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CARBON REDUCTION AS CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME: *LAUDATO SÍ*, CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING, AND THE COMMON GOOD

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Abstract

The environmental crisis is a concern for all people and must be addressed effectively and creatively to ensure a reversal of climate change. Now, particularly with the addition of *Laudato Sí* into the corpus of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), there is reason to include ecology in the conceptualization of the common good. In this article I will analyze three Catholic writings that discuss the idea of the common good from an environmental perspective. I will profile the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's *Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* (2001), Benedict XVI's *World Day of Peace Message: If You Want to Cultivate Peace*, *Protect Creation* (2010) and the ground breaking encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí: On Care for Our Common Home* (2015), arguing that Church teachings on the common good include the environment. I will identify carbon reduction as a primary way to care for the common good. Policies that reduce carbon emissions can be enacted through subsidiarity and differentiated responsibilities, both of which are emphasized in CST. I

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will conclude by reiterating that the environment is part of the common good in Catholic Social Teaching, most recently expressed in *Laudato Sí.*

Keywords: *Laudato Sí*, Catholic Social Teaching, Climate Change, Carbon Reduction, Subsidiarity, Differentiated Responsibilities

1. Introduction

John Locke argued that "God has given us all things richly, 1 Tim 6:17"[1] and therefore "the plenty of natural provision… (must be) keeping within the bounds, set by reason, of what might serve for his use."[2] Yet humans have violated this law, laid down from the beginning of time. The unrestricted capabilities of humankind have dominated the habitats of other creatures in an exploitative way since the industrial revolution. Concern over the deterioration of the environment has been a major feature of ethics over the last half century.[3] We are living in a community of creatures. We are human and non-human, locally, and internationally. "Globalization implies that we think of the common good differently,"[4] noted Lisa Sowle Cahill in 2004. That is, we are aware of the needs and contributions of people across the state, the country, and the continent. Our provincial view of "community" is no longer the village we were raised in. Rather, we recognize that all people are connected through commerce, digital technology, and shared planet. Now, particularly with the addition of *Laudato Sí* (LS)[5] into the corpus of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), there is reason to include ecology in the conceptualization of the common good and "acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face" (LS, 15). The pursuit of the common good must include the entire planet because all creatures exist in one, irreplaceable world that is limited and finite.

The environmental crisis is a concern of all people and must be addressed effectively and creatively to ensure a reversal of climate change. In this article I will analyze three Catholic writings that discuss the idea of the common good from an environmental perspective. I will profile the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's *Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common*

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[1]John Locke*, Second Treaties of Government*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1980, 20. These bounds are established by 1. How much one can use before it spoils and 2. Whatever one has mixed their own labour with, in order to claim it as property.

[2]John Locke*, Second Treaties of Government*, 21.

[3]Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967) 1203-1207.

[4]Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Bioethics and the Common Good*, Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004, 19.

[5]Francis, *Laudato Sí*: *On Care for Our Common Home*, Rome: Vatican Press, 2015.

Good (2001), Benedict XVI's "World Day of Peace Message: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation" (2010) and the ground breaking encyclical of Pope Francis, LS (2015), arguing that Church teachings on the common good include the environment. As such, it is the responsibility of people of good will to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem for all. I will identify carbon reduction as a primary way to care for the common good. Policies that reduce carbon emissions can be enacted through subsidiarity and differentiated responsibilities, both of which are emphasized in Catholic Social Teaching. I will conclude the article by reiterating the teaching that the environment is part of the common good in CST, most recently expressed in LS.

2. Catholic Social Teaching on the Common Good

Catholic Social Teaching articulates a notion of the common good that is concerned with building a more just society around two basic values: the dignity of the person and the well being of society. The common good includes fair use of the natural world for all people. In the last half-century, emphasis on the good of the entire world has taken on ecological contours.[6] CST indicates, "God intended the earth and everything in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should flow fairly to all."[7] Of particular interest for this article is Catholic Social Teaching on the common good, with emphasis on documents that consider the environment.

2.1. Background on the Common Good

The concept of the common good has been a prominent aspect of social philosophy since Plato,[8] Aristotle,[9] and Cicero.[10] It has extended through the work of Augustine,[11] Aquinas,[12] John Locke,[13]

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[6]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good," 15 June 2001, at http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/global-climate-change-a-plea-for-dialogue-prudence-and-the-common-good.cfm

[7]Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples* (1967), 22. The Pope is quoting from a council that took place a year prior, Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (1966), 69.

[8]Plato, *The Republic*, Richard Sterling and William Scott, trans., New York: W.W. Norton, 1985, 185.

[9]Aristotle, *Politics*, Ernest Barker, trans., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 1188–1189.

[10]Cicero, *De Re Publica*, C.W. Keyes, trans., Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1928, bk. 1 ch. xxv.

[11]Augustine, *City of God*, Henry Bettenson, trans., London: Penguin, 1972, book XIX.

[12]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* 2ndedition, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Kevin Knight, ed., (Online Edition, 2008), II-II, q. 58, art. 7.

[13]John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1980.

and Jacques Maritain,[14] among others. The common good can be defined in a number of ways, but perhaps the most well-known Catholic expression is found in *Mater et Magistra*, which defines the common good as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."[15] Essentially, the common good adjudicates claims between individuals and society.

In the common good, the rights and preferences of the individual are held in tension with the ideal that all people in a society will flourish. *Gaudium et spes* identifies the common good as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment... and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race."[16] This balance ensures that individuals do not become a cog in wheel — thus reducing a person with dignity to an inhuman component of society. It also builds a well-ordered society, which supports cooperation in many dimensions of political, domestic, economic, and recreational life. The common good is one dimension of ecological teachings within CST.[17]

2.2. Catholic Social Teaching, the Environment, and the Common Good

Catholic Social Teaching recognizes the interplay between the environment, individuals, and the common good. These intertwined realities provide a robust Christian ethic. In the last 15 years CST has demonstrated the continuity, coherence, and, at the same time, diversity of approaches to ecology.[18] I turn first to the earliest of the

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[14]Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, John J. Fitzgerald, trans., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947.

[15]John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*: *On Christianity and Social Progress* (1961), 65.

[16]Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

[17]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth: *An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*," (1991), at http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/renewing-the-earth.cfm

[18]For documents as early as 1990, see John Paul II, *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* (8 December 1989); John Paul II, "1990 World Day of Peace Message: Peace with God, the Creator, Peace with All of Creation" (1990); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Earth*: *An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (14 November 1991); Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace, "Chapter 10: Safeguarding the Environment," in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005), Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Contribution of the Holy See to the Fourth World Water Forum," (16-22 March 2006), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060322_mexico-water_en.html

three documents that I survey, *Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*.

2.2.1. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good (2001)

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are convinced that Christians are stewards of the earth and must mitigate climate change. They declare, "as people of religious faith, we bishops believe that the atmosphere that supports life on earth is a God-given gift, one we must respect and protect."[19] While it does seem that their concern for "life" is broad enough to include plants and animals, further investigation of the document shows that they take an anthropocentric approach to environmental conservation. That is, creation is intended for human use.

The common good only includes humans, but "extend[s] our concern to future generations. Climate change poses the question 'What does our generation owe to generations yet unborn?'"[20] Here, it is the unborn of *homo sapiens* that is the concern, not the future generations of flora and fauna that will diminish, go extinct, or be lost to ecosystem destruction. The two most significant features of the USCCB's *Climate Change* document are that the document emphasizes first, human responsibility in climate change and, second, conservation for the common good.

First, *Climate Change* places the responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate change on developed countries that do the majority of pollution, instead of impoverished countries that tend to have higher levels of population growth. The Bishops point out,

> Historically, the industrialized countries have emitted more greenhouse gases that warm the climate than have the developing countries. Affluent nations such as our own have to acknowledge the impact of voracious consumerism instead of simply calling for population and emissions controls from people in poorer nations.[21]

The rationale of the USCCB is two-fold. First, of course, the Church is officially against artificial contraception[22] and there is a fear that artificial birth control — inclusive of abortion — would be utilized as a solution to population growth.[23] Second, and nobler, is that each

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[19]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change."

[20]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change."

[21]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change."

[22]Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1968.

[23]John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), 16.

person's actions affect the common good. Thus, each person must take responsibility to mitigate noxious pollution.

Conservation for the benefit of the common good is the second essential feature of *Climate Change*. Environmental destruction impacts everyone, thus policies must be participatory. Everyone in the common good should cooperate to define the terms of environmental use and environmental preservation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops support a system where "developing and poorer nations have a genuine place at the negotiating table. Genuine participation for those most affected is a moral and political necessity for advancing the common good."[24] The Bishops understand that ramifications of climate change are not evenly distributed. This disrupts the common good by decreasing quality of life. It also jeopardizes the ability of people — especially the financially vulnerable — to flourish.

I maintain that the option for the poor is particularly salient in environmental discussions because the underprivileged are more susceptible to physical displacement due to climate change related flooding, deforestation, and wildfires. Moreover, people in developing countries are affected by the pollution of countries with large carbon footprints, though they do not reap the corresponding economic benefits. *Latina* theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz maintains, "the common good is to be judged by the rights and participation of the poorest in society."[25] The USCCB echoes this belief by acknowledging that diminished political power and social hardships preclude participation in climate policies. Conservation must occur on behalf of, and with the collaboration of, all in society to promote the common good. It is outrageous when "the voices of poor people and poor countries are neglected."[26]

The common good articulated in *Climate Change* offers solid prolegomena for further discussions on theological ecology. The objective of this document, as indicated in the title, is dialogue, and therefore the conclusions of the teaching do not end the conversation. Nine years after *Climate Change*, Benedict XVI delivered the 2010 *World Day of Peace Message*, also focused on the environment.

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[24]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change."

[25]Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Defining our Proyecto Histórico: Mujerista Strategies for Liberation," in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 9: Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, Charles Curran, Margaret Farley and Richard McCormick, ed., New York: Paulist Press, 1996, 120-135, at 127-128.

[26]United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Climate Change."

2.2.2. Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation, 2010"

Benedict XVI was named one of *Grist's* "15 Green Religious Leaders" in 2007, along with the Dalai Lama, Fr. Thomas Berry, and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.[27] News outlets cited his "electric car"[28] and solar-powered residence in Vatican City[29] as evidence of his conservationist inclinations. Certainly, Benedict XVI's teachings on the environment also secured his spot on the Top 15 list. Of particular relevance for this article is his 2010 "World Day of Peace Message, Protect Creation." Just as the common good was a primary focus of the USCCB document *Climate Change*, so too does the common good play a prominent role in Benedict XVI's message. Benedict XVI grounds his robust articulation of the common good in two places. First, he draws heavily on the Genesis creation narrative. Second, he maintains an anthropocentric concern for the environment based on the intrinsic worth of humans. Taken in tandem, a picture of the common good emerges.

The 2010 "World Day of Peace Message" utilizes the creation story of Genesis as normative for an ecological ethic of stewardship based on the common good.[30] Benedict XVI asserts, "the true meaning of God's original command, as the *Book of Genesis* clearly shows, was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility."[31] Responsibility and authority are two sides of the same coin. They partially define how all people are obligated to care for, and develop, the world around us. Citing Genesis 2:15 Benedict XVI affirms, "Technology in this sense is a response to God's command to till and keep the land."[32] But, lest technology become *the* driving force of human activity, moral agents must consider the implications of development for the common good.

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[27]Grist staff, "15 Green Religious Leaders," *Grist*, 25 July 2007, at http://grist.org/article/religious/

[28]Jura Koncius, "A Holy Roller," *The Washington Post*, 19 January 2006, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/18/AR2006011800483.html

[29]AFP, "Vatican is World's Greenest State: Official Daily," *Independent U.K.*, 12 December 2010, at http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/vatican-is-worlds-greenest-state-official-daily-2158560.html

[30]The creation story appears in other CST documents to show a normative anthropology that describes human nature, sin, universal claims to good, ecological sustainability, gender, and dignity. See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: For the Twentieth Anniversary of Populorum Progressio* (1987), 29.

[31]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation" (2010), 6.

[32]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 10.

Humanity as a whole must regard the earth as a gift to all people and part of the common good. The universal destination of goods was established from the beginning of time. Therefore, "respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because 'creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works.'"[33] And, just as the USCCB placed emphasis on the option for the poor and the human unborn, Benedict XVI likewise includes the entire human community in the common good. He confirms, "the environment must be seen as God's gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations."[34] Anthropocentric concern for creation is the second way Benedict XVI expresses the common good in his 2010 "World Day of Peace Message."

The gift of the earth is part of a covenant, or bond, between all of humanity and the Creator. God intended that every human being would have access to the abundance of the earth, without one person or group taking more than their fair share. The ability of the planet to provide for all people is a precondition for a dignified human life. In order for individuals to flourish, creation must not be obliterated. The common good will crumble if the earth is exploited.

Benedict XVI proclaims, "the goods of creation belong to humanity as a whole. Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come."[35] Again, CST underscores that creation is for human usage. And, even when non-humans are mentioned, it is with the recognition that human requirements are an indomitable priority. The 2010 "World Day of Peace Message" states, "the earth, water and air (are) gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction."[36] Benedict's human-centred approach to conservation provides authoritative teaching on the common good in an environmentally precarious era.

In recent years, CST has seen an expansion of the notion of the common good from humankind to our ecosystem. Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*: *On Care for Our Common Home*, promulgated in 2015, continues the tradition of ecological teachings on the common good in the Catholic Church.

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[33]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 1.
[34]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 2.
[35]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 7.
[36]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 12.

2.2.3. Pope Francis, Laudato Sí: On Care for Our Common Home (2015)

LS is the first encyclical primarily devoted to environmental concerns. This is significant because encyclicals are one of the most authoritative forms of Church instruction. The title of the much-anticipated teaching encapsulates the main idea that the earth is the "common home" for human and non-human animal, plant and water all engendered because of God our Creator. We share in the earth's bounty and wither in its dearth. The call to creation care is not just for faithful Catholics, but rather the Pope addresses "every person living on this planet" (LS, 3, 205), admitting that the environmental crisis affects everyone.

Francis defines the common good as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members ready access to their own fulfillment" (LS, 156).[37] The common good is imperilled when stewardship gives way to greed.

"We are one single human family" (LS, 52), declares the Pope, and we exist in a shared world that is imperilled. Since humankind is in global predicament, the Pope urges intelligent people to alter our trajectory. The emphasis in LS on integral ecology is the primary manifestation of the idea of the common good in this encyclical.

Integral ecology is full and expansive vision of harmonious life on earth. "Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, (Pope Francis suggests)... *integral ecology*, which clearly respects its human and social dimensions" (LS, 137) of the environment, social life, economics, culture, the common good, and intergenerational justice (LS, 138-162). Integral ecology has two parts, which must be explained. First, "integral" refers to the interconnectedness of all systems; we are a "network" of creation (LS, 138). Since all people depend on one another, the entire world must participate by promoting the common good (LS, 135). The underlying similarity of all humans as rational is a prerequisite for global participation, but an active and willing spirit is a requirement for social engagement.

Second, "ecology" exists as the matrix of systems which may benefit or harm people. Ecology may have an environmental nuance, but it is wider than just nature. Francis notes that, "human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics" (LS, 156). The teachings on integral

[37]The Pope is quoting the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

ecology[38] and integral humanism[39] have been a part of CST for decades. Attention to the whole person within society is foundational for the common good. Yet, the individual must undertake her own life-project within the larger scope of contributions to the global community. This guides the vision of integral ecology in LS.

LS affirms that an authentic human ecology is inseparable from ecological protection and flourishing (LS, 5). "Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself" (LS, 66), asserts the Pope. Thus, our actions and attitudes in one aspect of life affect the others. If we view ourselves as part of the complex and intertwined ecosystem, we can reach authentic fulfilment and respect our neighbour's claim to the goods of the earth as well. If we disregard the way our actions affect others, we reject the relational reality that God has ordained and violate the common good. Francis implores us to think of "*one world with a common plan*" (LS, 164). Yet our individual actions have repercussions on others. The next section will suggest carbon reduction as a way to care for the common good.

3. Carbon Reduction as Care for the Common Good

One of the ways ecologists quantify climate change is by greenhouse gas, or GHG, emissions. Greenhouse gases include methane, water vapour, nitrous oxide, ozone, and carbon dioxide. One of the most damaging types of GHG is carbon dioxide, or CO_2, which is a by-product of resource use and consumption. Each act of consumption has a measureable output of carbon dioxide, which is a leading cause of climate change.[40]

CO_2 production can be counted and attached to products, actions, individuals, families, countries, or the world aggregate. Of special concern for environmental conservation is the impact of each country's carbon output.

In 2008, China and the United States were the countries that produced the most carbon, with China releasing 6,534 million metric tons and the U.S. 5,833 million metric tons.[41] To put this in

[38]Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 14.

[39]Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism,* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.

[40]See International Energy Agency, *CO_2Emissions from Fuel Combustion - 2011 Highlights*, Paris: International Energy Agency, 2011.

[41]Union of Concerned Scientists, "Each Country's Share of CO2 Emissions," 20 August 2010, at http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2.html

perspective, the third most emitting country — Russia — produced nearly four times *less* than China.[42] While China and the U.S. top the charts of carbon emission by country, it should be noted that when per capita carbon is examined, statistics look different.

While the birth rates were about the same in both countries, China only discharged an average of 4.91 metric tons of carbon dioxide per capita, while the U.S. released nearly four times that amount at 19.18 tons per capita.[43] Attention must be paid not only to national, but also individual, CO_2 as they relate to planetary destruction. Data are overwhelmingly in support of decreasing carbon through stabilizing or reducing human population growth, resource consumption, or both. Carbon cutbacks are one of the most efficient and effective ways of quantifiably making strides to mitigate climate change. Francis declares, "there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced" (LS, 26).

Yet carbon reduction is difficult to implement in some countries — like the United States. There are still those who hold to a strong anthropic principle, or the idea that our ecosystem will correct itself and the imbalances that human create. This *Candide*-like optimism is countered by reports that we are irrevocably damaging our planet. Nonetheless, LS concurs with science and verifies the urgency of cutting carbon worldwide. Excessive greenhouse gasses jeopardize the common good through climate change. The carbon output of the world must be quantified as systematic policies make strides towards sustainability. These policies can be guided by the principle of subsidiarity and differentiated responsibilities.

3.1. Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity requires a process of dialogue with people from all areas of society and places limits on governmental, or top-down, decision-making by "insisting that no higher level of organization should perform any function that can be handled efficiently and effectively at a lower level of organization by persons who, individually or in groups, are closer to the problems and closer to the ground."[44] Concomitantly, institutions are not exempt from distributive justice, especially when they oversee national resources.

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[42]Union of Concerned Scientists, "Each Country's Share of CO2 Emissions."

[43]Union of Concerned Scientists, "Each Country's Share of CO2 Emissions."

[44]William J. Byron, "Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching," *America* (31 October 1998) 9-12, at 11.

Subsidiarity "asks not for the most local, but the most appropriate level of organization and response."[45] Because subsidiarity takes a tiered approach to ethical and social dilemmas, it allows each person or group to work "where they are at" without escalation to higher-level interventions.[46]

Francis believes that subsidiarity grants freedom "to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power" (LS, 196). Dialogue is essential for policymaking on all levels. In addition to acknowledging the responsibility of the rich to reduce carbon, subsidiarity can also ask those who produce less carbon to partake in conservation through differentiated responsibilities. If humans are to care for our common home it will take determination from all in the moral community.

3.2. Differentiated Responsibilities

Francis insists that the entire world must actively participate for the common good (LS, 135). Yet, it is undeniable that "regarding climate change, there are *differentiated responsibilities*" (LS, 52). Although we are all interconnected, responsibility for climate change is not equally distributed because carbon emissions are not equally distributed. Policymakers cannot expect individuals in the developing world — which often gets blamed for ecological destruction despite negligible resource use — to shoulder the burden of resource conservation alone. All people must endeavour to limit emissions that they themselves generate.

The Pope believes that living in a wealthy country translates to greater accountability for climate change. "Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most" (LS, 169). Varying levels of responsibility for the ecological crisis translates to individualized — not universalizing — policymaking.

In LS, affluent countries are primarily targeted for aggressive policy implementation to reduce GHG. Yet all countries must enact

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[45]Larry L. Rassmussen, "Next Journey: Sustainability for Six Billion and More," in Daniel C. Maguire and Larry L. Rassmussen, New York: State University of New York, 1998, 67-140, at 123.

[46]For a specific example of carbon reduction strategies in Catholic hospitals, see Cristina Richie, "*Laudato Si'*, Catholic Health Care, and Climate Change," *Health Care Ethics USA* 23, 3 (2015) 30-32.

"the establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems" (LS, 53). These policies should be in line with the common good (LS, 188), with clear attention to the role of those who use more resources than their fair share. We cannot let profligate carbon production take on "the harmless aspect of the familiar"[47] and tacitly accept pollution, environmental degradation, species loss, and massive poverty. As moral agents participating in the common good, differentiated responsibilities are fully enacted through subsidiarity, which allows each person to participate in the common good.

Support for CO_2 strategies can solicit democratic engagement. In these cases, the concept of subsidiarity and differentiated responsibilities are instructive for policymaking. Garret Hardin wrote in *The Tragedy of the Commons* that "so long as we behave as only independent, rational, free-enterprisers" we are locked in a system of "fouling our own nest."[48] Yet, the tragedy of the commons is neutralized by policies oriented towards the common good. *Laudato Si'* has continued the tradition of Catholic Social Thought that effectively communicates the mandate to safeguard our natural resources. As Francis indicated, "Not only is the planet for the common good, climate itself *is* a common good."[49] Policies that constrain carbon are one, significant, way to care for our common home that has support from Catholic Social Thought.

4. Conclusion

Historically, the Catholic Social Teaching on the common good has upheld the claims of the individual to authentic flourishing alongside the realities of a shared society. These twin individual and social aspects mutually reinforce each other. The dignity of the individual person is maintained by means of access to social goods. At the same time, the societal aspect of the common good checks individualism that only seeks ego-satisfaction. The common good is apparent throughout CST, and especially in the three documents I surveyed.

First, the USCCB's *Climate Change* underscores conservation as an essential feature of the common good. The Bishops do this by placing the onus of lifestyle change on developed world individuals and countries, which do the vast majority of resource excavation and

[47]Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962, 20.

[48]Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, 3859 (1968) 1243-1248, at 1245.

[49]Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," 23.

exploitation. The Bishops require that individuals take initiative to reduce waste in order to maintain our shared environment. Preservation of the earth on behalf of the common good is necessary in this age of ecological catastrophe, thus people must amend their overly consumptive practices.

Second, Benedict XVI continues the Catholic Social Teaching on the common good vis-à-vis his emphasis on the creation narrative, which links human relationships with their terrestrial dwelling. The goods of nature have been intended for humans since the beginning of time. The central teaching of the "World Day of Peace Message" can be summarized by one sentence: "Man (sic) has a duty to exercise responsible stewardship over creation, to care for it and to cultivate it."[50] Conservation of the earth for the benefit of all people is expected, appropriate to the biblical tradition of working the land.

Third, LS balances the claims of the individual and the limits of our common home. Pope Francis states, "Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person" (LS, 5). Although the priority for human needs is prominent in LS, nature cannot be instrumentalized. Thus, we see an expanded understanding of the common good. "It is not enough to think of different species merely as potential 'resources' to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves" (LS, 33), declares Francis. It seems, therefore, that creation is a part of the common good, where humans and animals, climate and water, algae and insects have a claim to species existence in harmony with the larger society. "Each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous" (LS, 84). Each living being is a member of the common good; all participate in a symbiotic bionetwork, while at the same time having a life of their own. An analysis of *Climate Change*, the "World Day of Peace Message," and LS clearly indicates support for envisioning the environment as part of the common good in Catholic Social Teaching.

[50]Benedict XVI, "World Day of Peace Message," 6. The Pope is quoting his own *Caritas in Veritate: On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth* (2009), 50.