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Editorial

Laudato Sí

Pope Francis's *Laudato Sí* (LS), the first encyclical that is fully dedicated to the ecological crisis, is already considered as one of the most significant encyclicals of modern times. In recent years, many documents of the Church have dealt with the ecological crisis. However, that an encyclical is completely set aside for the discussion on the ecological crisis itself shows the Church's awareness of the seriousness of this crisis and the urgency to respond to it.

Although, the primary target audience of an encyclical is the Catholic community, LS is not limited to the Catholic community. It is "On Care of Our Common Home," the common home of all. So, no one is excluded from its consideration. Drawing inspiration from other Christian Churches, other religions and cultures, and from the world of science, it engages in a dialogue with all people of good will, and invites all to be active participants in this dialogue on the care of our common home. Not only in its content, in its style and approach, LS is unique; the style is basically dialogical, invitational and inclusive. Thus, it shows the way for engaging in dialogue with the wider society today. Not only Catholics, but the society as a whole has acclaimed it as a ground-breaking document.

Although LS draws on data from various branches of science, it is not intended to be a document on the scientific aspects of the ecological crisis. It is basically theological, and belongs to the body of the social teaching of the Church (LS, 15). Ecological crisis is basically a crisis of the human society, and hence the remedy is to be sought in the conversion of the human society. LS points out the need of national and international collaboration in facing the ecological crisis, but makes it clear that without internal conversion of human beings any such effort will be futile. It calls for a new spirituality, an

ecological spirituality, which demands new attitudes to the created world, to other human beings, to human society as a whole, especially to the poor and the marginalised. Without doubt, LS also is another proof of Pope Francis's preferential option for the poor.

December 2015 issue of *Asian Horizons* is dedicated to the discussion on LS. There are articles from various contexts, dealing with various aspects of the ecological crisis and creative proposals for taking care of our common home. The first two articles attempt to introduce LS. Sandie Cornish examines the context in which the encyclical was issued, its purpose and audience. She explains its methodology, main concerns, and its contribution to the body of Catholic Social Teaching and how it can be helpful in the pastoral action. Cornish reflects on how LS is especially relevant for Asia. Kevin Kelly, a veteran moral theologian, gives a reflective summary of LS. He cites various passages from LS, with his own insightful comments, as well as those of a few commentators. Thus, the article is much more than a summary, highlighting the basic social perspectives emphasised by the encyclical, and the focus on a just society. In this reflective summary, Kelly also underscores the ecological spirituality proposed by LS.

A. Alangaram presents some of the ecological concerns in Christian traditions and shows how LS is in line with this tradition. Though the present ecological crisis and the response to it are new, in the Christian tradition we can find a spirituality in harmony with the nature. Similar ecological concerns can be found in other religious traditions as well. In the multi-religious context of Asia, ecological concern in various religious traditions is an important area of interreligious dialogue. He also emphasises that the poor suffer more due to ecological degradation, and that justice should become a key concern in the 'care for our common home.' Alangaram gives examples of creative steps taken for a changed attitude and action to protect the environment. Jeffrey Goh points out that in LS, Pope Francis succeeds in showing that the poor deserve a special place in God's creation and explores the place of the Poor in LS from anthropological, ecclesial, and socio-political lenses. According to him, LS calls for an "ecological conversion" at every level of human life so that the cry of the earth and of the Poor may be heard and remedied. D.J. Margaret, FMA warns that if humans continue to oppress the poor and to destroy the ecosystems, we will soon run out of balance of our life on this universe. She argues that the option for the poor and the earth are interrelated and underlines the need for carefully coordinated

solutions based on a morally, ethically and ecologically coherent world view. D.J. Margaret calls for a right education in ecological care and genuine concern for the poor, and says that “nature will truly enjoy its second spring only when humanity has compassion for its own members.”

Cletus U. Obijiaku disagrees with the argument that anthropology of the Judeo-Christian scripture is the cause of environmental degradation. Based on exegetical-hermeneutical analysis of some of the biblical passages and drawing inspiration from LS, he shows that the Bible or Christianity does not hold a ‘tyrannical anthropocentric’ view. On the other hand, it is modern anthropocentrism that has done havoc to ecology. He calls for the recognition of the presence of the divine immortal spirit in all things and shows how such a vision can become basis for an authentic environmental theology. Anthony J. Kelly, CSsR considers the Eucharist in relationship to the theory and practice of integral ecology. According to him, the Eucharist helps us overcome dualistic approaches and thus stimulates our ecological perspectives. The Eucharist is the ever-renewable resource in a world of non-renewable resources.

Cristina Richie analyzes LS and two preceding Catholic documents that discuss the idea of the common good from an environmental perspective. Situating LS in the tradition of the Catholic Social Teaching, she argues that the Church teaching on the common good includes the environment. According to her, “The pursuit of the common good must include the entire planet because all creatures exist in one, irreplaceable world that is limited and finite.” Richie identifies carbon reduction as a primary way to care for the common good. Reginald Alva discusses how the contemporary society, in the name of development, is endangering the environment. Environmental degradation is often justified under the garb of rationalization. LS, on the contrary, challenges this false rationalization and proposes to build a harmonious world, where everyone and everything created feels accepted and loved. Reginald Alva underscores the need of dialogue among religions and among various branches of knowledge, and the need of an inclusive model of development.

Analysing the deforestation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Léocadie Lushombo says that it is not only a Congolese and central African issue, but is also a global problem. She explains how the destruction of tropical forests influences the planetary climate and the

ways deforestation directly affects climate change in the world. Her article also discusses critical ethical issues of deforestation in light of LS. Lushombo proposes community forestry as an effective way of responding to Pope Francis' call for an overall approach to deal with climate change. Alex Muyebe, SJ and Peter Henriot, SJ discuss what LS means to Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. Malawi faces serious climate change problems caused by deforestation, and hence, LS, which recognises the reality of climate change and its impact on the poor, is very relevant to Malawi. They also present some of the efforts taken to respond to climate change.

Valerian Mendonca argues that a combination of the insights of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Alfred North Whitehead will produce a new intersubjective relational understanding of God, the world and the human community, and that this can lay a metaphysical foundation for the vision of an integral ecology. He explains how this can help us in responding to LS's call for an integral ecology.

Following these articles on *Laudato Si*, we have two other articles on other themes. Based especially on *Dei verbum* Shinto Puthumattathil George, CMI analyzes the Catholic Church's historical progression of discourse on the particular role of revelation, scripture and tradition. Francis Appiah-Kubi reflects on the revealed knowledge about marriage and family life in the light of the theology of the Church Family of God.

LS has been widely discussed in the Church and the wider society. However, only with concerted efforts and committed action coming from a deep conversion of heart we can expect real changes. LS also points out the need of ecological education that has to take place in a variety of settings (LS, 213, 214). Care for our Common home should become an urgent concern of all of us.

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