

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM



THE CRY OF THE EARTH AND THE CRIES OF THE POOR

An OFM Study Guide on the Care of Creation

THE CANTICLE OF CREATURES

MOST HIGH, ALL-POWERFUL, GOOD LORD,
YOURS ARE THE PRAISES, THE GLORY,
AND THE HONOUR AND ALL BLESSING.
TO YOU ALONE, MOST HIGH, DO THEY BELONG
AND NO HUMAN IS WORTHY TO MENTION YOUR NAME.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, WITH ALL YOUR CREATURES,
ESPECIALLY SIR BROTHER SUN,
WHO IS THE DAY, AND THROUGH WHOM YOU GIVE US LIGHT.
AND HE IS BEAUTIFUL AND RADIANT WITH GREAT SPLENDOUR;
AND BEARS A LIKENESS OF YOU, MOST HIGH ONE.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH SISTER MOON AND THE STARS,
IN HEAVEN YOU FORMED THEM CLEAR AND PRECIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH BROTHER WIND,
AND THROUGH THE AIR, CLOUDY AND SERENE,
AND EVERY KIND OF WEATHER,
THROUGH WHOM YOU GIVE SUSTENANCE TO YOUR CREATURES.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH SISTER WATER,
WHO IS VERY USEFUL AND HUMBLE AND PRECIOUS AND CHASTE.

ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

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FOREWORD

*“But ask the animals and they will teach you,
or the birds of the sky and they will tell you.
Or speak to the earth and it will teach you,
or let the fish of the sea declare to you.*

*Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this,
in whose hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all the human race?”*

(Job 12:7-10)

In these lyrical phrases, the Book of Job exhorts the human person to be open and ready to be taught by animals, birds, fish, and indeed, the earth itself. It is a passage that resonates with people of goodwill, and in particular with those who have been touched by the wonderful richness of the Franciscan tradition.

The resource booklet which you are about to read is likewise an exhortation to be open to the world around us, to listen attentively to

all those creatures who inhabit this little planet, our common home. It arises from an urgent concern that the *Cry of the Earth* and the *Cries of the Poor* are being disregarded and that, as Franciscans, we must be partners in dialogue, making our specific contribution to the healing of our world, and of the people who live in it.

While this short document is rooted in the Franciscan and biblical traditions, it intentionally expresses that same tradition in partnership with contemporary science. This was the express desire of the 2015 General Chapter, which asked for a Study Guide on the care of creation that is built upon a biblical, ecclesial, Franciscan and scientific foundation.¹ Theology and science are two different perspectives that together allow us to see the universe in its three-dimensional depth. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says, “Science is the search for explanation. Religion is the search for meaning.”² We Franciscans must engage intelligently with all of the sciences in order to complement our own insights.

In conjunction with previous documents of the Church and the Order – pre-eminently with *Laudato si’* – this booklet aims to provide guidance so that our Entities and all of you, my brothers, might be able to respond to the ecological challenges of our time.³ I would like to emphasise this particular aspect of our Franciscan commitment to the world. Inspired by the example of St. Francis, we Friars and Lesser Brothers are challenged to ‘do’ in order that we might understand more deeply the cries of God’s people, the cry of God’s creation. We are invited through our actions to become mystics, men of faith who are capable of perceiving the beauty and wonder of God’s handiwork in the lives of our brothers and sisters, and in every living thing, all created to participate together in giving glory to God and in offering a service of love and care one to the other. I encourage all who use this resource to reassess their manner of perceiving and acting, and to restructure their lifestyles in order to allow the Spirit of God to fashion within each of us an ‘integral ecological vision’ that embraces all, in charity and justice. May we allow God to work the wonderful mystery of love and mercy within us so that we might remove the obstacles that deafen us to the *Cry of the Earth* and the *Cries of the Poor*. There

¹ *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, Chapter Decision 10.

² *The Great Partnership. God, Science and the Search for Meaning*, 2011.

³ *Ibid.*



is urgency to our response. Humanity and the planet cannot wait any longer. We must act now!

“Let us begin again for up to now we have done little or nothing.”⁴

Rome, 25 July 2016

Feast of St. James the Apostle

Br. Michael Anthony Perry, OFM
Minister General and Servant

Prot. 106652

⁴ Cf. *ICel* 103.



INTRODUCTION

The cry of the Earth and the cries of the poor can no longer be ignored; a response is urgently required. Indeed, Pope Francis' historic Encyclical, *Laudato si'*⁵, has sent a powerful message about the urgency of the environmental crisis to the whole world. As Franciscans, we are called to “cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation”⁶ in every way possible.

The 2015 General Chapter, in continuity with the previous Chapter⁷, continues to encourage us to establish practical fraternal relationships in the cause of the care of creation. Anticipating the publication of *Laudato si'*, the Chapter gave these two mandates:

The General Definitorium is to draw up a Study Guide on the care of creation that will have a solid biblical, ecclesial, Franciscan and

⁵ *Laudato si'*, 48.

⁶ *Laudato si'*, 14.

⁷ Cf. *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, Mandates of the 2009 General Chapter, no. 43.

*scientific foundation, and will give guidance so that our Entities might be able to respond to the ecological challenges of our time.*⁸

*Each Entity, through the Moderator of Ongoing Formation, the Animator for Evangelization, and the Animator of JPIC, following the guidelines of the general Study Guide, is to prepare a programme to help ensure that this dimension becomes a part of our lifestyle and of the life and pastoral and social activity of the Entities. This objective will be evaluated in the meetings of the Presidents of the Conferences with the General Definitorium.*⁹

In faithfulness to these mandates, we now offer a brief resource that will, we hope, encourage the friars to take concrete steps towards a new *praxis*. We take the profound reflections on JPIC values already published by the Order as our starting point, and we believe that experience is an excellent way of understanding and learning.

The 2015 General Chapter document maintains that we are *experiencing many radical changes, such as the economic revolution connected to globalization; the digital revolution, and bioethical challenges*. These changes are accompanied by *new forms of poverty*, and complex environmental situations like *climate change, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity*.¹⁰ Faced with these problems, one could be pardoned for wondering what we Friars Minor can do; why not let these affairs be dealt with by specialists? However, we cannot close our eyes and take refuge in our cloisters; if we honestly look around us we must recognize that *our common home is falling into serious disrepair*.¹¹ Therefore, the spirit that animates this document is a desire to examine our current way of life (in which, at times, we consume the planet's natural resources as if they were unlimited)¹², so as to help us to embrace a new way of life.

We must actively promote that “ecological spirituality” described by the Pope, which goes beyond an arrogant anthropocentric relationship with nature, and invites us to recognize with humility that we must be ‘*lesser ones*’ and subject to all, including Creation (*et est subditus omnibus*,

⁸ *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, Chapter Decision 10.

⁹ *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, Chapter Decision 11.

¹⁰ Cf. *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, no. 3.

¹¹ LS 61.

¹² LS 106.



says St. Francis¹³). There can be no proper ecology without an adequate anthropology.¹⁴ A renewed attitude of respect, wonder, amazement and gratitude should be the foundation of this new relationship. In fact, before we talk about care for the Earth, we should firstly remember to thank God and his Creation for taking such good care of us. “We are not God. The Earth was here before us and it has been given to us.”¹⁵ The food we eat, the clothes we wear and the air we breathe are gifts of God’s creation for us! “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”¹⁶

But spirituality needs to be translated into action. This means a call towards an “ecological conversion” of the heart which involves gratitude, sobriety and moderation - the ability to be happy with little - in order not to succumb to unhappiness, thinking only of what we’re missing.¹⁷ This new lifestyle can be supported by the familiar Franciscan virtue of *minority*, which invites us to constantly renew our way of life, paying particular attention to *peripheries* of every kind . It is a call to be less consumeristic, less predatory towards the environment. “We are being called once again to go out from the comfort of our homes and our lives”¹⁸ and move to the peripheries. All of this very clearly reflects a Franciscan lifestyle of poverty and simplicity, seen not as a virtue in itself, but as a reflection of how God has chosen to relate to us. He first became simple and poor for our sake! Through a renewed lifestyle we will be closer to the poor, who are the real victims of this ecological crisis.

It is for such reasons that this resource is offered to all the brothers, so they can respond in a practical way to the cry of the Earth, as well as to the cry of the poor of our time!

¹³ Cf. *A Salutation of the Virtues*, 16.

¹⁴ LS 118.

¹⁵ LS 67.

¹⁶ LS 84.

¹⁷ Cf. LS 216-219, 222.

¹⁸ *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, no. 32.



THE BIBLICAL DIMENSION

In *Laudato si'* Pope Francis points out how Genesis 1:28 has been misinterpreted. The bible verse which says, “*subdue it... have dominion over the fish of the sea ...*” has been wrongly considered as a license to exploit nature for human purposes. But a deeper understanding of the story of Creation leads us to the following points for discussion:

Firstly, God is the Creator of all things. He alone brings all things into existence. So, in a world created by God, who are we, and where are we? Secondly, although God is the Creator of all, he shares his power. God lovingly directs Creation toward its own purpose. The Earth produces vegetation; the waters produce swarms of living creatures; the sun and the moon regulate (*rādâ*) day and night; and humans have been delegated real power to govern (*rādâ*) the Earth. The power to dominate is given or delegated by God, it is not our own. How can we respond to this divine generosity? Thirdly, Creation is cosmos. There was chaos at first, but by means of Creation God introduced order and structure, through his loving plan for everything. Every creature has its function and assigned place in this marvelous complex, something which summons up awe and reverence, as St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis remind us, evoking amazement and gratitude. Fourthly, Creation is good - truly very good - as desired and intended by God. The universe was not born in war, combat or conflict, but effortlessly and without

struggle, through the word of God and divine action. Also, humans are not originally wolves to each other (Hobbes), but originally created to be good, responsible for each other and for all of Creation. Fifthly, the Earth is home for all earthly creatures. The Earth is not just for humans, but is a habitat or home for all of God's Creation. Humans are not the only ones blessed by God; birds and fish and every created thing are blessed by God. We must begin to think in terms of an Earthly family, or an Earth community, and not exclusively of a community of human beings on Earth. How much worse if we should end up considering ourselves solely as individual human beings, ready to fight against one other to survive! Finally, according to the Bible, the culmination of the story of Creation is *Shabbat*. Contrary to many readings of the story, the high point is not reached when humans are created on the sixth day – instead, the climax is the seventh day, the day sanctified by God. *Shabbat*, the seventh day blessed by God, reminds us that the world is in the loving hands of God. It tells us that the world will not fall apart if we cease working: life doesn't depend on the feverish activity of humans. The celebration of a day of rest reminds us that our world, our life, is given simply as a gift from God. Pope Francis says, "Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. [...] Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others."¹⁹

In addition, the second creation account, in Genesis 2:15, says: "The Lord God placed the human person in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it." Pope Francis gives a new insight into this text, writing: "cultivate" refers to tilling, ploughing or working, while "keep" (*shomer* in Hebrew) means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.²⁰

The psalms are a constant song of praise to God, who is "good" and "compassionate ... towards all he has done,"²¹ and whose mercy endures forever.²² "The Psalms also invite other creatures to join us in this praise: "Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!..." (cf. Ps. 148).²³ Continually the psalms and wisdom literature speak of

¹⁹ LS 237.

²⁰ Cf. LS 67.

²¹ Ps 145, 9.

²² Cf. Ps 136.

²³ LS 72.



this interconnectedness of all creatures, a kind of universal family, a sublime fellowship.²⁴ The writings of the prophets also see Creation and liberation as intimately linked to God.²⁵

Finally, in the New Testament Jesus emphasizes that God is Creator and Father.²⁶ Jesus reminds us that all of Creation is important to God: “Behold the birds of the air, they do not sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.”²⁷ Also, Jesus himself is in harmony with Creation, “who is he that the winds and the sea obey him?”²⁸, because Christ is the *logos* through which Creation comes into being.²⁹ Christ is the purpose of Creation, its *telos*. At the end of time Jesus will consign all things to the Father; everything, not just human beings, will be filled with the divine presence.³⁰

These biblical sources remind us strongly, not only of our responsibility of caring for the Earth, but also of humbly acknowledging that human beings are not at the center of things; secondly, that we are not the measure of all things; thirdly, that we must discern our human identity and vocation; fourthly, they call us to a vision of peace and harmony, to a spirituality and ethics of hospitality and ecological responsibility. In this context it is fruitful to study and reflect on the story of Job, who dared to question God, but who ultimately is forced to come to terms with his real place before God and all creation.

²⁴ LS 89.

²⁵ Cf. Jer 32:17-21; Is 40:28b-29.

²⁶ Cf. Mt 11:25.

²⁷ Mt 6:26.

²⁸ Mt 8:27.

²⁹ Cf. Col 1:16; Jn 1:1-18.

³⁰ Cf. Col 1:19-20; 1Cor 15:28.



THE ECCLESIAL DIMENSION

It may appear unusual to connect environmental protection – which might seem to belong more to the fields of bioethics and social morality – with the Church. But the obligation to maintain the environment with love and responsibility comes from our being created in the image and likeness of God and, as children in the Son,³¹ we are called to increasingly be “partakers of the divine nature.”³² It is starting from this biblical base that a theology concerned with bioethics and social ethics can address the theme of the safeguarding of Creation, that is of “our common home.” In fact, the nature of the Church and her Eucharistic life give us the basis for this link between the Church and a commitment to the protection of Creation - since the Church is “sign and instrument, both of a very closely knit union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race,”³³ and because the Eucharist is *font and summit* of the Church’s action.³⁴

The theme of the Church in relation to Creation can inspire us to choose a Eucharistic approach to life. “The Eucharist is the living center of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life ... a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment,

³¹ Cf. *Jn* 1:12.

³² *2Pt* 1, 4.

³³ *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

³⁴ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

directing us to be stewards of all creation.”³⁵ This leads us to a change in mentality, an “ecological conversion.”³⁶

The Eucharistic liturgy, in particular the Offertory, helps us to conceive of the natural environment, our common home, as a gift that must be loved and cared for, since it is offered by us to God. In the future the world will participate in the inheritance of the children of God, as the “new creation,” part of a single divine plan. The future of creation is eschatological, and its destiny will be fulfilled when we “find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13.12).”³⁷ While waiting for this fulfilment, humans strive to care for Creation and the poor, and in the Eucharist the Lord of life gives us light and motivation to perform this service, which leads to a healing of our relationships. Through the free gift of God, we learn to recognize and respect the rights of others, as well as our own duties towards Creation.

The prevailing ethics of humankind and society influence a network of mutual relationships - human relationships with God, with others, and with creation. “The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa.”³⁸ Integral ecology, a term coined by *Laudato si’*, encompasses all three of these human relationships, which make up a single narrative.³⁹

In his homily on being inaugurated as Pope, Benedict XVI emphasized: “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast” - for this reason the ecological crisis is a call for a profound interior conversion.⁴⁰ At the basis of this human and spiritual maturity is a fundamental truth of the Christian faith, that the whole of creation bears the imprint of the Blessed Trinity.⁴¹

Pope Francis does not forget that fact that he has chosen for himself the name of St. Francis of Assisi. The Poor Man of Assisi saw nature as a book in which God speaks to us, and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.⁴² The charismatic simplicity of the Saint of Assisi once again leads us to understand that harmony with God, with others, and with Creation are inseparable – which, of course, is the concept of *integral ecology*.⁴³

³⁵ Cf. *LS* 236.

³⁶ Cf. *LS* 216–221.

³⁷ *LS* 243.

³⁸ *Caritas in Veritate*, 51.

³⁹ Cf. *LS* 10, 137–162.

⁴⁰ Cf. *LS* 217.

⁴¹ Cf. *LS* 238–240.

⁴² Cf. *LS* 12.

⁴³ Cf. *LS* 10.



THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

St. Francis was proclaimed “the patron saint of lovers of ecology” by St. John Paul II.⁴⁴ This linkage of St. Francis with ecology is well justified because of the special relationship that he had with all creatures, a characteristic well documented in his writings and his biographies.

It is chiefly the *Canticle of Brother Sun* that displays Francis’ contemplative gaze on earthly and heavenly creatures, where he recognizes that “*de te, Altissimo, portano significazione.*” This statement, at the beginning of the *Canticle*, gives the first and most important reason to have respect towards every creature: all reality points to God its Creator. Francis is aware that the only Creator and Lord of all is God, and this leads him to challenge the rationale of power and property, which sees people as masters of everything. We are not masters, but beneficiaries of a free gift from God, given equally to all. This “principle of gift” evokes respect for Creation as a sign of God’s love, and it produces the ability to share this gift with others because one cannot consider it one’s exclusive property. It brings about a recognition of a brotherly and sisterly bond, which leads Francis to give the name of “*brother*” and “*sister*” to every creature.

⁴⁴ 29 November 1979.

We Franciscans are accustomed to hearing about *brother* sun, *sister* moon, *brother* fire and *sister* water. But if we stop and think about it, these are really unusual expressions; for in what sense I can say that the wind is my brother? I understand that we can think of another human person as our brother or sister, but how can we claim the same about a rock, or a plant?

The explanation lies in the fact that the sisterhood and brotherhood intuited and experienced by Francis is not just a human reality, it is also cosmic: it extends to every creature and expresses a universal bond of brotherhood and sisterhood that comes from the simple fact of having a shared Creator and Father, who is God.

In the name that Francis chose for himself and his companions – *lesser brothers* – he is connecting our fraternal bond with the awareness of being *lesser ones*. *Lesser* in regard to other people, but also in regard to all creatures, as Francis teaches us in the conclusion of *A Salutation of the Virtues*: “Holy Obedience confounds every corporal and carnal wish, binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit and obedience to one’s brother, so that it is subject and submissive to everyone in the world, not only to people but to every beast and wild animal as well that they may do whatever they want with it insofar as it *has been given* to them *from above* by the Lord.”⁴⁵ Minority (being lesser ones), here expressed in terms of obedience, is extended universally, opening itself up to animals and to all creatures.

Therefore, the deepest motivation of our Franciscan ecological commitment, following in the footsteps of Francis, is a *theological* motivation; God is recognized as the Creator of everything, something which demands respect for God’s creation, which he has given to all, and not just to some.

Our *General Constitutions* continue this theme, both in Art. 71, which says: “Following closely in the footsteps of Saint Francis, the friars are to maintain a reverent attitude towards nature, threatened from all sides today, in such a way that they may restore it completely to its condition of brother (and sister) and to its role of usefulness to all humanity for the glory of God the Creator,” and especially in the final sentence of Art.1 of the GGCC, which lays the Foundation of our identity. Article 1, §2 was

⁴⁵ *A Salutation of the Virtues*, 14-18.



modified by our 2003 General Chapter, which added “to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and to preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds; and to show respect for creation.” Care for our common home was recognized as an essential part of our charism, and it was seen that a thorough description of who we are as *Friars Minor* cannot help but talk about “respect for Creation.” The word respect (*reverentiam* in Latin) was chosen precisely because it indicates not only care, but also an essential attitude of minority and universal fellowship that truly makes us lesser brothers.

Since the Summer of 2015, with the publication of *Laudato si'*, it has become even more evident that a Franciscan cannot possibly assume that attention to ecological issues is a non-compulsory element, or some sort of *optional* extra. The notion of “integral ecology” which the Pope puts forward in this Encyclical is an essential task for every Christian, and even more so for all Franciscans because the Pope wanted to bind his call for an “ecological conversion” to the person of Francis of Assisi, who is cited several times in the text, and to whom even the title of the Encyclical makes reference.

However, knowing the theoretical “Franciscan” reasons for our commitment to ecology is not enough: we need to develop a personal conviction. A focus on Francis, and a knowledge of our Constitutions certainly help, but the essence of such a personal conviction stems from the awareness that no one can substitute for me in the task of my own Franciscan formation, and that I have to make a personal choice: “The Friar Minor, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the chief protagonist of his own formation.”⁴⁶ Only friars who are “protagonists of [their] own formation” will undergo the process of “ecological conversion” that our vocation requires of us today.

⁴⁶ *Ratio formationis franciscanae*, art. 40.



THE SCIENTIFIC DIMENSION

The sciences have contributed positively to a more complete understanding of reality and of nature. They have also had a place in raising our awareness of the transcendence of God, fostering in humans a new consciousness of their responsibilities in the world, and also raising the issue of the role of humans in our world and its history. The sciences have also made a significant contribution to the plurality of human thought, involving people and societies in more serious dialogue about the realities of the world in which we live.

In addition, the recent contribution of the sciences to our understanding of nature have caused these same sciences to become more aware of their own limitations. The sciences claim that nature is the result not only of a single system, but the result of many systems - e.g. the biosphere, and ecosystems. Nature also bears the effects of history, culture, languages, human relations, etc. To resolve current issues concerning nature we need to ask questions that “not only concern the environment in isolation; [an] issue [that] cannot be approached piecemeal”⁴⁷ as Pope Francis puts it in *Laudato si’*. The interplay of factors affecting nature combine in such a way that a single explanation or sole interpretation is impossible - it is precisely the interactions of various elements that make it so

⁴⁷ LS 160.

complex. In fact, the most important issue is not so much that the various factors are so numerous; nature's complexity arises from the fact that within it many variables are continuously interacting, making interpretation from just one particular standpoint very difficult. An understanding these issues - the interactions of the biosphere and ecosystems, climate change, and the many other systems that make up nature, in addition to also finding ways to repair the damage done to them – would be impossible through the use of scientific methods alone. This is particularly true because every new understanding of a constituent factor opens up yet another broad field of research inextricably connected with other factors. For every system in nature, one can almost always discover another subsystem consisting of a wide variety of elements in constant mutual relationship and interdependence. The interconnectedness of these systems are often unpredictable, so much so that webs of relationships are continually being created that are constantly “different” and constantly “the same.” This makes it hugely difficult to find solutions to current problems. The complex interaction between the various elements and systems is decisive, and this is one of the reasons why the sciences can certainly give us great understanding, but can only give us partial and non-definitive solutions for the current problems of nature and how we might go about saving its biosphere, ecosystems, and climate.

Obviously all of the characteristics of nature that we have mentioned have an impact on how we engage with it. Although we may appreciate that nature is a reality that requires a distinctive approach in order to engage with it as a whole, this still does not mean that it is easy to move from a scientific/analytical approach to a more systematic one. In order to have a deeper understanding of nature, and to arrive at a better solution to the problem of its preservation, what is necessary is the approach proposed by the Encyclical – “an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.”⁴⁸

Integral ecology requires an openness to approaches that go beyond the exact language of the sciences, and connect us with categories that pertain to the essence of humankind; that is, with spiritual, ethical, cultural, and relational dimensions.

⁴⁸ *LS* 137.



From this perspective, what is the current role of the sciences?

The sciences are crucial in identifying, understanding and formulating present-day problems regarding nature, ecosystems, the biosphere, climate, human culture, etc. The sciences also indicate solutions, but by themselves they do not have the capacity to resolve the issues they have raised. Their main role would be (as well clarifying issues and looking for solutions) to stir up awareness and a sense of responsibility, and to create spaces for connecting with other specific approaches that have a larger and more global scale, especially in the political and economic arenas. Here too we could hope for an awareness of the possibility and necessity of the sciences to engage in dialogue with the new approaches that are emerging, as well as with multi-layered disciplines (such as philosophy, theology, ethics etc.) These approaches would push the boundaries of the scientific discipline, but would still retain scientific competence. While thus involved in the establishment of a more holistic and systemic approach, the sciences would become the basis for the creation of an integral ecology, involving larger-scale and more sustainable solutions to deal with the current problems facing nature and the world in which we live.



PRAXIS

As Franciscans, we are not called to answer the question “what should we do faced with the ecological crisis,” but rather “what should we do in the midst of the ecological crisis.” We should ask ourselves how this situation is already affecting us, and only afterwards can we take a position as to how we can respond. We must start from a spirituality immersed in the world, feeling ourselves a part of the cosmos, as well as part of the problem. Otherwise we may end up always seeing the crisis as something far removed from our lives, even when its effects come close to home, and we will continue to think that all this is happening in faraway countries and in places other than our own.

Finally, it should be noted that the destruction of any part of our sister mother Earth affects everybody, and has an impact on the whole world, because everything is interconnected.⁴⁹ We must look out for the world in which we live in, we must listen to the cry of the Earth: only in this way will our spirituality have an impact in everyday life.

⁴⁹ Cf. *LS* 92.



I. Evaluating our lifestyle

We would like to invite you, within your own fraternities, to have a discussion about lifestyle from an environmental point of view. Generally, there's a tendency to think that almost all challenges and invitations to action are addressed to the outside world; but the primary call to lifestyle conversion relates to ourselves and our fraternities. It would be very useful to discuss how each brother in the fraternity looks at the issue of climate change, first at an individual level and then at the community level.

The first chapter of *Laudato si'* is devoted to a reading of the signs of the times and the Pope says, "But we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair."⁵⁰ The first chapter of the Encyclical proposes six areas that require careful analysis: we include them in this guidebook, because we believe that they give a solid foundation to our reflection, rooted in the Magisterium of the Church. We offer a brief summary of each area,⁵¹ in order to invite both personal and shared reflection.

⁵⁰ LS 61.

⁵¹ For further study, please see "Guide to the study of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*," prepared by the JPIC Working Group of the Franciscan family in Rome, "Romans VI." Languages: English, Spanish, Italian, German, French, Indonesian, Korean, Portuguese. <http://francis35.org/>

Pollution and climate change (LS 20-26)

There are many forms of pollution that affect everyone on a daily basis. Every year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are produced, most of which are non-biodegradable, or are highly toxic and radioactive. These are problems which are closely linked to our “throwaway” culture. With regard to climate change, the Pope states that there is a significant scientific consensus that an alarming level of global warming is occurring.

Water (LS 27-31)

Drinkable water is a vital resource, as it is essential for human life and for terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The Encyclical is clear in stating that access to safe drinking water is a basic human right, which is fundamental and universal.

Loss of Biodiversity (LS 32-42)

It is impossible to envisage the extinction of plant and animal species. These losses do not just involve the elimination of necessary resources, but involve the disappearance of species that have an intrinsic value. We must acknowledge the fact that *all* creatures are interlinked, and that all humans are interdependent.

Worsening of quality of life, and social deterioration (LS 43-47)

We must be conscious of the effects on peoples’ lives of environmental degradation, current development models and a “throwaway” culture. An analysis of these effects show that the economic growth of the last two centuries has not always led to real progress or an improved quality of life.

Global inequality (LS 48-52)

Pope Francis says that “the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet.” The impact is greatest on poorest and most marginalized, who make up the majority of the Earth’s inhabitants, and who often are treated in international discussions as an afterthought - or collateral damage.



The feeble response to our environmental problems (LS 53-59)

Although we have never abused our common home as much as in the last two hundred years, we have been unable to find adequate solutions to this crisis; this is an indication that international politics is subordinate to global and financial technology. “Any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions, or as an obstacle to be sidestepped.”



II. Discerning a new style of life

The Biblical Dimension

In a world created by God, who are we and where we are? Do we still think of ourselves as being masters of creation, or as being its caretakers? Do we claim to be the center of creation, or do we recognize ourselves as one of God's creatures?

To claim that God is Creator means that, as his creatures, we are all brothers and sisters in a common home. Do we truly believe that we are brothers and sisters to all creatures, and that the world is not for people only, but is our common home, which must be protected?

Jesus brings a message of the peace and harmony of Creation.⁵² How can we help in advancing the integrity and harmony of Creation?

The Ecclesial Dimension

Do we recognize that our relationships with God, with others and with Creation are closely interdependent?⁵³

⁵² Cf. *Mt* 8:27; *Jn* 1:1-18; *Col* 1:16.

⁵³ Cf. *Caritas in Veritate* 51, *LS* 137-162.

Do we appreciate the value of the celebration of the Eucharist as an act of cosmic love, in which nature returns to its Creator in joyful worship?⁵⁴

As Franciscans, do we join with other people of good will in protecting the environment, living a modest lifestyle, and taking our inspiration from the Eucharist?⁵⁵

The Franciscan Dimension

Would you say that we are really aware that the most profound reason for our ecological commitment is a “theological” reason, meaning that it refers to God as the Creator of everything?

Are we Franciscans truly signs of universal sisterhood and brotherhood towards every human being and every creature? Is our fraternal relationship with everyone actually that of minors, i.e. being the least of all?

The Scientific Dimension

How does science currently understand the issues arising from the interaction of ecosystems, climate change, the biosphere and the many other systems that constitute ‘nature’? What solutions has science found?

Do we agree that, in order to find appropriate solutions to current climate problems, we must always deal with two challenges – in the environmental and in the educational (social) areas - because these, in the context of integral ecology, actually constitute a single issue?

Regarding the scientific and social debate; how can we ensure that this debate is “A broad, responsible scientific and social debate ... capable of considering all the available information, and of calling things by their name”⁵⁶ so as to act together in ways that are responsible, sustainable and inclusive?

How do we build a more systematic approach to address current climate issues?

⁵⁴ Cf. LS 236.

⁵⁵ Cf. LS 10, 236.

⁵⁶ LS 135



The first chapter of Laudato si'

Do you agree with the Pope that the Earth, our common home, is falling into serious disrepair? What evidence can we produce to support this opinion?

In recent years there has been a very heated discussion about the causes of global warming. The Pope affirms that, although there are various causes, the most important is that linked to human activity. What do you think?



III. Living a new lifestyle

A PLAN FOR THE FRATERNITY AND FOR THE ENTITY (Province or Custody)

What can we do at the personal, community and social levels, to address the causes of climate change?

In the light of the reflections provided in this resource material, we invite you to make practical decisions in order to establish “a program to help ensure that this dimension becomes a part of our lifestyle, and of the life and pastoral and social activity of the Entities.”⁵⁷ We do this conscious of our identity as Friars Minor committed to moving towards the peripheries. In order to encourage such a process of discernment, we will now briefly present some topics that are more extensively covered in the JPIC Office document “Care for Creation in the Daily Life of the Friars Minor.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Going to the Peripheries with the Joy of the Gospel*, Chapter Decision 11.

⁵⁸ For further study see the document itself, available in English, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese.
http://www.ofm.org/ofm/?page_id=439&lang=en

Water

Is a renewable, but limited, resource. Although three quarters of the Earth's surface is covered by water, only 1% is available for human activity. In whatever way we use it (irrigation, refrigeration, sanitation, etc.), the amount of evaporation of water increases. All of the water that evaporates does not necessarily return to the land surface of the earth, since part of the evaporated water will fall into the sea in the form of rain. This, together with climate changes that are likely to cause drier conditions, will result in less water being available for human consumption. For these reasons, our goal should be more responsible consumption, rather than increasing supply.

Some practical advice: don't waste water when taking showers etc.; check for water leaks in your home; water the garden either at night, or early in the morning; avoid throwing away residues (oil); install low consumption faucets for domestic use; check monthly water consumption on your meter.

HOW CAN WE REDUCE WATER CONSUMPTION IN OUR COMMUNITIES?

Energy

Wherever humans are involved in day-to-day activities, they need energy. Things around us require energy to operate, or at the least energy was used in their production. To provide this energy large amounts of fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) are burned, causing the emission of gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂), which produce "the greenhouse effect," one of the main causes of climate change. The elevated amount of these gases will alter energy exchanges between the inside and the outside of the atmosphere, causing climate change and affecting the balance of our planet.

Some practical advice: turn off lights when you leave a room; unplug appliances after use; maximize the use of natural light; avoid excessive use of air conditioning; invest in LED technology; choose renewable energy; purchase energy efficient equipment as much as possible; install solar panels; on a monthly basis, check power consumption readings on your meter.



WHAT CAN BE DONE? MAKE SHARED DECISIONS
TO HELP TOWARDS ENERGY USE THAT IS EFFICIENT,
SPARING, AND SUSTAINABLE.

Waste and residues

Consumerism is unavoidably related to the waste of natural resources, to pollution and the increasing generation of trash of every kind. From where we do extract the raw materials needed for such consumption? Where will all this waste finish up? Let us remember that nature's ability to provide raw materials, and to absorb our waste, is limited.

Some practical advice: avoid using disposable products, especially those with plastic or PET. Reuse some of your refuse, such as cardboard, bags, envelopes. Choose products made from recycled material. Encourage recycling of waste.

WHAT DISPOSABLE PRODUCTS ARE USED AT HOME?
WHICH OF THEM COULD BE SUBSTITUTED OR
AVOIDED? WHAT PRODUCTS COULD BE REUSED, AND
WHAT COULD BE RECYCLED?

Paper

Paper, a material that we use very frequently, requires cutting down many trees and planting fast-growing species, with the consequent danger of desertification and ecological changes, especially in poor countries where most of the wood we use is found. As we know, forests are essential to the balance of life on the planet.

Some practical advice: try to use less paper. Before you print anything, think about whether it is really necessary. Print on both sides. Preferably use recycled or environmentally friendly paper. Reuse wrapping paper. Separate paper and cardboard, and deposit them in the correct containers for recycling.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Transportation

We should be aware of the fact that transport activities have a high human, social and environmental cost, including the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere (through petroleum and its derivatives). Transport is the sector that produces the highest amount of greenhouse gases. Many respiratory diseases and premature deaths, as well as diseases of the nervous system, are due to air pollution. There are thousands of deaths each year on the roads, not to speak of the negative environmental impact of highways and high-speed lines.

However, transport is an essential part of almost all of our activities and it would be absurd to think of giving it up, so we need to look for alternatives and adopt more sustainable transport patterns.

Some practical advice: review the use of cars in the friary. As much as possible, use public transportation. Encourage walking and cycling in our communities. Buy low-energy cars.

WHICH OF THESE OPTIONS ARE FEASIBLE FOR OUR
COMMUNITY?

Food

Food production is getting more and more aggressive. For example, the fires that ravage the Amazon rainforest are caused by, among other things, intensive farming of soy beans for use as cheap animal feed for factory farming.

Intensive farming uses pesticides and chemical fertilizers which poison fields and the water table, and leave residues in food. Cattle rearing is more and more factory-like, with animals being treated like units on an assembly line; industrial fishing fleets destroy the deep sea. The promotion of transgenic or genetically modified foods is questioned by many scientists who maintain that they lead to negative consequences for the environment and for agriculture (excessive use of toxins, pollution from neighboring crops, loss of biodiversity).



Some practical advice: eat fresh foods, avoid junk food, preferring organic and seasonal foods. Avoid excess meat, sweets and fats. Don't waste food.

IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO IMPROVE OUR
NUTRITION?

Other documents that may be useful in developing an ecological plan for your Province or Custody

Franciscans and Environmental Justice: *the relationship between ecology and social justice.*

Prepared by the JPIC Office of the General Curia, 2011. The document tries to answer the challenges of the environmental crisis, from the perspective of Franciscan spirituality, proposing a new ethic for a globalized world. In addition, it offers the testimony of some communities of the Order. Finally, it is an invitation to read the signs of the times.

Available in English:

http://www.ofm.org/01docum/jpic/EnvironmentalJustice_ENG.pdf

and in other languages (Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese):

http://www.ofm.org/ofm/?page_id=439

Pilgrims and Strangers in this World. *Resource for Ongoing Formation from Chapter IV of the CCGG.*

Especially the third chapter of the document, “Caretakers of Creation,” that addresses the issue of environmental degradation. It looks at the theme through the lens of the Christian and Franciscan message. It presents some experiences from throughout the Order, and formulates a proposal for implementing a personal and fraternal life plan, rooted in Sacred Scripture, the documents of the Church, and the Franciscan Sources.

Available in English:

<http://www.ofm.org/01docum/jpic/sussidioING.pdf>

and in other languages (Spanish, Italian, German, French, Portuguese, Polish): http://www.ofm.org/ofm/?page_id=439

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER IN UNION WITH CREATION

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!

Amen.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH BROTHER FIRE,
THROUGH WHOM YOU LIGHT THE NIGHT,
AND HE IS BEAUTIFUL AND PLAYFUL AND ROBUST AND STRONG.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH OUR SISTER MOTHER EARTH,
WHO SUSTAINS AND GOVERNS US,
AND WHO PRODUCES VARIOUS FRUIT
WITH COLOURED FLOWERS AND HERBS.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD,
THROUGH THOSE WHO GIVE PARDON FOR YOUR LOVE,
AND BEAR INFIRMITY AND TRIBULATION.
BLESSED THOSE WHO ENDURE IN PEACE,
FOR BY YOU, MOST HIGH, SHALL THEY BE CROWNED.

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH OUR SISTER BODILY DEATH,
FROM WHOM NO ONE LIVING CAN ESCAPE.
WOE TO THOSE WHO DIE IN MORTAL SIN.
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOM DEATH WILL FIND IN YOUR MOST HOLY
WILL,
FOR THE SECOND DEATH SHALL DO THEM NO HARM.

PRAISE AND BLESS MY LORD AND GIVE HIM THANKS
AND SERVE HIM WITH GREAT HUMILITY. AMEN.



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