

### III. Earth Stewardship and *Laudato Si'* Annotated Outline

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#### **Introduction** (p 271)

The Stewardship Tradition—emerging in antiquity and continuing through the 18<sup>th</sup> century—was given remarkable new life by *Laudato Si'—On Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis.

#### **Scientific and Religious Endorsements** (p 272)

The Ecological Society of America presidents named it “an eloquent plea for responsible Earth Stewardship...” that “will lead to serious dialogue among--and action by--the world's religious, political and scientific leaders.” This support was joined by NRPE partners: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Evangelical Environmental Network, National Council of Churches of Christ, & Coalition on Environment & Jewish Life

#### **Stewardship as a Culture of Care** (p 273)

In his Encyclical Pope Francis wrote: “We have been handed “a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about...” our relationship to the Earth “should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.” Stewardship is a culture of care—a “relación de reciprocidad”—that returns ecosystem and biospheric services with grateful and sustaining services by all people and their institutions.

#### **Appointed to Serve and to Keep** (p 274)

Genesis 1:28—the verse taken by some to support mastery—is given clarity in the context of Genesis 2:15 which explicitly appoints the gardener to serve and keep the garden even as it implicitly recognizes that the garden serves and keeps the gardener.

#### **Stewardship as Reciprocating Con-Service** (p 275)

People's reciprocal relationship with the Earth can be broken and “media and the digital world...can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously.” Knowledge of stewardship and supporting ethics must be made fully accessible to all and applied to correct real or impending degradation of people and environment” allowing response to “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

#### **Global Crisis and Praxis** (p 276)

*Krisis* is “the turning-point of a disease for better or worse” and mere data collection or synthesis is not enough; *appropriate action* is necessary. Our challenge is to engage with the “technocratic paradigm” to reform it or replace it with the new paradigm of “integral ecology.” We must press on to the goal of sustaining life on Earth.

#### **Disciplinary Fragmentation** (p 277)

“[T]oday's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis...”—one that “clearly respects its human and social dimensions.” Of particular importance is the assertion by Francis that “the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.”

**Integral Ecology** (p 278)

“Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources... To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem as it comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system.”

**Praxis and Action Forcing** (p 278)

“The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis.” However, a means for achieving this culture can be found in a policy that is incorporated into the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969—a *forcing mechanism* that integrates science, ethics and praxis in a way that produces the need to know not only of natural systems and their human impacts, but also human societies, including those in poverty.

**Awe and Wonder** (p 280)

Beyond our stewardship of the biosphere, and of law and culture, it is vital to maintain our awe and wonder for the world in which we live and work. Citing his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis speaks of an approach to what it means to be human, with an “openness to awe and wonder” and speaking “the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world” so that care for the world “will well up spontaneously.”

**Wonder and Climate** (p 280)

Astronomer, Frank Very marveled: “we find the atmosphere playing the part of a conservator of thermal energy, and must gratefully admire the beneficent arrangement which permits the Earth to be clothed with verdure and abundant life.” This *conservator* role is played both by condensing (evaporating) gases, primarily water vapor—and non-condensing (non-evaporating) gases, primarily carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The *thermostat* role of the atmosphere is played by non-condensing gases (primarily CO<sub>2</sub>), whose removal results in a frozen Earth— contrasting with condensing gases (primarily water vapor) whose removal only briefly *diminishes* their conservator role until restored by evaporation. The *re-distributor* role is principally played by condensing gases (primarily water vapor), even as these depend on non-condensing gases for their abundance.

**Carbon and Climate** (p 282)

Human industrial activity is causing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to increase at a geologically unprecedented rate a Symposium of the Swedish Academy reports. But does this matter? Pope Francis reminds us, “As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear... Such evasiveness serves as a license to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption. This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices, trying not to see them... pretending nothing will happen.”

**Praised Be . . .** (p 283)

We respond because we care deeply for this Earth and the marvelous wonder of our common home.

**Concluding with 37 References**

All statements in quotation marks are from *Laudato Si'* unless otherwise indicated. See: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) for full text of *Laudato Si'—On Care for Our Common Home*