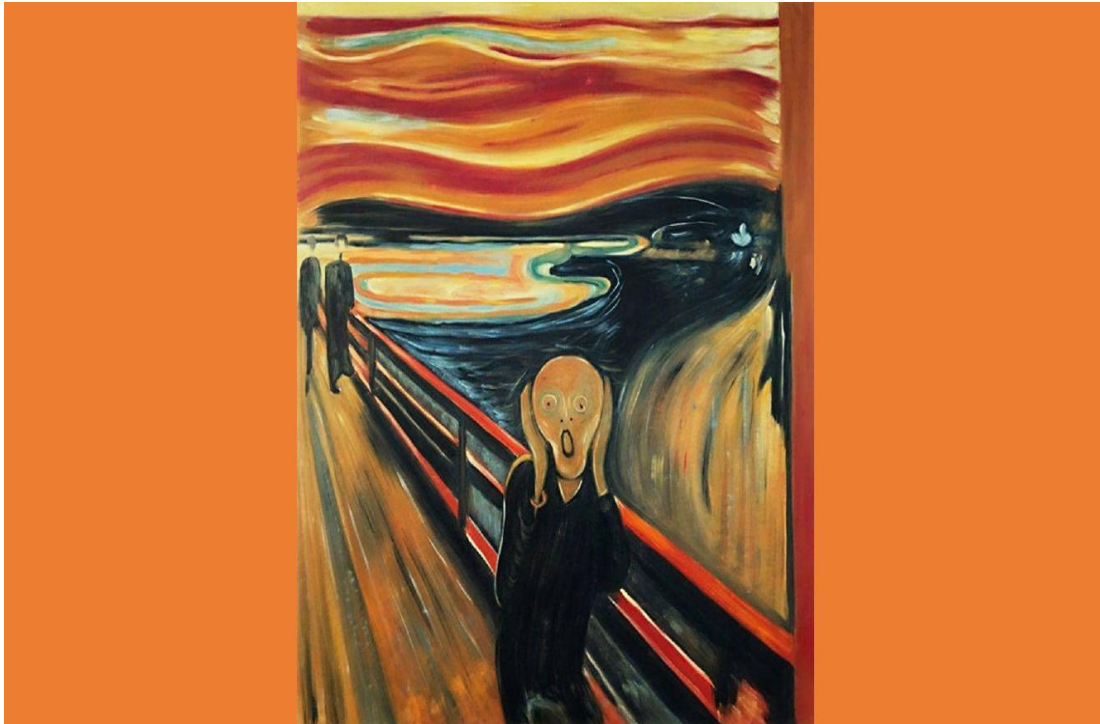
*Yes, I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

Creation is God's first and primordial revelation- the very first epiphany of God.

Beauty of nature, wonders of the universe, diversity, peace, harmony, time for people to really meet, children of the future generation..... BUT What is happening to our" wonderful world "? Due to pollution," the earth, our home is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth"LS21

Our earth cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her, by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods God has endowed her. The extensive use of fossil fuels and the destruction of natural habitats have had negative effects on our climate. "Nature is sending us a message with the corona pandemic and ongoing climate change." (Inger Anderson UN environment chief). Destructive practices such as logging, mining, industrial farming which drives wild animals into contact with people must be reviewed, live animal markets, an ideal mixing bowl for disease must end. Rising sea levels, melting icebergs, ocean acidification, unusual rain patterns, drought, famines, forest fires, the disappearance of fauna and animals all affect peoples in harmful ways leading to enforced migrations, refugees and all the perilous implications. "Sister Earth along with all the abandoned of our world is crying out pleading that we take another course" LS 53

This painting by Edvard Munch symbolizes pain, despair, a certain agony and outcry. It is both noisy and quiet- because the Scream is silent while the sound waves seem to permeate the very contours of the painting, distorting all that surrounds it. The Scream is apparently not heard by the two people on the bridge in the background... Are we hearing the Scream/Cry of the Earth, the Scream/Cry of the Poor all around us?



We are not faced with two separated crises,” the two cries one environmental and the other social, but rather a complex crisis that is both environmental and social. In chapter IV of *Laudato Si* Pope Francis outlines his vision of strategies for a solution that demands an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature and fostering sustainable development LS 139. A vision that is capable of taking” into account every aspect of the global crisis” LS 137, by offering a number of different ways of seeing and understanding the world- an Integral Ecology. An ecology that sees the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, political, social, cultural and ethical issues. In the spirit of St Francis of Assisi, our Pope sees an integral ecology that calls for an openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology and takes us to the heart of what it is to be human lived out joyfully and authentically.

Indeed, an integral ecology that must allow not only for the data regarding what can be measured, weighed and calculated LS 199 but also explores the meaning and values accessible through human imagination using artistic creativity, faith, moral experience and compassion. Pope Francis is encouraging us to “zoom out” and see the context in which we live. Trying to look at the big picture is a difficult task, so he offers several different ways of seeing and understanding our world, theological, environmental, economic, social,

cultural, patterns of daily life, personal dignity. Each of them represents a specific way of connecting people or one could say a different “ecology”. That is the study of the complex totality of conditions necessary for the survival living organisms in an environment eg a fish could not survive in a desert!

He also says that in our present-day realities the patterns of connecting to each other do not make it possible for EVERYONE to live well. By EVERYONE he also includes future generations What kind of a world do you want to leave to your children? He states too that not all kind of interconnectedness is for the common good. Another important point he makes is that he is not saying that there is one perfect readymade plan that can solve all our problems. He wants us to respect our local circumstances and cultural heritage and build from the ground up in a way that integrates every important aspect of life.

How does the very ethos of integral ecology as outlined in Chapter IV of Laudato Si encounter our lives as Daughters of the Holy Spirit? Let us reflect on our charism, spirituality, vows, mission and lifestyle in relation to the explanation of this ecology given by Pope Francis.

“Laudato Si mi Signore” – “Praise be to You my Lord “. The encyclical invites us to orient our understanding of ecology toward praise of God specifically the Trinitarian God and all our endeavours in all of creation ought to be directed toward the same. It is unusual to connect concerns of an ecological outlook to the doctrine of the Trinity! However, with the aim of developing an integral ecology, Laudato Si makes a connection between the care of our common home and the Trinitarian life of God. “The Divine Persons are subsistent relations and the world created according to the Divine Model is a web of relationships “. The same article LS 240 continues “The human person grows more, matures more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures the trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. “

“In the first chapter and first article of our Rule of Life we read “Open to the Spirit, the (the first Daughters of the Holy Spirit) found in the adoration of the Trinity.... The source of that love that gave them life. “This, our founding charism has been enriched by the spiritual experience of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Briouze, “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the

full “Jn 10:10, and again by the charism of the Sisters Hospitallers of the Holy Spirit of Poligny: a call to live universal love according to the Gospel Matthew 25:31-46. Do we not hear echoes of the orientation of Pope Francis’ integral ecology?

This is a web of relationships that connects all of creation. The chapter on our vow of celibacy sees this vow in the light of the importance of relationships.” Celibacy for the sake of the Gospel calls us to stress the importance of human relationships....to create conditions which enable people to meet and communicate “RoL14 We have yet to add “a relationship with the whole of creation”. Our vow of Poverty is expressed thus, (Jesus) “calls us, in following Him to be poor and to stand in solidarity with the poor “RoL 16 Our vow of poverty is not simply spiritual but incarnational focused on promoting God’s Kingdom on earth – the common good. It is a public statement of our option for the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable in God’s name. Matthew 25:31-46 is an important text for us, it is on the title page of our Rule of Life. We re-direct some of our resources to those in need, to alleviate their dehumanizing state in life. Our vow of poverty exists for others, we have heard their cries.....Now we are called to hear the cries of all of creation...” We must hear the cry of the poor and make it our own, try and find out what breeds injustice and poverty in our society, and in a new awareness, confront our discoveries with the demands of the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church “RoL18 Finally our vow of obedience in discerning our mission, “The Spirit speaks to us in many ways....In fidelity to our charism, we believe that he also speaks to us with particular urgency through the distress of the poor and the efforts of those who work for justice and peace”RoL30 Now we must speak of” eco - justice. “

The threatening reality of climate change has yet to seriously impinge on our church communities worldwide. Political and economic decision makers almost ignore the extent to which the insatiable demands of our global economy are thoroughly tearing apart the web of life with disastrous consequences as seen in the beginning of this article. We have for many years in the Congregation a Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission in each unit, which has worked to raise awareness of the global violation of the rights of the environment and of nature. However now more than ever we must address this issue. The third orientation of the General Chapter of 2014-a year before the publication of Laudato Si:

“Let us discern the calls of the Spirit. Our world carries many strong forces for life. We must also listen to its cries and spot its brokenness. Let us enter into conversation with this world where the Holy Spirit is calling us to become involved, such as the plight of displaced persons or families in difficulties.” A “brokenness in the relations with the web of life. The Common Document of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit Spiritual Family written in 2018 embraces the call to care for our Common home as part of our mission.

- To work with shared responsibility in our works and social involvements, political, economic environmental. Cultural and religious as a contribution to the process of renewing the face of the earth.
- To work in networks, with others constructing alternatives paths. which have as a goal the integral development of the person and his or her cultural and natural environment, going against the current of the logic of the economy and neoliberal market?
- To promote bonds of solidarity on justice in all our places of mission in order to contribute to the elimination of the social injustice, violence corruption and destruction of our “Common Home”.
- To participate actively and responsibly to the care and defence of our “Common Home” with creativity and boldness by small means or grand actions which take place in our neighbourhood, towns countries, wherever is our mission. “The strength of our Mission” Pages 67, and 70

An analysis of environmental problems is linked to the “analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts and also how individuals relate to themselves, which leads to how they relate to others and the environment” LS 145

“They lived simply among the people, together they formed a “house of charity”. RoL 1 Our mission as Daughters of the Holy Spirit is defined by the choices we make:” We believe that the Spirit of Jesus....is at work in our world, bringing into being a new creation. And we believe that the Spirit calls us to share in this work.... We become particularly sensitive to those who suffer, whose dignity is not recognized who are not loved.... we pay special attention to the underprivileged...we work with all those who seek to restore in the world relationships characterised by justice and fraternal love.” RoL 3

We must respect the culture of the people with whom we live and work. “As life and the world are dynamic realities, so our care for the world

must also be flexible and dynamic.” LS 144 This is mirrored in our Rule of Life Supplement article 10. “the diversity of beliefs and convictions is a richness... We are open to this diversity when we know how to listen, to respect the convictions and welcome the initiatives of those who do not think as we do and participate with them in joint action for the service of humanity”. Laudate Si pays special attention and care for the indigenous communities and their traditions. In “Querida Amazonia”, Pope Francis outlines the new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology. Blessed by the God given diversity of life and creation, we are asked to be stewards not consumers. This obliges us to enable all God’s creation, human, wildlife and environmental to flourish in equality, fairness, justice and peace – so that all may have life in all its fulness.

Contemplation leads to transformation.” For us there is no mission without adoration, without calling on the Spirit to renew the face of the earth “RoL 10... our prayer embraces the life concerns of the people we live ...the cry of those who suffer...RoL34. The General Chapter of 2002 states “called by the Spirit of Pentecost let us rise up as women of peace and reconciliation to foster life... to this we could think “with all of creation”.

Within our liturgies we can include current ecological concerns. We could celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, the Seasons of Creation 1stSeptember-4<sup>th</sup> October.... There comes into use our creativity and commitment to endless suggestion and possibilities. The worldwide protest movement that followed the murder of George Floyd could be heard as a call to reflect with others, on the Bible from the context of those of us in our diverse worlds, who are reading it in search of the Good News and suffering racial prejudice. 1 Peter2:1-17. Do not our communities and our places of mission reflect different cultures?

We can vote for politicians who are committed to an effective sustainable climate and environment protection. We can use our power of advocacy to lobby parliament, raise awareness by protests, the distribution of leaflets, or merely sign a petition in this vein. However, we need both systemic transformation and individual behaviour changes, the two work together. It will not be an “overnight change”. Let us prepare for the long haul! Yet “You are never too small to make a difference” said Greta Thunberg, the young climate change advocate.

Again, let us remember “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” Margaret Mead. Animo! Bon Courage! Go for it.....

In our lifestyle as Daughters of the Holy Spirit, how do we move or continue to move towards an “integral ecological conversion?” “God is in the bits and pieces of everyday” says the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh. Fundamentally for us there are two ways in our everyday life in which we affect the rest of creation; by what we use and what we throw away. This could be looked at in all contexts at home, in our places of mission, what we eat, our travel options, shop, build or vote. Could we not improve the quality of life in our neighbourhood - support Food Banks, stop and admire the beauty of nature around us, use less water, less plastic, turn waste land into communal gardens, support efforts for better housing and public transport, embrace and live slogans such as Go Green at home! Reduce Reuse Recycle ... Indeed, the biggest challenge of Laudato Si is being aware that each person has a responsibility who or where ever we are “Whatever be our situation.... we can always live the mission which is ours as Daughters of the Holy Spirit “ RoL 11 Are we “ingenious in finding ways to serve others” RoL1 “ others “ now includes all of creation.

Living such a conversion in the power of the Holy Spirit sets us on a great adventure of mind and heart, expanding the repertoire of our love and relationships. All justice becomes an eco-justice, that embraces and includes the big challenges of creation. We must all work for the building up of the kingdom of God, God’s Household. the Common Good call it what you will for this is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allows social groups,,,,, ready access to their own fulfilment”LS 156. We must speak of “intergenerational solidarity.” For the earth is on loan to each generation which it must pass on to the next” Portuguese Bishops Conference2003. “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, the children who are growing up?” LS 160.” I hear babies cry I see them grow..... “Pope Francis says near the end of Laudato Si “Let ours be remembered as a time for the awakening of a new reverence for life, a firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of Life “ LS 207



## TO WEAVERS EVERYWHERE

God is weeping,  
the beautiful creation tapestry  
she wove with such joy  
is mutilated, torn into shreds  
reduced to rags  
its beauty fragmented by force.  
God is weeping  
But look  
She is gathering up the shreds to weave something new  
God sits weaving  
Patiently and persistently  
With a smile that radiates like a rainbow  
On her tear-streaked face.  
And She invites us  
Not only to keep offering her shreds and rags of our suffering  
And our work  
But even more-  
To take our place beside Her  
At the loom and weave with her  
The tapestry of a new creation.

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