

“Caring for Creation for a Holistic Hospitality”

A Reflection on Environmental Ethics



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Table of content

Introduction.....	3
The concept of environmental ethics.....	5
Biblical roots of environmental ethics.....	6
A. Old Testament roots	6
B. New Testament roots.....	8
Fundamental Principles of Environmental Ethics.....	9
1. “Sacramental Universe”	9
2. Respect For Life:	10
3. Planetary Common Good	10
4. Solidarity.....	11
5. Universal Purpose of Created Things	11
6. Option For the Poor.....	11
7. Authentic Development	12
8. Justice between the generations	12
Praxis: The call of Laudato Si’	12
A. Evaluating our lifestyle.....	13
1. Pollution and climate change	13
2. Water.....	14
3. Loss of Biodiversity	14
4. Worsening of quality of life, and social deterioration.....	14
5. Global inequality.....	14
6. The feeble response to our environmental problems	14
B. Living a new lifestyle of Hospitality	15
1. Prophetic leadership	15
2. Laudato Si’ Goals based Actions.....	16
2.1. Laudato Si’ Goals for Actions.....	16
2.1.1. Response to the Cry of the Earth	16
2.1.2. Response to the Cry of the Poor	16
2.1.3. Ecological Economics.....	16
2.1.4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles	16
2.1.5. Ecological Education	16
2.1.6. Ecological Spirituality.....	17
2.1.7. Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action.....	17
2.2. Actions in Response to the cry of the Earth	17

2.2.1.	Religious Order/Congregation.....	17
2.2.2.	Healthcare centers	18
2.2.2.1.	Institutional management approach	18
2.2.2.2.	Ten Goals for actions	18
2.2.2.2.1.	Leadership	18
2.2.2.2.2.	Chemicals substances.....	19
2.2.2.2.3.	Waste.....	19
2.2.2.2.4.	Energy.....	20
2.2.2.2.5.	Water.....	20
2.2.2.2.6.	Transportation.....	21
2.2.2.2.7.	Food.....	21
2.2.2.2.8.	Pharmaceuticals	22
2.2.2.2.9.	Buildings	22
2.2.2.2.10.	Purchasing	23
2.2.3.	Homes: Communities-families	24
2.2.3.1.	Water.....	24
2.2.3.2.	Energy.....	24
2.2.3.3.	Garbage and Waste	26
2.2.3.4.	Packaging.....	27
2.2.3.5.	Paper, Batteries, Toxic Products	28
2.2.3.6.	Transport.....	29
2.2.3.7.	Food.....	29
2.2.3.8.	Fair Trade/Purchasing	30
2.2.3.9.	Liturgy and Prayer	30
2.3.	Actions in Response to the cry of the Poor: Works of Mercy in Laudato Si'	31
2.3.1.	Corporal works of Mercy (8).....	32
2.3.2.	Spiritual Works of Mercy (8).....	32
	References.....	33

Introduction

‘Which of these three’, asked Jesus, ‘was neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ (Luke 10:36). Our planet, our common home, seems to have ‘fallen into the hands of robbers who have stripped it’ off its assets, and plundered it, ‘and have gone away, leaving it half dead’ (Luke 10:30).¹

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), which is a core biblical passage for our spirituality, beyond being a story about goodness, is a parable about involvement.² What sets the Samaritan apart is that he is someone who acts. He sees, he has compassion, he acts, he gets involved.³ For Jesus, he is the model of our response to the world: he becomes involved in the situation in which he finds himself. Our world is being plundered; we cannot walk away leaving it half dead.⁴ The present context of the global environmental crisis can no longer be ignored; a response is urgently required. The Order is expected, like the Good Samaritan, to get involved and act.

The hospitaller ministry is challenged to reflect on the following: How can the Hospitaller Family offer a new Hospitality as a response to the cry of a traumatized Earth and all its people? What can our Hospitality say to our suffering planet and to our brothers and sisters who are deeply impoverished by the increasingly serious environmental crisis? What does God's invitation to heed both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor mean to our fraternal lives and our mission?

Among the core principles of hospitality presented in the *Charter of Hospitality*, published in 2000 and revised in 2012, a clarion call was given to care for creation, in as much as the Order pointed out that to give respect for human life requires “duties towards the resources of the biosphere”⁵. However, the main focus of the Charter which gives the basis on the ethics of the Order, remained on the caring of the sick and the needy person, without a broader development of this area.

Today, aware of the interconnectedness of all the creation, arises the need to have a more detailed reference guide that serves the entire Order in caring for our “Mother Earth” whose degradation (environmental degradation) compromises human health, life and dignity — especially for the poor, vulnerable and future generations.⁶

Thus, in response to the call of the 69th General Chapter to elaborate a Code of Ethics containing recommendations with regard to the respect of creation⁷, *Caring for Creation for a Holistic Hospitality*, is set to be a reflexional guide on environmental ethics that completes the Code of Ethics of the Order and implement what is said in the *Charter of Hospitality*. Purposefully, it attempts to provide basics for overcoming the current global environmental issues that lead to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”⁸. Building upon the Biblical and hospitaller tradition, in conjunction with teachings of the Church – pre-eminently with *Laudato si’* (LS)–

¹ D. FARRELL, *The Cry of the Earth – The Cry Of The Poor: The Climate Catastrophe*, 5.

² Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, *Pastoral Care in the manner of Saint John of God*, N°2.3.5.4

³ FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, N°66-67

⁴ D. FARRELL, *The Cry of the Earth – The Cry Of The Poor: The Climate Catastrophe*, 5.

⁵ Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, *Charter of Hospitality*, N°4.2.6

⁶ D. J. MISLESH-D. R. DILEO- L. ANDERKO, *Laudato Si’ and Catholic Health Care*, 47. LS, 95,

⁷ Cf. *Déclarations du 69^e Chapitre Général*, 117.

⁸ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si’* (LS), 49.

this document aims to provide guidance on environmental ethics so that our entities, in the Hospitaller Order and the Congregation of the Hospitaller Sisters, might be able to respond to the ecological challenges of our time.

Creation that has welcomed us into this world, needs our hospitality in order to remain hospitable to the entire universe. "The ecological balance and the sustainable and equitable use of the world's resources are important elements of just dealings with all the communities in our global village; they are also the object of justice to be shared with future generations who will inherit what we bequeath to them. The irresponsible exploitation of natural resources and the environment degrades the quality of life, destroys cultures and reduces the poor to abject poverty. We must foster strategic attitudes which will create responsible relationships with the environment in which we live and which we share, and of which we are merely its stewards."⁹ As hospitallers, we are called to "cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation"¹⁰ in every way possible. We are called to be opened to the world around us, to listen attentively to all those creatures who inhabit this little planet, our common home; we must be partners in dialogue, making our specific contribution to the healing of our world, and of the people who live in it.

Even if we cannot attribute to the life of Saint John of God the expression of our attention to ecology, we can nevertheless trace some traits of "ecological sensitivity" in his work. First, he always showed great attention to the "environmental" components of his assistance to the sick and the needy. In fact, he did not limit himself to treating them in the body but provided them with shelter, a hot meal, mats and blankets. In this sense, it is particularly significant to have saved the furnishings of the hospital in Granada during the fire and after having saved the mentally ill who were hospitalized there, at the cost of his own life.

Even today in the Gomérez ascent, where he structured his first real hospital, a small door gives access to Carmen de San Juan de Dios, that is a small garden, the only testimony of his ancient hospital but also of the attention to nature that was present there.

As it is well known, after the abandonment of the paternal house, John of God (Giovanni) became a shepherd. As it has been observed, unlike the farmer, the shepherd spends most of his time grazing the flock, immersed in nature and contemplating it. Basically, he is a contemplative and there is a specific literature (called "bucolic") born in the world of pastoralism.¹¹

In a more direct way, the nascent Hospitaller Order begins to have a specific interest in areas that today we would define as "ecological".

In Anton Martin's hospital, patients with skin diseases due to bad hygienic conditions began to be differentiated by preparing the great remedy of water for them, that is, special baths.

In most of the first hospitals there was a special garden where plants were used by the "spetiale" (specialist) (ie the pharmacist friar) to provide the most appropriate remedies for the various pathologies.

⁹ Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, *Charter of Hospitality*, N°4.2.6

¹⁰ LS 14.

¹¹ L. SALVINO, *San Giovanni di Dio, il creatore dell'ospedale moderni*, 46.

In 1804 a school of botany was established in Milan directed by Fr. Innocenzo Monguzzi who, among other things, also collected a precious and vast herbarium.¹²

Among the saints who were followers of Saint John of God, Saint Benedict Menni (11 March 1841 – 24 April 1914) had an integral concept of Hospitality, which encompasses all the dimensions that contribute to and affect people's health and their therapeutic process; everything and everyone is people-oriented, as people are at the core of all Hospitaller institutions' actions.

Against this background, Benedict Menni considers the aesthetic dimension of architecture to be especially important, as there is a therapeutic balance between spaces and people, rehabilitative and humanizing dynamics, beauty, and harmony, light and plants, colors and materials.¹³ The feeling of well-being and the experience of “home”, welcoming and familiar warmth are highly valued and essential aspects of the Hospitality that defines us.

Saint Benedict Menni tried to build the centers where there was enough space for gardens, orchards and, in many cases, access to mountains and springs. For the sick, this was a way to have fun and keep busy. In other words, apart from enjoying their surroundings, they looked after them with great care.

Beauty is at the service of people. We want our Hospitaller service and attention to be expressed through aesthetics in all dimensions – light, harmony, colours, balance. In our everyday life, this is where we experience complementarity between science and charity¹⁴, between the beauty of the service and the truth of caring for people, conveyed in a dignified aesthetics which simultaneously takes us into the spiritual dimension and the merciful and compassionate love of Jesus for the most vulnerable and the sick.

It is for such reasons that this resource is offered to all the members of the hospitaller family, 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.

The concept of environmental ethics

The first and historical definition of ecology is due to Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), in his book *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen*, describing it as «the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature — the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment; including, above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact — in a word, ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle of existence.»¹⁵

Consequently, a prominent feature—some, indeed, would say a defining feature—of ecological ethics is the extension of moral standing beyond the human community. [...] Ecological ethics involves evaluating, justifying (or not), and prescribing values, norms, and standards of character and conduct in view of the ecological conditions that contribute to the well-being of humans and other life forms. Ecological ethics comes in both philosophical and religious

¹² G. RUSSOTTO, *Saint John of God and his Hospitaller Order*, Vol II,98.

¹³ B. F. LISAZO, - Perfil Juandediano del Beato Benito Menni,26,94

¹⁴ Congregação das Irmãs Hospitaleiras CSJ, *Critérios Fundacionais*, Coleção Identidade e Missão, 28.

¹⁵ J. BATE, *The Economy of Nature, in Romantic Ecology*, 26.

versions; the problems and values are often the same, though the methods and ultimate rationales are often different.

“The Ecological Ethics of *Laudato Si'* echoes the biblical concept of justice — the Hebraic Covenant Theology, which refers to as Right-Relations in four directions: to God, to oneself, to our fellow human beings and to creation.”¹⁶

The topical agenda of ecological ethics is molded by contemporary environmental problems. The primary concerns are climate change, multiple forms of pollution, human population growth, scarcities of some renewable and nonrenewable resources, human-induced losses in biodiversity, the interactive dynamics of ecological degradation and economic patterns of consumption and distribution, and, increasingly relevant, the environmental effects of genetic manipulations.

Biblical roots of environmental ethics

A. Old Testament roots

Creation stories of Genesis 1-2 provide the accounts of creation and provide a number of important insights concerning creation and the relationships and responsibilities that exist between God, humankind and the rest of the created order. From these chapters of Genesis are drawn religious truths such as: that God is the creator of all things; that there is a close relationship between God and the created world; that the created world is a good thing; that human beings have a particular responsibility, known as stewardship, for the created world and that failure to fulfil this responsibility of stewardship will inevitably lead to undesirable consequences for humankind.

Throughout history, humanity has primarily operated out of an anthropocentric view of the world which has focused on the primacy and supremacy of humankind in the created order. Such views arose out of beliefs that the biblical command of Genesis 1:28 to “*subdue it ... have dominion over the fish of the sea ...*” was in effect a license to freely use the world's resources. This belief has, in effect, sanctioned the free use of the world's resources for the goal human advancement. “The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to 'use and misuse', or to dispose of things as one pleases.”¹⁷

Genesis 1:28 has been misinterpreted. This biblical verse has been wrongly considered as a license to exploit nature for human purposes. A thesis, very in vogue, even if criticizable, holds that the Judeo-Christian culture has had a determining role. Advance by Lynn White Jr. in 1967 this thesis constitutes an obligatory point of reference both because it has now become an authoritative bibliographic reference and because it offers the starting point for a series of fundamental considerations. There are essentially three accusations made against Christianity in this sense. The first is the attitude of domination and exploitation of the earth that would spring from the command given by God to man to “subdue it” and “dominate” his creatures (Gn 1, 26-28); the second relates to the desacralization carried out by Christianity on nature, reduced

¹⁶ A. L. S. INGLES, Jr, *The Ecological Ethics of Laudato Si'*,1; LS 210,

¹⁷ FRANCIS, *Evangelium Vitae*, 42.

to the rank of created reality and, as such, removed from the sphere of intangibility that it had in pagan religions; the third refers to the role played by the Judeo-Christian religion in the development of science and technology.¹⁸

The story of Creation did not receive a deeper understanding. This text highlights rather the mutual relationship which exists between humankind and the rest of creation. The world provides resources needed for human life; however, the negligent use of these resources will lead to environmental degradation and a loss of the capacity of the earth to provide. Thus, this passage forms a teaching on stewardship, a reminder of the fundamental responsibility to care for creation.

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*, the seventh day blessed by God. The climax of the work of God is the seventh day, the day sanctified by God. *Shabbat*, 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. "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 Jewish thought, observance of the Sabbath is much more than a commandment that obliges to rest. Respect for creation is inherent. God stops (and man must do it together with Him) to contemplate and so respect His work.

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." "Cultivate" (*habad*) refers to tilling, ploughing or working, while "keep" (*shamar*) means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.²⁰—These highlights the understanding of stewardship. The earth's resources will provide for human need; however, humankind has a responsibility to protect environment and ensure it remains fruitful.²¹ So was the covenant given to Noah (*Gn 9: 9-10*).

Besides Genesis, other books of the Pentateuch, especially Deuteronomy 20:19-20, Leviticus 25:5-6, prohibits any needless destruction of the natural environment, and teaches responsible agricultural practices whereby the fields are to lie fallow every seventh year in order to ensure the continued fertility of the soil and to guard against over taxing its resources.

Even the plagues of Egypt can be read as a disharmony in a universe and in an environment where animal and environmental resources are each other in perfect harmony.

¹⁸ *LS*, 67-69

¹⁹ *LS*, 71, 237

²⁰ *LS*, 67

²¹ *LS*, 124

In the Psalms which are a constant song of praise to God, we encounter the Almighty who is “good” and “compassionate ... towards all he has done,”²² and whose mercy endures forever.²³ “The Psalms also invite other creatures to join us in this praise, espousing reverence and respect for creation: “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!” (cf. Ps. 148).²⁴ Continually the Psalms and wisdom literature speak of this interconnectedness of all creatures, a kind of universal family, a sublime fellowship.²⁵

The writings of the Prophets also see Creation and liberation as intimately linked to God and call humanity for a sense of wonders of creation found in.²⁶ These passages anticipating future messianic times also show a flourishing environment and a state of harmony between humankind and the rest of creation. These messianic visions reflect beliefs of a future time where people will live according to the will of God. In this vision environmental wellbeing is integral.

B. New Testament roots

In the New Testament Jesus’ teaching on the reign of God extols the virtues of respect, consideration, harmony and balance etc, which are at the heart of modern environmental ethics. While he may not have taught explicitly about environmental concerns, Jesus’ teaching on the reign of God is, nevertheless, a powerful element of environmental ethics. Jesus emphasizes that God is Creator and Father.²⁷ He reminds us that all of Creation is important to God. He uses the example of the natural world to convey the ways of God to listeners. Thus, the balance and simplicity of nature are placed before followers as worthy of contemplation in order to more perfectly respond to the will of God: “Behold the birds of the air, they do not sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.... See how the flowers of the field grow... If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?”²⁸ Also, Jesus himself is in harmony with Creation, “who is he that the winds and the sea obey him?”²⁹, because Christ is the *logos* through which Creation comes into being.³⁰ 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.³¹

In the Gospel there are numerous references, examples, parables that draw inspiration from nature and its orderly development: the parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–23), of the good wheat and weeds (Matthew 13:24-30), of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9), of the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), of the wheat grain (John 12:24-26), etc.

²² *Ps* 145, 9.

²³ Cf. *Ps* 136.

²⁴ *LS* 72.

²⁵ *LS* 89.

²⁶ Cf. *Jer* 32:17-21; *Is* 11:1-9,40:28b-29, *Joel* 2:21-26, *Job* 39-41

²⁷ Cf. *Mt* 11:25.

²⁸ *Mt* 6:26-31

²⁹ *Mt* 8:27.

³⁰ Cf. *Col* 1:16; *Jn* 1:1-18.

³¹ Cf. *Col* 1:19-20; *1Cor* 15:28.

Finally, Paul describes the Kingdom of God as, "...not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness (justice), peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rm 14:17). He uses an important element of nature (ie the process of germination) to illustrate the kingdom of God and the resurrection: "if the seed does not die ... "(1 Cor 15, 42-44). Pauline literature offers perhaps the most important affirmation with respect to the ecological theme, that is the idea that all nature is waiting to be redeemed and she too suffers in the pangs of childbirth (Rm 8: 18-25).

" Gazing in the Old Testament, it can be noticed that the Hebraic Covenant Theology best translates justice concept as "Right-Relations" or "Life-Giving Relationships"³² As an ethical value, this can be associated with the concepts of harmony, wholeness, caring, compassion, reciprocal regard, and mutual valuation of intrinsic worth. To be just means human beings should live in lifegiving relationships in the following holistic essential relations in four directions or the fourfold relationality: with their fellow human beings, with themselves, with nature (creation) and ultimately with God.³³

Drawing from this perspective, integral Ecology presupposes the said holistic essential relations and serves as a paradigm that "seeks to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God."³⁴ It "should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning"³⁵.

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. Challenging mainly the anthropocentric view which exalts humankind over the rest of creation and which leads inevitably to its exploitation, the Bible prohibits needless destruction and calls also for reverence, respect, consideration, harmony and balance.

Fundamental Principles of Environmental Ethics

The tradition of Catholic social teaching offers a developing and distinctive perspective on environmental issues. The following principles drawn from this tradition are integral dimensions of ecological responsibility:³⁶

1. "Sacramental Universe"

The Christian vision of a sacramental universe-a world that discloses the Creator's presence by visible and tangible signs-can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once

³² A. L. S. INGLES, Jr, *Life With Ease (Nakakaluwag): A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14

³⁴ LS 65-66, 210.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 210.

³⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 451-487

again.³⁷ It calls “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale.”³⁸

Reverence for the Creator present and active in nature, moreover, may serve as ground for environmental responsibility. It is to the Creator of the universe, then, that we are accountable for what we do or fail to do to preserve and care for the earth and all its creatures. For “the Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it” (Ps 24:1). Dwelling in the presence of God, we are to experience ourselves as part of creation, as stewards within it, not separate from it. As faithful stewards, fullness of life comes from living responsibly within God’s creation.

Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. It is a difficult balance, requiring both a sense of limits and a spirit of experimentation. Even as we rejoice in earth’s goodness and in the beauty of nature, stewardship places the responsibility for the well-being of all God’s creatures.

2. Respect For Life:

Respect for nature and respect for human life are inextricably related. Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, extends also to the rest of creation, other species, ecosystems, and even distinctive landscapes give glory to God³⁹ even if only the human being has the dignity of a person and, as such, is distinguished from every other creature.

The diversity of life manifests God’s glory. Every creature shares a bit of the divine beauty. The wonderful variety of the natural world is, therefore, part of the divine plan and, as such, invites our respect. Accordingly, it is appropriate that we treat other creatures and the natural world not just as means to human fulfillment, but also as God’s creatures, possessing an independent value, worthy of our respect and care.

By preserving natural environments, by protecting endangered species, by laboring to make human environments compatible with local ecology, by employing appropriate technology, and by carefully evaluating technological innovations as we adopt them, we exhibit respect for creation and reverence for the Creator.⁴⁰

3. Planetary Common Good

Ecological concern has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is.⁴¹ Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible, although those most responsible are often the least affected. The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic.⁴²

Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone. Its various aspects demonstrate the need for concerted efforts aimed at establishing

³⁷ LS, 233-236

³⁸ LS, 9.

³⁹ LS, 85-86, 118

⁴⁰ LS, 87

⁴¹ LS, 42, 138-139

⁴² LS, 156-158

the duties and obligations that belong to individuals, peoples, States and the international community.

A particular responsibility of governments in this area is the task of providing for the defense and preservation of common good such as the natural and human environments.⁴³

4. Solidarity

In the Catholic tradition, the universal common good is specified by the duty of solidarity, a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good, a willingness to lose oneself for the sake of the others instead of exploiting them.⁴⁴ Solidarity requires sacrifices of our own self-interest for the good of others and of the earth we share. It places special obligations upon the industrial countries and reveals the urgent moral need for a new universal solidarity, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized. Only with equitable and sustainable development can poor nations curb continuing environmental degradation and avoid the destructive effects of the kind of over development that has used natural resources irresponsibly.⁴⁵

5. Universal Purpose of Created Things

God has given the fruit of the earth to sustain the entire human family without excluding or favoring anyone. Human work has enhanced the productive capacity of the earth and in our time is increasingly important as the productive factor both of non-material and of material wealth. But a great many people, in the developing countries' cities and rural areas, are still deprived of the means of livelihood.⁴⁶ In moving toward an environmentally sustainable economy, we are obligated to work for a just economic system which equitably shares the bounty of the earth and of human enterprise with all peoples. Created things belong not to the few, but to the entire human family.⁴⁷

6. Option For the Poor

The ecological problem is intimately connected to justice for the poor when it is clear that environmental degradation and social injustice are interconnected.⁴⁸ The goods of the earth, which in the divine plan should be a common patrimony, often risk becoming the monopoly of a few who often spoil it and, sometimes destroy it, thereby creating a loss for all humanity.

The painful adjustments to be undertaken in economies for the sake of the environment must not diminish the sensitivity to the needs of the poor. The option for the poor embedded in the Gospel and the Church's teaching brings that the poor suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering.

A related and vital concern is the Church's constant commitment to the dignity of work and the rights of workers. Environmental progress cannot come at the expense of workers and their

⁴³ LS, 157

⁴⁴ LS, 13-14,

⁴⁵ LS, 192-194, 206-207

⁴⁶ LS, 48

⁴⁷ LS, 49-52

⁴⁸ LS, 10, 25, 48-49

rights.⁴⁹ Solutions must be found that do not force to choose between a decent environment and a decent life for workers so that not only the earth but also workers and their families are protected.⁵⁰ No one has the right to take the dignity of a human person.⁵¹

7. Authentic Development

Unrestrained economic development is not the answer to improving the lives of the poor. Catholic social teaching has never accepted material growth as a model of development. A mere accumulation of goods and services, even for the benefit of the majority is not enough for the realization of human happiness.⁵² The Church warned that in desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, humanity consumes the resources of the earth subjecting it without restraint as if it did not have its own God-given purposes.⁵³

Authentic development supports moderation and even austerity in the use of material resources. It also encourages a balanced view of human progress consistent with respect for nature. Furthermore, it invites the development of alternative visions of the good society and the use of economic models with richer standards of well-being than material productivity alone. Authentic development also requires affluent nations to seek ways to reduce and restructure their overconsumption of natural resources. Finally, authentic development also entails encouraging the proper use of both agricultural and industrial technologies, so that development does not merely mean technological advancement for its own sake but rather that technology benefits people and enhances the land.

8. Justice between the generations

The principle of justice between the generations refers to the fact that intergenerational solidarity as the notion of the common good extends to future generations. “Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.”⁵⁴ “The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.”⁵⁵ The current crisis demands a very concrete response: “The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.”⁵⁶

Praxis: The call of Laudato Si’

“‘*What is it that we should do?*’ (Lk 3:14). There is no single answer to this question. As in John the Baptist’s response to the crowds who asked this question, there are different tasks for each of us, according to our age and condition and the role we have in the Church or in society. But there is one answer that applies to all of us, since each of us has the responsibility to protect our common home and

⁴⁹ LS, 246

⁵⁰ LS, 134

⁵¹ LS, 205

⁵² LS, 222-223, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 28.

⁵³ LS, 225-227

⁵⁴ LS, 159

⁵⁵ LS, 161

⁵⁶ LS, 162

to show concern for our neighbors, whether near or far in space and time. Like every summons to conversion, this call to ecological conversion is addressed to each of us personally and demands a discernment and change in the way we live.”⁵⁷

As Hospitallers, 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. “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”⁵⁸

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 mother Earth affects everybody, and has an impact on the whole world, because everything is interconnected.⁵⁹ 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.

A. Evaluating our lifestyle

“Today, in a word, the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle.”⁶⁰ 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 in our homes or places of work. It would be very useful to discuss how each brother and co-works look at the issue of climate change, first at an individual level, community level and in healthcare settings.

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.”⁶¹ The first chapter of the Encyclical proposes six areas that require careful analysis: we believe that they give a solid foundation to our reflection. The brief summary of each area, could help for both personal and shared reflection.

1. Pollution and climate change⁶²

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.

⁵⁷ Interdicasterial Working Group of The Holy See on Integral Ecology, *Journeying Towards Care*, 219-220

⁵⁸ LS, 19

⁵⁹ LS, 92

⁶⁰ LS, 206

⁶¹ LS, 61

⁶² LS 20-26

With regard to climate change, the Pope states that there is a significant scientific consensus that an alarming level of global warming is occurring.

In healthcare facilities there can be heavy sources of pollution if there is an inadequate wastes management, or emissions of toxic air pollutants such as mercury and dioxin. Mercury can be used in thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, thermostats, fluorescent lights, and other products found in hospitals.⁶³

2. Water⁶⁴

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.

3. Loss of Biodiversity⁶⁵

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.

4. Worsening of quality of life, and social deterioration⁶⁶

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 shows that the economic growth of the last two centuries has not always led to real progress or an improved quality of life.

5. Global inequality⁶⁷

"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.

6. The feeble response to our environmental problems⁶⁸

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."

⁶³ Healthy Air: A Community and Business Leaders Guide: Reducing Air Pollution from: Hospitals, 1.

⁶⁴ LS 27-31

⁶⁵ LS 32-42

⁶⁶ LS 43-47

⁶⁷ LS 48-52

⁶⁸ LS 53-59

B. Living a new lifestyle of Hospitality

What can we do at the personal, community, hospital and social levels, to address the current environmental crisis?

1. Prophetic leadership⁶⁹

At this historical juncture, the need for prophetic leadership should be the driving force for a new lifestyle of hospitality in the Order. It is prompting to notice also that beside his great introductory formula of all his letters: “God before all and above everything in the world. Amen Jesus.”, Saint John of God almost at the end of his life advised that for God one should have “Reverence: as Creator...” “and praying to God for the whole world.”⁷⁰ This was a call of our founder to be in unity having in mind the interconnectedness of the whole world and giving reverence to the owner, God.

Pope Francis is leading in this respect with his repeated and forthright calls to care for our common home. The response to this call has to come in all the areas of our ministry towards the sick and the needy, as essential in helping all the members to see and understand the need for reflection, discernment and action.

Above all, there is a need to lead by example, taking into account the actual ecological impact of all aspects of the Order’s own actions and demonstrating how these can be reduced through practical measures. Every infrastructure of the Order, being a place of human activities, has its own ecological footprint.

This response can be engaged in simple seven key steps: ⁷¹

1. **Develop Leadership:** Ensuring the support of key leaders from across the ministry,
2. **Encourage Ecological Conversion:** Using education and spirituality to come to see, know and love creation as God does,
3. **Build a Team:** Engaging a team to drive the ministries ecological vision, goals and actions,
4. **Engage Everyone:** Providing information, removing barriers and providing incentives to engage the maximum number of people within the ministry,
5. **Start Small:** Prioritizing easy-to-achieve projects, acknowledging ecological successes, and sustaining motivation with an annual progress report,
6. **Take on Challenges:** Increasing credibility by tackling important and challenging changes and providing more frequent progress reports,
7. **Review:** Taking time to celebrate achievements, identify challenges/opportunities and refocus for ongoing action.

⁶⁹ Trócaire, *Ethical Investments in an era of Climate Change*, 5.

⁷⁰ *Letters of Saint John of God*, III 13-14.

⁷¹ The Society of Jesus, *Laudato si’ Action Plan*, 6.

2. Laudato Si' Goals based Actions⁷²

Discerning a response to the ecological crisis is a profound act of care. At this kairos moment, action is needed. The Laudato Si' seven (7) Goals guide our actions. They redefine and rebuild our relationship with each other and our common home. Their holistic approach acknowledges the planetary limits of all socio-economic systems and the human roots of the ecological crisis. They call for a spiritual and cultural revolution to realize integral ecology.

2.1. Laudato Si' Goals for Actions

2.1.1. Response to the Cry of the Earth

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy sufficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

2.1.2. Response to the Cry of the Poor

The Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programs.

2.1.3. Ecological Economics

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritizing care labour and protecting the dignity of workers.

2.1.4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g., plastic, etc.).

2.1.5. Ecological Education

Ecological Education is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring equitable access to education for all and promoting

⁷² Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, *Laudato Si' Special Anniversary Year*, 3-5.

human rights, fostering Laudato Si' themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities.

2.1.6. Ecological Spirituality

Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things”, both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities. Actions could include promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs, etc.

2.1.7. Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action

Community resilience and empowerment envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels. Actions could include promoting advocacy and developing people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.

2.2. Actions in Response to the cry of the Earth

Being a religious Order and working as a hospitaller family, brothers and co-works rank from various part of the society and intervene in various sphere of societal life. Thus, concrete response in the Order could be guided by lines of action in three (3) main sectors: Religious Order, Healthcare centers, Homes (communities-families)

2.2.1. Religious Order/Congregation⁷³

At the level of the Order/Congregation as a religious family:

1. Integrate and promote integral ecology into formation and ongoing formation programs.
2. Encourage members and affiliates living in areas of conflict and/or violence to share their stories about the human and environmental impact of violence and about effective nonviolent efforts to transform conflict, protect vulnerable communities and heal the earth.
3. Prioritize care for creation in outreach and promotional materials being sent to prospective members and benefactors.
4. Advocate consistently nonviolent approaches to protecting and healing the earth in the local, national and international spheres.
5. Be present to, take part in or support regional actions in response to ecological violence or threats of violence, offering solidarity and accepting the consequences of such actions.
6. Build network with Catholic aid, educational institutions and development agencies to support the promotion of environmental ethics

⁷³ Interdicasterial Working Group of The Holy See on Integral Ecology, *Journeying Towards Care*, 6.

2.2.2. *Healthcare centers*

In the course of our healthcare ministry, which is core in our mission, one of the prompting questions should be what impact our facilities and processes have on the environment and those people most vulnerable to climate change and pollution?⁷⁴

2.2.2.1. *Institutional management approach*⁷⁵

1. **Strive to improve the quality of the environment:**

- Environmental policy
- Procedures for managing the principal causes of negative environmental impact: (residues, dangerous materials and products, recycling of medical supplies, environmental contamination...)
- respect of environmental legislation

2. **Practice a proactive policy in terms of environmental protection:**

- regulation of water and energy consumption
- use of renewable energy sources
- promotion of integral campaigns aimed at raising people's awareness and educating them in environmental protection and improvement,
- Dissemination of guidelines on environmental protection

3. **Ensure an annual review of the organization's environmental commitments:**

- Environmental policy
- Environmental budget
- Annual environmental report

2.2.2.2. *Ten Goals for actions*⁷⁶

2.2.2.2.1. *Leadership*

Prioritize Environmental Health as a strategic imperative

Action Items

- Develop and commit to a system-wide green and healthy hospital policy.
- Form a task force consisting of representatives of various departments and professions within the organization to help guide and implement efforts.
- Dedicate staff resources at the executive/directorate and facility levels to address environmental health issues organization- or system-wide.
- Invest in research to remove barriers to further innovation.
- Assure that strategic and operating plans and budgets reflect the commitment to a green and healthy hospital.
- Provide opportunities for educating staff and community on environmental factors that contribute to the burden of disease, as well as the relationship between public environmental health and disease prevention.
- Together with the local community, engage in dialogues, debates and initiatives related to disease prevention and environmental health.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to map environmental health risks and conduct surveillance of diseases associated or potentially associated with environmental factors.

⁷⁴ B. SMITH, *Laudato Si' : The Latest Chapter In Catholic Social Tradition*, 63.

⁷⁵ Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, *Charismatic management*,30.

⁷⁶ Health Care Without Harm, *Global Green and Healthy Hospitals*,8-34.

- Build or participate in local networks of hospitals and/or health services groups committed to advocate for environmental health policies.
- Advocate for disease prevention and environmental health as core components of future health strategies.
- Encourage multilateral and bilateral agencies financing hospital construction or health sector operations to collaborate with public and private sector counterparts, to ensure that such financing promotes the development and operation of environmentally sustainable health facilities that foster community environmental health.
- Educate accreditation bodies about the intersection between environmental sustainability, human health and health care standards.
- Identify ways that sustainability practices can be incorporated into accreditation standards

2.2.2.2.2. Chemicals substances

Substitute Harmful Chemicals with Safer Alternatives:

Action Items:

- Develop institution-wide chemicals and materials policy and protocols to protect patient, worker, and community health and the environment, while helping drive society wide demand for alternatives.
- Implement a facility -specific chemicals action plan with benchmarks and timelines.
- Participate in the WHO Global Mercury-Free Health Care Initiative by substituting all mercury thermometers and blood pressure devices with safe, accurate, affordable alternatives.
- Address the use of chemicals of concern, including, for example, glutaraldehyde, halogenated fire retardants, PVC, DEHP and BPA, and seek safer alternatives and substitutes.
- Adopt policies that require disclosure of chemical ingredients in products and materials and seek to ensure that all ingredients have undergone at least basic toxicity testing.
- When products or materials are identified that contain Substances of Very High Concern -- substances that have been identified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction, or that are persistent and bioaccumulative or warrant similar concern -- hospitals should make it a high priority to replace them with safer alternatives.

2.2.2.2.3. Waste

Reduce, Treat and Safely Dispose of Healthcare Waste:

Action Items:

- Set up a waste management committee and allocate a dedicated budget for waste management.
- Implement a comprehensive waste reduction program, including avoiding, where feasible, injectable medicines where oral treatments are as effective.
- Segregate waste at source and initiate recycling for non-hazardous wastes.
- Implement a comprehensive waste management training program, including injection safety and safe handling of sharps and other waste categories.
- Ensure waste handlers are trained, vaccinated and have personal protective equipment.

- Introduce non-burn treatment technology in order to ensure that the waste that cannot be avoided is treated and disposed of in an economical, safe and environmentally sustainable manner.
- Advocate for public authorities to build and operate secure landfills to manage nonrecyclable waste post-treatment.
- Support and participate in the development and implementation of “zero waste” policies that significantly reduce the amount of waste generated at the hospital, municipal and national levels.

2.2.2.2.4. Energy

Implement Energy Efficiency and Clean, Renewable Energy Generation

Action Items:

- For existing buildings, implement an energy conservation and efficiency program that will reduce energy consumption. For new buildings, design to achieve building energy performance targets of 320 kWh/sq m or less.
- Conduct regular energy audits and use the results to inform awareness and retrofit programs.
- Once efficiency measures are implemented, investigate the purchase of clean, renewable energy, and if available, purchase at least five percent at the next available opportunity. In existing plants, shift to cleaner boiler fuels.
- Investigate sources of onsite, clean, renewable energy and include its generation in all new building plans.
- Identify potential co-benefits of climate mitigation efforts that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and local health threats, while saving money at the same time.
- Integrate occupant education and awareness programs to reduce energy consumption related to occupancy. In mechanically conditioned spaces, turn thermostats down a few degrees in winter or cool climates, and up in summer or warm climates. Even a slight shift can create significant energy savings.

2.2.2.2.5. Water

Reduce Hospital excessive water usage and supply potable Water.

Action Items:

- Establish a framework that aspires to “net zero water use” within a hospital system.
- Implement water conservation strategies: install efficient faucets and toilets, routinely check plumbing and pipes to prevent leaks, eliminate seal and cooling water on medical air compression and vacuum pumps, and retrofit refrigeration systems.
- Switch from film-based radiological imaging equipment, which uses large quantities of water, to digital imaging, which uses no water and no polluting radiological chemicals.
- Landscape grounds using drought-resistant plants to minimize water use.
- Consider harvesting rainwater and/or recycling water for process water uses.
- Eliminate bottled water facility-wide if high quality potable water is available.
- Regularly analyze water quality.
- Where the health facility has access to potable water but it is not readily available in the community, develop programs to provide the community with potable water as a public health service.

- Implement on-site wastewater treatment technologies when no municipal service is available.
- Develop joint projects with the community to improve and protect water supplies; support initiatives for public systems to improve water quality, water delivery and wastewater systems for the entire population.

2.2.2.2.6. Transportation

Improve Transportation Strategies for Patients and Staff

Action Items:

- Provide health care in locations that are accessible to patients, staff and visitors without causing them unnecessary travel.
- Consider community-based primary care, home care and co-locating medical services with related social services or community programs.
- Develop strategies for telemedicine, communication by e-mail and other alternatives to face-to-face encounters between caregivers and patients.
- Encourage staff, patients and visitors to walk or use car pools, public transport or bicycles whenever possible.
- Install showers, lockers and bicycle storage facilities to encourage staff to adopt healthy modes of transportation
- Negotiate discounts for public transport to provide incentives for its use.
- Optimize the energy efficiency of hospital fleet vehicles by using hybrid, electric or appropriate bio-fuel technologies.
- Purchase from local suppliers, and/or suppliers who use fuel efficient transportation.
- Dispose of waste near the point of generation.
- Advocate for progressive public transportation policies in the interest of environmental health.

2.2.2.2.7. Food

Purchase and Serve Sustainably Grown, Healthy Food

Action Items:

- Modify hospital menus and practices to support healthier food purchases by buying locally produced and organic produce.
- Make the hospital a “fast food free zone”; eliminate sugar-based soft drinks in hospital cafeterias and vending machines.
- Work with local farmers, community-based organizations and food suppliers to increase the availability of locally sourced, sustainably grown food.
- Encourage vendors and/or food management companies to supply food that is produced without synthetic pesticides and hormones or antibiotics given to animals in the absence of diagnosed disease, and which supports farmer and farmworker health and welfare, as well as ecologically protective and restorative agriculture.
- Implement a step-by-step program to identify and adopt sustainable food procurement.
- Begin where minimal barriers exist and immediate steps can be taken, for example, by introducing organic fresh fruit in the cafeteria.
- Educate and communicate within the hospital or health care system, as well as to patients and community, about nutritious, socially equitable and ecologically sustainable food practices and procedures.
- Minimize and beneficially reuse food waste. For instance, compost food waste or use it as animal feed. Convert cooking oil waste into biofuel.

- Make the hospital a center that promotes nutrition and healthy food by holding farmers' markets for the surrounding community and fostering community gardens on hospital grounds.

2.2.2.2.8. Pharmaceuticals

Safely Manage and Dispose of Pharmaceuticals

Action Items:

- Prescribe small initial quantities for new prescriptions.
- Do not provide samples of medications to patients, as these often end up in the waste stream (or, alternatively, develop a program to reduce free sample waste). Inform consumers about safe disposal methods for unused or expired medications.
- Encourage pharmaceutical companies to develop more effective medication delivery systems, so medications are absorbed more efficiently by the body, and chemical excretion is minimized.
- Develop training programs for health care providers to optimize their prescribing practices.
- Adopt a plan for the centralized procurement and distribution of medications that controls the quantities that patients receive and limits waste.
- Wherever possible, establish contracts that ensure the return of excess pharmaceuticals to the manufacturer.
- Ensure that pharmaceutical waste is treated and disposed of in accordance with national and/or WHO guidelines as appropriate.
- Ensure that pharmaceuticals are only donated on request, and that any donations are in line with WHO policy and the policy of the recipient country.
- Initiate and publicize take-back programs to provide an alternative for patients to disposing of unused medicines down the drain or in municipal waste.

2.2.2.2.9. Buildings

Support Green and Healthy Hospital Design and Construction

Action Items:

- Aspire to carbon-neutral building operation.
- Protect and restore natural habitat; minimize the combined footprint of building, parking, roads and walks.
- Use high reflectance roofing and paving, or "green roof" systems and pervious paving, in order to reduce urban heat island impacts, manage stormwater and promote habitat.
- Design within local natural and social contexts in order to better integrate the building with the community and natural environment. Site facilities in accordance with solar orientation and prevailing wind.
- Employ passive systems wherever possible to provide increased resilience and redundancy -- use narrow floor plates for daylighting and natural ventilation.
- Prioritize health impacts of material extraction, transport, use and disposal in assessing them for use in health care settings, and use materials that are replenishable and support human and ecosystem health in all phases of their life cycle.

- Support the use of local and regional materials (reducing transportation energy), utilize salvaged and recycled materials (reducing energy otherwise expended on new production).
- Avoid materials such as lead and cadmium-containing paint and coatings, as well as asbestos.
- Substitute materials containing persistent bio-accumulative toxic chemicals (PBT's), including PVC, CPVC, and halogenated and brominated flame retardants, with safer alternatives.
- Create civilized built environments that foster inhabitant choice and control, advanced indoor air quality (through natural ventilation and mechanical systems), lighting and acoustical settings that reduce stress and support health and productivity.
- Refer to guidelines created by national or regional green building organizations.
- Advocate for policy guidelines and public funding that support green and healthy buildings.

2.2.2.2.10. Purchasing

Buy Safer and more sustainable products and materials

Action Items:

- Review facility procurement practices, and patronize local vendors who carry third party certified sustainable products and follow sustainable and ethical practices whenever possible.
- Implement a sustainable purchasing agenda that considers the environmental and human rights impact of all aspects of purchasing, from production to packaging to ultimate disposal.
- Develop coordination between hospitals to increase buying power for environmentally preferable purchasing.
- Utilize a sustainable and certified computer purchasing program for computer and electronic needs.
- Require suppliers to disclose chemical ingredients and safety testing data for product purchases and give preference to suppliers and products meeting these specifications. Limit hospital/health system purchases to products meeting these specifications.
- Utilize purchasing power to obtain environmentally responsible and ethically produced products at cost competitive prices and work with manufacturers and suppliers to innovate and expand the availability of these products.
- Make sure all contracts meet socially-responsible business principles: Follow the guidelines on ethical procurement for health from the Ethical Trading Initiative and the British Medical Association.
- Advocate for Extended Producer Responsibility, and for products to be designed so they generate less waste, last longer, are less disposable, use less hazardous raw materials and include less packaging.

2.2.3. Homes: Communities-families⁷⁷

We need to consider nine areas of daily life that can help in response to the care of the environment:

1. Water
2. Energy
3. Garbage and waste
4. Packaging
5. Paper, batteries and toxic substances
6. Transportation
7. Food
8. Fair Trade/ Purchasing
9. Liturgy and prayer

2.2.3.1. Water

Action Items:

- Turn off faucets when not using water (brushing teeth, soaping up when we wash our hands or take a shower, while washing anything). Allowing water to run for one minute represents a loss of 2 to 5 liters.
- Take a shower more frequently than a bath.
- Repair leaks and breaks as rapidly as possible (one faucet or toilet that drips can waste up to 5000 liters of water a year).
- Install storage tanks and low-use faucets.
- Fill the washer with clothes, economize on water (no half-loads)
- If you have a garden, practice xeriscaping (drought tolerant landscaping). Design the garden for low water use.
- Do not throw waste into the toilet: oil, cigarette butts, etc. Cigarette butts should be thrown into the trash and petroleum products (like paints and varnishes) should be placed in a bottle or jar and taken to recycling centers.²
- Avoid throwing contaminants or toxic substances into the sink: detergents, soaps, oils. In spite of purifiers, they still leach into the rivers. Some cleaning products contaminate less than others. Use them accordingly.
- Reduce consumption of detergent and softener in washing machines. (Manufacturers usually recommend larger amounts than are really needed.)
- Buy appliances that are energy and water efficient.

For reflection:

- **How can we improve our communal use of water?**
- **Decide what to do and evaluate the decision in six months by reading the water meter and looking at the water bill: how much water and how much money have been saved?**

2.2.3.2. Energy

What Steps Do We Need to Take?

⁷⁷ "Care for Creation in the Daily Life of the Friars Minor", Pg 6-24

To stop climate change and to reverse the damage it causes, we need to work at the personal, the communal and social levels. Four ways to address the issues are:

- **Promote energy that is clean and renewable:** solar, wind, water, energy produced from forest and farm waste. In just a few decades they can provide all the energy we need.
- **Save energy** by not wasting it.
- **Use energy in a rational and efficient manner** in cities, buildings, industry, for transport, in the home.
- **Support and cooperate with others** who defend the three previous points.

Action Items:

Lighting:

- Turn off the lights when leaving a room.
- Use natural light whenever possible, turn on only the lights farthest from the windows, and work at the tables closest to the natural light.
- Use low energy bulbs (compact fluorescents): they last nearly longer. Fluorescent bulbs save most in places that need continuous and prolonged illumination.
- Use halogen lamps (spot lights) for direct lighting of objects (pictures, works of art), or for concentrated focal points. They are not good for lighting an entire room.
- Replace normal switches with dimmers in areas that do not need constant maximum illumination.
- Install sensors in hallways, bathrooms and other places of occasional use.
- Clean lamps and bulbs regularly. Dust can reduce the lighting power of a bulb

Heating and Air Conditioning:

- Choose a heating system with a thermostat that turns off the boiler when the temperature reaches a pre-programmed level. Putting thermostatic valves on every radiator allows you to vary the temperatures for each room; you can keep rooms at different temperatures according to need.
- Do not block circulation of warm air, or cover radiators in any way.
- Turn off the heat or air conditioning after using bedrooms or meeting rooms that will be out of use.
- Service the boiler annually; a poorly maintained boiler produces less heat, consumes more fuel and pollutes more.
- Avoid heat loss. Fix windows that do not close well. Lower the shades at night or when not at home. Cover the space at the bottom of doors. Even better, insulate the house: walls and ceilings; install double-paned and hermetically sealed windows.
- Heat through the floor to guarantee a considerable saving of energy.
- In the summer, regulate the air conditioner to no more than 8° below the outside temperature, and turn it on only when necessary. If we raise the temperature of the air conditioner by only one degree, there is an energy saving of up to 8%!
- Do not leave the air conditioner on when away from home for a long time or when windows are open to air out the house.
- Clean the filters of the air conditioner often.

Work Equipment:

- Buy computers and electrical equipment that require less energy. Products that are energy efficient and follow safety and environmental standards can be recognized by a label which guarantees their quality (generally tagged with the labels *Energy Star* or *Ecolabel*).
- Program your computer and screen to switch to stand-by when not in use for a certain length of time. But avoid staying on stand-by for long periods of time because this function also contributes to energy consumption. (A TV turned off with the remote stays on stand-by; 10% of home energy consumption is attributable to items left on stand-by.)
- Turn off the main switch or pull the main plug at the end of the working day: computer transformers consume energy even when turned off.
- Turn on photocopiers and printers only when necessary.
- When going up two or three floors avoid using the elevator and use the stairs, if possible. The exercise is good for your health and each trip not taken provides a savings of almost 30 watts.

Household Appliances

- Buy fewer small appliances that you really do not need (like electric fruit squeezers), and use the ones you have less frequently.
- Check the energy labels on appliances (washers, refrigerators, dishwashers, etc.) before buying them. Try to buy class A appliances (with green labels). A product in the A class consumes about 30% less energy and produces less pollution as well.
- Use washing machines and dishwashers only when full and at lower temperatures.
- Position refrigerators and freezers away from heat sources like radiators and windows.
- Keep the thermostat in refrigerators and freezers on an intermediate setting. Very low temperatures are not useful for preserving food.
- Do not put hot food into the refrigerator or freezer (it causes frost build-up).
- Defrost the freezer regularly
- Limit the pre-heating of ovens.
- Keep bathroom water temperature in the intermediate range [not over 55° C (130° F)].
- Install the bathroom water heater near where the hot water will be used to avoid losing heat in long pipes.
- Do not keep the TV and other electric appliances (modem, video camera) on standby when they will not be used for long periods of time.

For reflection:

- **Read this information on energy use. Make realistic community decisions that will help achieve a more efficient, austere and sustainable use of energy.**
- **After four months, take a look at the meter and the electric bill; compute how much energy and money have been saved.**

2.2.3.3. Garbage and Waste

Action Items:

REDUCE: The first rule for the protection of the environment is reduction of consumption. It cuts down on waste of natural resources, on the amount of trash and on pollution. Avoid:

- “Use and throw-away” products.
- Excessive packaging.
- Non-refillable lighters, single-use cameras.
- Plastic or styrofoam trays for meat, vegetables, etc., because they are made with strong pollutants.

REUSE: Reuse the same object many times.

- Do not throw things away when they break—fix them.
- Reuse bags, boxes, envelopes and other containers.
- Give priority to articles with ecological labels. It promises a longer life for the product, due to replacing different parts of the product (check availability of spare parts).
- Choose products made of recycled materials.
- Choose products with returnable containers.
- Choose family or industrial sized containers over smaller ones.

RECYCLE: our garbage may become a new resource.

- Cardboard and magazines can be made into boxes.
- Recycled plastic can be used to produce water pipes, mattresses, bottles, containers, automobile parts....
- Glass and aluminum can be recycled to make new products of glass and aluminum.
- More than 50% of domestic waste can be recycled as compost.
- Practice selective collection of garbage. Keep up the pressure on authorities where it is not yet practiced.
- Use recycled paper.
- Use both sides of paper. Used sheets of paper can serve as note pads.
- Collect furniture, computers, household appliances, etc., for reuse or to recycle their parts.

For Reflection:

- **What throw-away items are used in the house? Could you find substitutes for some? Eliminate others?**
- **What items can be reused? Which one can recycled?**
- **In places where there is selective collection of garbage, does the community always separate the trash?**
- **Make some concrete decisions.**

2.2.3.4. Packaging

Action Items:

- To be a responsible consumer, it is necessary to recognize each kind of packaging and know how to dispose of it. Evaluate the impact of your consumption and use containers that cause least damage to the environment.
- Imagine how many plastic bags would be saved if you used a cloth bag instead.

- Reuse plastic or paper bags; remember to take one when you go shopping; use a bag only when necessary. Get accustomed to carrying a bag in your backpack or purse; you will not need a new bag if you buy more than expected.
- Do not buy water in plastic bottles. Installing a filter in your house in order to make use of tap water will provide water that is just as good. Also, you will eliminate problems caused by use of plastic.

For reflection:

- **We might decide not to accept plastic bags when making even the smallest purchase.**
- **Discuss in community/Home whether bottled water is really necessary or whether a filter might be installed to use tap water. If the decision is made to buy water, it could be bought in reusable glass bottles. The same is true for milk and other drinks: glass bottles are better than tetra brik or aluminum cans.**
- **It is very important to sort containers for garbage collection.**
- **What other decisions can be made? Be concrete!**
- **Six months after making the decisions in regard to these issues, schedule a communal evaluation of the process and its results.**

2.2.3.5.Paper, Batteries, Toxic Products

1. Paper

Action items:

- Try to use less paper. Consider whether you actually need a copy before you print something.
- Use both sides of the paper.
- Use recycled paper as your first option, or at least ecological paper.
- Reuse gift wrapping.
- Separate paper and cardboard and put them in their proper recycling containers.

2. Batteries

Action items :

- Reduce use of batteries by using solar calculators, games without batteries or by listening to music on the internet.
- Use rechargeable batteries, which can be used many times.
- Keep a special container handy for used batteries. Do not throw them into the trash, they are highly contaminating!
- Assign one member to collect used batteries and take them to the appropriate place for recycling.

3. Toxic Substances:

What Can We Do?

- Avoid using unnecessary toxic substances and substitute natural products when possible.
Most rural people of the world can be our teachers in this matter.

- Read labels and note products that carry the symbol for poison.
- Use concentrated products.
- Use only recommended quantities (or less when possible).
- Do not use products containing phosphates, phosphonates or polycarboxylates (they do irreversible damage to aquatic life).
- Shop at stores that carry environmentally friendly products.
- Use natural cosmetics, especially those that are Fair Trade.
- Opt for natural paint, or ecological paint when natural is unavailable.
- Use natural varnish, some made with linseed oil (they can be tinted with pigments or powders that are also natural).
- Clean paintings with solvent made of essence of citrus (orange oil).

For Reflection:

- **Reflect on the material presented in this section and make some realistic choices, personal and communal, in regard to paper, batteries and toxic substances. These decisions should be very concrete and put into writing. Alert the person who does purchasing for the household about them.**
- **Review the decisions after six months. Have they worked?**

2.2.3.6. Transport

What Can We Do?

- Use public transportation as much as possible. It will help avoid parking problems, save money and contribute to diminishing pollution.
- Do not use the car when unnecessary.
- Use a bicycle or walk around town more often for trips that are not very long. It is good for health and for the pocketbook.
- Ride-share as much as possible, for work, vacations, etc.
- Buy cars that are more fuel efficient.
- Do not exceed 100 km/h (55 mph) on the highway; it will save gas.
- Shop close to home, where it is not necessary to use a car.
- Choose the train for trips outside the city, especially longer ones.
- Support groups and campaigns that pressure government improve and promote public transportation.

Reflection:

- **Discuss the use of cars in communities/Homes. Do we really need all of them?**
- **When buying a car, do we look for the most efficient models?**
- **Are there situations when we might avoid use of a car and use public transport instead?**
- **Do we promote public transportation in our city? Are there groups that try to pressure the government in this area?**
- **Make concrete decisions in this area.**

2.2.3.7 Food

Action items:

- It is good to eat less sweets, meats and fats, and more grains, legumes, fruits and greens.
- Avoid junk food (have you considered the true meaning of that phrase?).

- Eat fresh foods that are produced close to where you live, cutting down on transport and pollution.
- Buy fish caught in sustainable ways.
- Natural food is safer for people and the planet. Its use promotes development of small and medium sized farming and herding enterprises which are less harmful to the environment. They also help to sustain rural communities.
- Do not waste food. This is a simple way to make the most of natural resources.
- Get accustomed to reading labels in order to avoid food that is genetically modified.

For reflection:

- **Is there something about our use of food that needs to improve?**
- **Do we provide clear information on this topic to our cooks and to those who do the shopping?**

2.2.3.8 Fair Trade/Purchasing

Action items:

- By choosing Fair Trade items we add an ethical component to our purchasing and promote a model of production and trade that is at the service of people.
- Fair Trade products can be a bit more expensive, but allow us to practice solidarity and justice. We are accustomed to giving free will gifts to promote projects in the developing world. The little bit extra we pay for these products is a kind of free will offering to promote the peoples of the developing world. It is our contribution to justice in international trade.
- Look for products that carry the Fair Trade seal; it certifies that the product meets Fair Trade criteria, and allows you to look for these products in the places where you usually shop.
- Promote Fair Trade activities in schools and parishes: urge them to organize a talk, a course, a booth with Fair Trade articles...
- Besides buying Fair Trade products for ourselves, we can pass this information on to family and friends, and encourage them to buy Fair Trade products.

For reflection:

- **How well informed are you on Fair Trade issues?**
- **Organizations that promote Fair Trade exist in many countries, and Fair Trade stores exist in many cities. Are you aware of any of them?**
- **If the community is not aware of Fair Trade, appoint one of the members to gather information (perhaps from the JPIC Animator or Committee). Organize an ongoing formation session for the community on this theme.**
- **What products for personal or communal use can be purchased at Fair Trade stores? Make some concrete decisions.**

2.2.3.9 Liturgy and Prayer

Action items:

Use certain moments in the liturgical calendar to highlight aspects of Creation:

- **Christmas:** For example, do we need trees for decoration? And if we do, can we replant or recycle them?

- **Lent:** Perhaps during Lent our communities/Homes could study some ecological problems. We could have a prayer meeting (retreat day...) on these themes and ask ourselves what kind of conversion the Lord is asking of us. Some topics might be: global warming; water; energy sources; waste; genetically modified foods; ecology in our daily life; responsible consumption.
- **Blessing of Animals** (of pets, seeing eye dogs, police horses, etc.): a blessing, organized with appropriate readings and prayers, can be a great opportunity for evangelization.
- **The “Time of Creation”:** celebrate the “Day for Care of Creation” on September 1st, and plan related activities. These can include conferences, prayers and various ecological activities.
- **Celebrate international days** like World Water Day (March 22), Mother Earth Day (April 22), and World Environment Day (June 5). Plan educational activities, catechetical programs, prayers and other projects.
- **Include appropriate petitions in liturgies** throughout the year, e.g., asking for pardon for the evil done to the environment; praying for the proper care of Creation; offering thanksgiving for the gift of creation and for the fruits it provides. Use songs and hymns that celebrate Creation and promote its care. Include the theme of creation in homilies.
- **Other ideas to consider:**
 - Decorate the entrance of the church or other buildings with posters of the “Canticle of the Creatures.”
 - Create other appropriate posters using sayings like: “All creation praise the Lord” or “The whole earth is filled with the glory of God.”
 - Use potted plants in church instead of cut flowers or plastic flowers.
 - Use recycled paper for all printed material.
 - Put containers to recycle paper, bottles, etc. at all exits.

For reflection:

At a community meeting discuss that which is already being done in regard making Care for Creation part of our liturgical life.

Make concrete decisions about how this theme can become more evident in liturgy, prayer and pastoral ministry.

2.3. Actions in Response to the cry of the Poor: Works of Mercy in Laudato Si’

To act in response to the cry of the poor, “each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society,”⁷⁸. This is the lengthy approach developed in the *Charter of hospitality*.

⁷⁸ FRANCIS, *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him*, N°4.

Besides, “in the light of *Laudato si*’, the Works of Mercy take on a new currency, urgency, reach and scope”⁷⁹, giving another path to respond to the cry of the poor.

2.3.1 Corporal works of Mercy (8)⁸⁰

1. to feed the hungry; especially those who suffer from poverty and drought.
2. to give drink to the thirsty; especially those who lack clean, abundant water.
3. to clothe the naked; especially those exposed to the cold of winter and the sting of indifference.
4. to give shelter to the homeless; especially victims of war, storms, and rising seas.
5. to care for the sick; especially those who have been poisoned by the wastes of our industries.
6. to ransom the captive; especially those oppressed by cruel economic and political systems, or from addictions to the pleasures of the world.
7. to protect the dignity of the human person, especially in reverently burying the dead.
8. to care for our common home.

2.3.2 Spiritual Works of Mercy (8)⁸¹

1. to teach those who do not see how their lifestyles harm others.
2. to offer hope to those who despair for the future of loved ones or the future of the world.
3. to admonish those who sin against neighbor, the natural order, or the laws of nature.
4. to patiently bear the sufferings inflicted by gluttony and greed.
5. to willingly forgive offences committed against humanity and the goodness of creation.
6. to comfort those afflicted by corruption, by changes to our climate, and by unwholesome desires.
7. to desire always to pray for the living and the dead and future generations.
8. to care for our common home.

⁷⁹ P. K. A. TURKSON, *Care of Creation as a Work of Mercy*, 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

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