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DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

**Message: Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson**

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

**"Ecology, Justice and Peace: The Perspective of a Global Church"**

**At "Fragile World: Ecology & the Church" Conference**

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***Introduction:***

Dear Participants of the "*Fragile World: Ecology & the Church*" Conference, I bring you the greetings of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and its prayerful wishes for a very successful conference.

In order to view ecology, justice and peace from the viewpoint of our global Church, I will offer my remarks today in three parts. First, I will introduce Catholic social teaching and how it addresses the nature of ecology. For this material, I will focus on the pontificates of St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Both of these Holy Fathers have contributed significantly to a deepened understanding of the relationship between natural and human ecology. Second, I will tell you about a practical application of this teaching that occurred when the Holy See engaged in the International Conference on Sustainable Development held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. This was the "Rio+20" conference, so named because it took place twenty years after the first Rio conference on the environment. Finally, I shall introduce some brief contributions that the pontificate of Pope Francis has made to the legacy of the Church's teaching on natural and human ecology to-date, knowing that this will expand with the upcoming encyclical on these topics in mid-2015.

## ***Ecology in the Social Teaching of the Church***

It is customary to begin the account of Catholic social teaching with the encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII, issued in 1891. While that Encyclical focussed on the conditions and rights of workers, it also contained some seeds of current ideas about our natural environment. For example, it stated that those who receive God's bounty in the form of natural resources or property should exercise their responsibility "as the steward of God's providence, for the benefit of others".<sup>1</sup>

Another milestone in Catholic social thought was the Encyclical *Populorum progressio* of Pope Paul VI. Issued in 1967, it treated many facets of the development of peoples. Two of its key ideas are that *development* is the *new name for peace*, and that we need some *effective world authority* to cope with the scale of challenge in the environmental and financial realms.<sup>2</sup> And it includes this very positive remark: "By dint of intelligent thought and hard work, man gradually uncovers the hidden laws of nature and learns to make better use of natural resources. As he takes control over his way of life, he is stimulated to undertake new investigations and fresh discoveries, to take prudent risks and launch new ventures, to act responsibly and give of himself unselfishly."<sup>3</sup>

In his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens* (May 1971), Pope Paul VI further addressed the inseparable relationship and interdependence between human life and the natural environment, saying: "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace—pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity—but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable" (§21). Paul VI also expressed worries about how the concern to control nature through science could put the human dimension under parallel but inappropriate control (§38); about the "new positivism" of "universalized technology" (§29); and about notions of "progress" (§41) that embrace rampant industrialization that could turn persons into "slave(s) of the objects" that they make (§9). The combination of themes in this Letter makes it a true precursor of the focus on *integral* thinking of his successors.

In November of the same year and just before the Stockholm Conference (1972) launched the *UN Program on the Environment* (UNEP), Paul VI convoked the Synod on *Justice in the World*, which first gave prominence to the link between *justice* and *ecology*. Its line of thought suggested a close link between *concern for the poor* and a *concern for the earth*, essentially the *cry of the poor* and the *cry of the earth*, and adverted to the *culture of waste* of the rich.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, Leo III (15 May 1891), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, Paul VI (26 March 1967), 76-78.

<sup>3</sup> *Populorum progressio*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Justice in the World*, §70 (<http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/synodjw.htm>)

I offer you these historical touchstones to demonstrate that our recent and current Popes have always built their contemporary perspectives on ecology derived from earlier foundations. Another reason is to assure you that Catholic social teaching offers a rich storehouse for further exploration of these topics.

### Saint Pope John Paul II

In his first encyclical on the human person (*Redemptor hominis*), John Paul II warned about the threat of pollution to nature.<sup>5</sup> Later, in his social encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), on the 28th anniversary of *Populorum progressio*, he focussed on the nature of authentic human development and its moral character. In this regard, he centred on the need for individuals and communities to have full respect for the nature of the human person, whose origin and goal are found in God. He called attention to the need to respect the constituents of the natural world, which the ancient Greeks referred to as the “cosmos” (*an ordered system with beauty*). Such realities demand respect by virtue of three considerations that may be summed up in the three words *connection, limitation and pollution*.

The first consideration, he wrote, is the need for greater awareness, “that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate – animals, plants, the natural elements – simply as one wishes, according to one’s own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos.”<sup>6</sup>

The second consideration is the realization that natural resources are limited. As we know, not all resources are renewable. If we treat them as inexhaustible and use them with *absolute dominion*, then we seriously endanger their availability in our own time and, above all, for future generations.

The third consideration reminds us of the effects of a certain type of development on the quality of life in industrialized areas—the sort of development that causes pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of populations.<sup>7</sup>

When we take these considerations together, I believe they suggest a clear moral message from John Paul II: we readily understand that the demands of morality are a *sine qua non* for the wellbeing of humanity. We should extend our fundamental conception and application of morality to *natural ecology*—the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources, and the consequences of haphazard industrialization.

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<sup>5</sup> *Redemptor hominis*, § 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, § 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 34.

A few years later, on the one-hundredth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, John Paul II expanded further on this theme in his social encyclical *Centesimus annus*. With regard to the nature of private property and the universal destination of material goods, he drew attention to what he termed *the ecological question* and its connection with the problem of consumerism. Here he referred to a widespread anthropocentric error: this being our failure to recognize that our capacity to transform, and in a certain sense re-create, the world through human work is always based on God's prior and original gift of all that exists. Man might imagine that he can make arbitrary use of the earth and subject it without restraint to his will. Rather than carry out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God. The final outcome is a rebellion on the part of nature which is more tyrannized than properly governed by him.<sup>8</sup>

To correct these faulty ideas, John Paul II pointed out that all of us humans, as individuals and in our community, must respect the created world and be conscious of our duties and obligations toward future generations. Certainly, the things that God has created are for our use; however, they must be used in a responsible way, for man is not the master but the *steward* of creation.

The Holy Father did not stop at the *natural environment* when he drew attention to the ecological question. He focused as well on the destruction of the *human environment*. Here he introduced the concept of *human ecology*. Yes, damage to the natural environment is serious, but destruction of the *human environment* is more serious. We see people concerned for the balance of nature and worried about the natural habitats of various animal species threatened with extinction. But meanwhile, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic *human ecology*. Not only has God given the earth to humanity, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but the human being too is God's gift to us—indeed, it is the greatest gift. For this reason we must respect the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The encyclical applies this thought to the serious problems of modern urbanization; it calls for proper urban planning which is concerned with how people are to live, and for attention to a *social ecology* of work.<sup>9</sup> With these teachings, John Paul II expanded the Church's social thought on the ecological question, leading to the teaching in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* that "the relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity",<sup>10</sup> and that the cry of the earth and that of the poor are related.<sup>11</sup> In fact, in his *World Day of Peace Message* (1990), he wrote: "The proper ecological balance will not be found

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<sup>8</sup> Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II (1 May 1991), 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Centesimus annus*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Press, 2005 (reprint 2010), #452

<sup>11</sup> Idem, cf. #481-484.

without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty that exist throughout the world."<sup>12</sup> This message inspired the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to teach that, "ecological harmony cannot exist in a world of unjust social structures; nor can the extreme social inequalities of our current world order result in ecological sustainability."<sup>13</sup>

To sum up the contribution of Saint John Paul II on our topic of ecology: In Catholic social teaching, respect for the *natural environment* and the *human environment* are inseparably and closely linked. On the one hand, man must respect the *natural environment* by not abusing it. On the other hand, the *human environment* receives the even greater respect it deserves when we respect the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The more we respect our natural and moral structure, the more we respect others and also the created world. The *natural environment* and the *human environment* have a close relationship, and for the *natural environment* to be respected demands that the *human environment* be respected above all.

#### Pope Benedict XVI

In the new millennium, Pope Benedict XVI recalled the teaching of his immediate predecessor and elaborated further on the nature of ecology. In his Message for the World Day of Peace (2007), he pointed to four variants of *ecology*: the *ecology of nature*, and alongside it, a *human ecology* which, in turn, demands a *social ecology*, and, finally, the *ecology of peace*. For peace to be effected in the world, we must be conscious of the relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology*. The *ecology of peace* is comprised of peace with creation and peace among men, which presupposes peace with God.<sup>14</sup>

The Holy Father provided the example of energy supplies to illustrate the close connection between *natural ecology* and the *human ecology* and the consequences for *peace*. Increased industrial production in recent years has led to increased energy needs. The subsequent unprecedented race for available resources has caused, on an overall basis, a rise in energy prices. Benedict XVI expressed serious concern for those affected, namely, for those suffering in the less developed countries who were excluded, as well as the injustices and conflicts that may be provoked by the race for energy resources. He affirmed the urgent need in international relations for a commitment to *human ecology* that can favour the growth of an *ecology of peace*; and said that

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<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation", World Day of Peace Message, 1990, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops: "You love all that exists.... all things are Yours, God lover of life", 17. Cf. too, Marjorie Keenan, RSHM: *From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical Overview of the Concern of the holy See for the Environment 1972-2002*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City 2002. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *And God saw that it was good: Catholic Theology and the Environment*, 1996 (with pastoral letters of US Bishops and other Conferences); John McCarthy SJ., "Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology, Fact Sheet" on: [http://www.ecojesuit.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CST\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ecojesuit.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CST_ENG.pdf). Note the list of studies and pronouncements of other Bishops' Conferences and local Churches.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 January 2007), 8.

this can occur only when guided by a correct understanding of the human person, that is, an understanding not prejudiced by ideology or apathy.<sup>15</sup>

The following year, during his Apostolic Visit to Australia, Benedict XVI drew attention to the beauty of the *natural environment* created by God. But this natural environment now bears scars as well, including erosion, deforestation and the effects of devastating drought. At the same time, the world's mineral and ocean resources are being squandered and water levels are rising.<sup>16</sup> He also drew attention to the *human environment*, the highpoint of God's creation, and the genius of human achievement such as advances in medical sciences, the wise application of technology, and creativity reflected in the arts. But the *human or social environment* also has its scars, such as alcohol and drug abuse, the exaltation of violence and sexual degradation, and the false notion that there are no absolute truths to guide our lives. He affirmed the true nature of human life that entails a search for the truth, the good and the beautiful, that to this end we make our choices, and that for this we exercise our freedom, knowing that there we find happiness and joy.<sup>17</sup>

In his landmark social encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, Benedict XVI dedicates the entire fourth chapter to the issue of the environment and human existence: "*The Development of Peoples, Rights and Duties, The Environment*". Because "the way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa",<sup>18</sup> Benedict XVI speaks of an inseparable relationship between human life and the natural environment which supports it as "that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying".<sup>19</sup> This bond between man and his world paved the way for the Holy Father to teach that the Book of Nature is one and indivisible, and that it includes not only the environment, but *also individuals, family and social ethics*. Accordingly, as he goes on to teach, our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person.<sup>20</sup> But, for Benedict XVI, the "*decisive issue*", in the relationship between man and his world: natural and human ecology, "*is the moral tenor of society*".<sup>21</sup>

During his Apostolic Visit to Germany in 2011, the Holy Father elaborated further on the importance of respecting both the *natural ecology* and the *human ecology*. There he drew attention to the fact that, in the ecological movement in Germany in the 1970s, young people had come to realize that something was wrong in our relationship with nature. Matter is not just raw material to be shaped at will; rather, the earth has a dignity of its own and we must follow its directives. As he

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<sup>15</sup> *Message* (1 January 2007), 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> For example strip mining, which reduces agricultural lands or forests to hillocks of rock-waste and gaping craters, contaminates rivers and springs with mercury, zinc and cyanide.

<sup>17</sup> Benedict XVI *Address*, Barangaroo, Sydney Harbour (17 July 2008).

<sup>18</sup> *Caritas in veritate*, (2009) §51.

<sup>19</sup> *Caritas in veritate*, §50; cf. *Message*, World Day of Peace 2008, §7.

<sup>20</sup> *Caritas in veritate*, §51. Cf. too, *World Day of peace Message* (2010).

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*.

said, “If something is wrong in our relationship with reality, then we must all reflect seriously on the whole situation and we are all prompted to question the very foundations of our culture. We must listen to the language of nature and we must answer accordingly.”<sup>22</sup> He also underlined *human ecology*, namely, that man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate. His words were: “Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.”<sup>23</sup>

What Pope Benedict affirmed here is a mutual relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology*: that we must respect the created world and that we must respect the way in which the human person has been created, for only in this way will we be able to fulfil our freedom. Such an affirmation, moreover, is not a religious claim but the statement of a natural fact.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the Holy Father calls for an *integral understanding* of the world and the human person: one that respects both the created world and the highpoint of creation that is the human person.

If we look at recent Papal Messages on the annual World Food Day, we see how *natural ecology* and *human ecology* are presented as being inseparably interrelated in order for integral development to take place. In 2011, for example, Benedict XVI called attention to the tragic famine in the Horn of Africa. Improvements cannot come unless “the agricultural sector has a level of investments and resources capable of giving stability to production and hence to the market.”<sup>25</sup> But this will require changes in human behaviour and decisions if the good of society is to be favoured. In *Caritas in veritate*, the Pope spoke of the “*moral tenor of society*” as the decisive issue. Here, he calls for the cultivation of “an interior attitude of responsibility, capable of inspiring a different style of life, with necessary sobriety in conduct and consumption;” and this, he observes, is for the good of society and “also for future generations, for their sustainability, protection of the goods of creation, distribution of resources and, above all, the concrete commitment to the development of whole peoples and nations.”<sup>26</sup> What is needed, in other words, is the interior transformation of persons in order to promote an integral development which respects the goods of creation and brings about authentic human development.

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<sup>22</sup> Benedict XVI *Address* to the Bundestag, Reichstag Building, Berlin (22 September 2011).

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Francis George O.M.I., “Legislation creating ‘same-sex’ marriage: What’s at stake?” Chicago: *Catholic New World*, 6-19 January 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI *Message* on World Food Day (17 October 2011), § 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*.

## ***Social Teaching on Ecology in the Intergovernmental Context***

Postponing momentarily the contributions of Pope Francis to the Church's teachings on ecology, I wish to turn now to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that took place in June 2012. Representatives of the international community came together to discuss many concerns regarding the environment and the need for common commitment on the part of the international community to chart a course forward to address these issues in a sustainable manner. This process had begun in Stockholm in 1972 and had two high points: the first in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 at the so-called "Earth Summit" and the second at Johannesburg in 2002. These events, once again, came together at the Rio+20 Conference to discuss sustainable development and the interplay of the three acknowledged pillars of such development, namely, economic growth, environmental protection, and the promotion of social welfare.

During the initial preparations for the Rio+20 Conference, the Holy See noted that unanimous consensus had emerged in the international community on two points:

- a) first, that protecting the environment means improving people's lives; and
- b) second, that environmental degradation and underdevelopment are closely interdependent issues needing to be approached together, responsibly and in a spirit of solidarity.

It then focused on the first principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which had been adopted at the 1992 Conference—the principle that "human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature."<sup>27</sup> Expanding upon this fundamental theme, the Holy See called for the discovery of an art of living together—one that respects the *covenant* between human beings and nature, without which the human family risks dying out. The Holy See explained that there exists a stable and inseparable *covenant* between human beings and nature in which the environment conditions the life and development of human beings, while human beings in turn perfect and ennable the environment by their creative, productive, and responsible labour.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the term *covenant* has a rich history in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this context, *covenant* is not a contract between God and man, not a pact built on reciprocity; it is rather a gift given by God to man, a creative act of God's love.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, humans must use this gift for its purpose, not taking advantage of it, not abusing it, but using it wisely for integral human development and thus for the present and future generations.

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<sup>27</sup> Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), 12 August 1992, Annex I.

<sup>28</sup> Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, III Preparatory Committee Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, 13-15 June 2012, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Cf., Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22, no. 4 (1995), 636.

During the negotiations of what would become the outcome document of the Conference, the delegation of the Holy See regularly drew attention to principles that underpin the protection of human dignity. The seven principles are:

- a) responsibility, even when changes must be made to patterns of production and consumption in order to ensure that they reflect an appropriate lifestyle;
- b) promoting and sharing in the common good;
- c) access to primary goods, including such essential and fundamental goods as nutrition, education, security, peace and health, which stems from the right to life;
- d) a universal solidarity capable of acknowledging the unity of the human family;
- e) the protection of creation which in turn is linked to inter-generational equity solidarity;
- f) intra-generational equity, which is closely linked to social justice and which requires taking into account the ability of future generations to discharge developmental burdens; and
- g) the universal destination not only of goods, but also of the fruits of human enterprise.<sup>30</sup>

These seven principles were the contribution of the Holy See Delegation to shaping the Rio+20 position; and they merit reflection and practical action in pursuit of sustainable development.

### Sustainable development

The *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* of 1992 did adopt some important principles, such as: the polluter pays; responsibility for spill-over damage from one country to another; intergenerational equity; public participation; a precautionary approach; environmental impact assessments; differential responsibilities; and healthy environments. Nevertheless, some did not think that it had focused enough on environmental concerns.<sup>31</sup>

As we have seen, the Catholic Church affirms that there is an essential relationship between *natural ecology* and *human ecology* and that ignoring one will be to the detriment of the other. She also affirmed a link between *sustainable development* and *integral human development*, because every economic decision has moral premises and consequences. For this reason, the Holy See Delegation argued that consideration must be given to the ethical and spiritual values that guide and give meaning to economic decisions and to technological progress. Development must be considered not simply from an economic point of view but from an integrally human point of view,

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<sup>30</sup> Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., *Rio Declaration* in “Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy,” Volume 2 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2009), 201-202.

that is to say, one which necessarily takes into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of development and is based on the dignity of the human person.<sup>32</sup>

It followed, for the Holy See Delegation, that any neo-Malthusian approach to development must be totally rejected. Such views hold that people are an obstacle to development. The solution to global poverty cannot be to eliminate the poor.<sup>33</sup>

Instead, people are the drivers of development. As the *Rio Declaration* had rightly pointed out in its first principle, *people* are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, during negotiations, the delegation of the Holy See regularly drew attention to the inherent dignity of the human person and thus the role of the family in integral development and resisted efforts to impose language suggestive of population control.<sup>35</sup>

In the outcome document of Rio+20, entitled *The Future We Want*,<sup>36</sup> Member States agreed to launch a process to determine a set of *sustainable development goals*. While much discussion surrounded what these goals would be like, agreement was reached during negotiations that they would be “action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities”.<sup>37</sup> The Holy See Delegation affirmed that whatever *sustainable development goals* are finally agreed upon by Member States, they must not ignore, and rather must fully take into account, the dignity of the human person—from conception onwards to natural death—which includes the needs of the poor, the aged and of future generations. This insistence is supremely significant because these *sustainable development goals*, or “SDGs”, are quickly becoming the backbone of the United Nations post-2015 development goal process.

### Green economy

With regard to the subject of the *green economy*, the fact that the concept had not yet been defined was much discussed. At Rio+20, Member States chose not to provide a definition of the concept. However, they did agree to devote a section of the outcome document to the concept, and placed it within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Accordingly, the

<sup>32</sup> Cf., *Holy See Position Paper*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Cf., Peter K.A. Turkson, *Statement*, Summit of Heads of State and Government on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 20 September 2010. [www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/debate/VA\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/debate/VA_en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Cf., in this regard, also the *United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development* (A/RES/41/128) esp. at Article 1, 1: “The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”; and Article 2,1: “The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.”

<sup>35</sup> In this regard, the delegation of the Holy See and like-minded delegations successfully resisted efforts by some developed countries to insert in the text the term “reproductive rights” which can be interpreted to include abortion and artificial contraception.

<sup>36</sup> Cf., A/RES/66/288.

<sup>37</sup> A/RES/66/247.

document affirmed that the *green economy* “should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth’s ecosystems.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, in the light of human dignity concerns raised by various delegations including the Holy See Delegation, the document also accepted that however the concept of *green economy* might be defined, it should aim at

- a) reducing poverty,
- b) sustaining economic growth,
- c) promoting solidarity,
- d) improving human welfare, and
- e) promoting decent work for all.

### ***Pope Francis on Integral Ecology.***

Lately, Pope Francis, rooted deeply in the teachings of his predecessors, has enriched the Church's teaching on the relationship between natural and human ecology. He has mentioned and discussed care for creation, integral human development, and concern for the poor and the aged in his homilies,<sup>39</sup> addresses and messages<sup>40</sup> at various audiences and events, and in his *Apostolic Exhortation*<sup>41</sup>—all of which will culminate in an encyclical on natural and human ecology to be issued, we anticipate, in June or July of 2015.

While awaiting the contribution of Pope Francis's "ecological" encyclical to the treasury of the Church's teaching on the care of creation and its inhabitants, we may synthesize his various pronouncements and treatment of the ecological question under four headings:

- 1) The call to protect (environment and life) is integral and all-embracing;
- 2) The care for creation is a virtue in its own right;
- 3) The moral conversion to care for what we cherish and revere; and
- 4) The call to dialogue and a new global solidarity.

Briefly considered,

- 1) The call to be protectors is integral and all embracing: We are all called to protect and care for both creation and the human person. The threats that arise from global inequality and the destruction of the environment are inter-related; and they are the greatest threats to our human family today.

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<sup>38</sup> A/RES/66/56.

<sup>39</sup> The homily of the inaugural mass of his Petrine Ministry, Piazza San Pietro, 19 March, 2013; . *Saint Peter's Square XXVIII World Youth Day: Palm Sunday, 24 March 2013*, §2; "Evangelium vitae" Day, 16 June, 2013 etc.

<sup>40</sup> Eg. UN World Environment Day, 5 June, 2013; Pope Francis' meeting with indigenous people during visit to Brazil: [http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/27/in\\_brazil\\_pope\\_francisSpeaks\\_out\\_on\\_the\\_amazon\\_environment\\_and\\_indigenous\\_people.htm](http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/27/in_brazil_pope_francisSpeaks_out_on_the_amazon_environment_and_indigenous_people.htm)

<sup>41</sup> *Evangelii gaudium*, § 56, 215-216

- 2) Compelled by the scientific evidence, but most importantly, by the real experiences of peoples for climate change, we are called to care for humanity and to respect the grammar of nature as virtues in their own right. In responding to this combined threat, every action counts. We all have a part to play in protecting and sustaining what Pope Francis has called *own common home*.
- 3) Binding regulations, policies and targets are necessary tools for addressing poverty and climate change, but they are unlikely to prove effective without moral conversion and a change of heart. Our efforts at combating/mitigating/preventing *climate change, global warming, poverty* and *inhuman conditions* require an integral approach to ecology. It cannot be limited to laws, policies, or merely scientific, economic or technical solutions. To succeed, whatever is done must be undergirded by "*ecology conversion*"—a real conversion of mind, heart, lifestyle and solidarity.
- 4) *Integral ecology* thoroughly integrates the natural and the human. As the basis for justice and development in the world, integral ecology requires a new global solidarity, one in which everyone has a part to play and every action, no matter how small, can make a difference. At the center of this integral ecology and the call to dialogue and a new solidarity is a changing of human hearts in which the good of the human person, rather than the pursuit of profit, is the key value that directs our search for the global, the universal common good.

In this, we have the core elements of an integral ecology that in turn provides the foundation for authentic and sustainable approach to human development. Further, the relevance and pertinence of these teachings this year, 2015, cannot be denied. It is a critical year for humanity. In July, nations will gather for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa. In September, the U.N. General Assembly expects to reach agreement on a new set of sustainable development goals running until 2030. In December, the Climate Change Conference in Paris will receive the plans and commitments of each Government to slow or reduce global warming. The coming eight months are crucial, then, for decisions about international development, human flourishing and care for the common home we call planet Earth. The "*decisive issue is the moral tenor of society*"<sup>42</sup> and an *ecology conversion*.

### ***Helping Catholics understand their role regarding ecology in the United States***

Within your own country of the United States, the Catholic Climate Covenant is working actively to help prepare for and respond to the upcoming encyclical from Pope Francis.<sup>43</sup> I commend this group

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<sup>42</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, §51.

<sup>43</sup> Catholic Climate Covenant: care for creation, care for the poor. <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

in particular for planning activities in three phases to maximize the impact of the encyclical on the consciousness of Catholics and of your nation. Very briefly:

- 1) Phase 1 will see press events and advertising. In some such events, local bishops and other high profile Catholics speakers will address the impact of climate disruption, draw out inspiration from the key messages of the encyclical, announce commitments by bishops to work towards reducing their diocesan carbon footprint, and press policy makers to take specific further action in supporting solutions that lead to positive climate change.
- 2) With the help of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), local parishes can expect to receive Gospel-based key messages addressing ecology that can be integrated into homilies; printed materials for distribution to both parishioners and the community; and short video messages that can be accessed through social media.
- 3) Study guides and curriculum will be provided to parishes, schools, and other institutions to help Catholic communities understand the theology and the social implications of the Pope's message.

The goal of these three phases is to maximize the impact of the encyclical by keeping it in front your nation and your public officials; by reaching dioceses and especially parishioners; and lastly by embedding the messages of ecology, including its relationship to justice and peace, within Catholic curriculums for years to come.

### ***In Conclusion***

Here, as in the past, the Church has a role to play. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Caritas in veritate*:

*In view of the threatening catastrophe, there is the recognition everywhere that we must make moral decisions... [But] how can the great moral will, which everybody affirms and everyone invokes, become a personal decision? For unless that happens, politics remains impotent.*

*Who, therefore can ensure that this general awareness also penetrates the personal sphere? This can be done only by an authority that touches the conscience that is close to the individual and does not merely call for eye-catching events...*

*[Here the Church] not only has a major responsibility; she is, I would say, often the only hope. For she is so close to people's consciences that she can move them to particular acts of self-denial and can inculcate basic attitudes in souls.<sup>44</sup>*

So I ask each of you, as you reflect on your discussions of our “Fragile World: Ecology & the Church”, your own future, your own relationship to each other, and your own care for both *natural ecology* and *human ecology*: what will you do? How will you address ecology now and in the future? And how will you, as Catholics, Christians, or peoples of faith, bring the gift of the *covenant* given to you in sustaining our common home?

I encourage you to give great attention to what, in the forthcoming encyclical, Pope Francis will say about the themes mentioned above. As we confront the threat of an environmental catastrophe on a global scale, I am confident that a shaft of light will break through the many heavy clouds about ecology, and bring us what Pope Francis describes as the warmth of hope! Most importantly, as we become revolutionaries of tenderness, overcoming the world's pervasive inequities, this period can indeed initiate a millennium of respect for life, of our care for God's creation, of solidarity and justice, and particularly of peace.

With my blessings and prayerful good wishes for your Conference.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson

President

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<sup>44</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World* (A Conversation with Peter Seewald), 2010, p. 45, referring to the World Climate Conference in Copenhagen, December 2009.