

Laudato Si': An Introduction

LAUDATO SI'

ON CARE FOR
OUR COMMON HOME



POPE FRANCIS



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Pope Francis

- Born in Buenos Aires on 17 December 1936.
- Trained as a Chemist.
- Ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1969.
- Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998.
- Elected pope in 2013.



Pope Francis

- *Lumen Fidei* (2013).
- *Laudato Si'* (2015).
- *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).
- *Dilexit Nos* (2024).



Themes of *Laudato Si'*

- Anthropocentrism
- Integral Ecology.
- Technocratic Paradigm.
- Ecological conversion.

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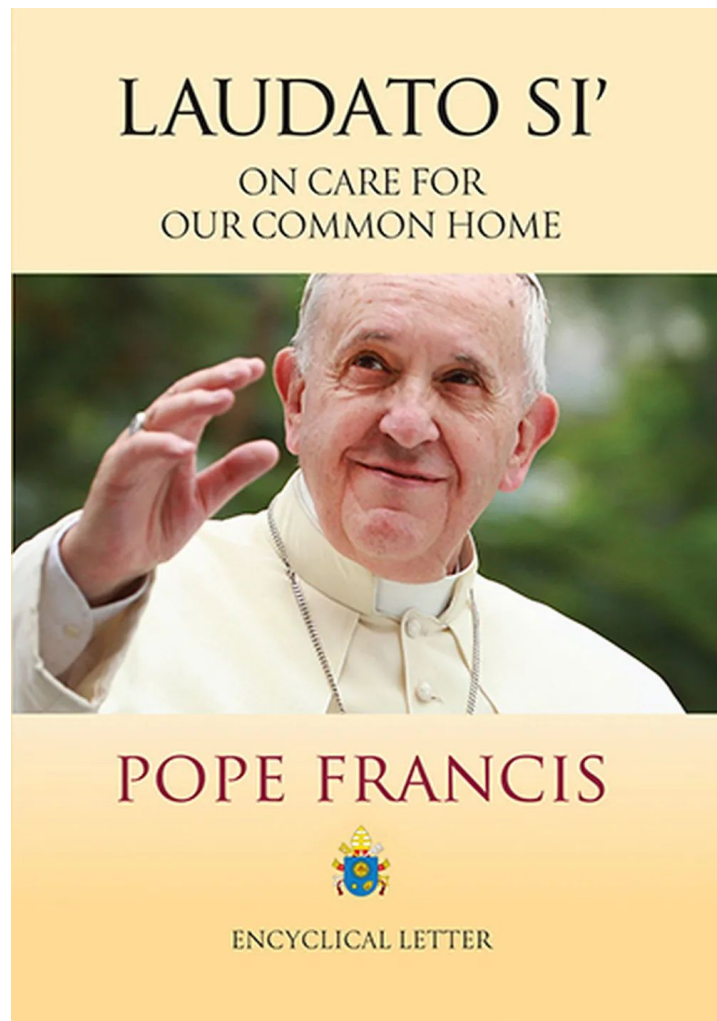
POPE FRANCIS



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Structure of *Laudato Si'*

1. What is happening to our Common Home?
2. The Gospel of Creation.
3. The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis.
4. Integral Ecology
5. Lines of Approach and Action.
6. Ecological Education and Spirituality.



The Dignity of Non-Human Life

“As part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. **God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.**” (90)



The Dignity of Non-Human Life

“The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation. Thus, **the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end.** The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.” (100).



Anthropocentrism

“Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds. The time has come to pay renewed attention to reality and the limits it imposes; this in turn is the condition for a more sound and fruitful development of individuals and society... **When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.** Hence we should not be surprised to find, in conjunction with the omnipresent technocratic paradigm and the cult of unlimited human power, the rise of a relativism which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests..” (115-116)



Anthropocentrism

“We are not God...” (67)

“A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot. **The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world.** Otherwise, human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality.” (75)



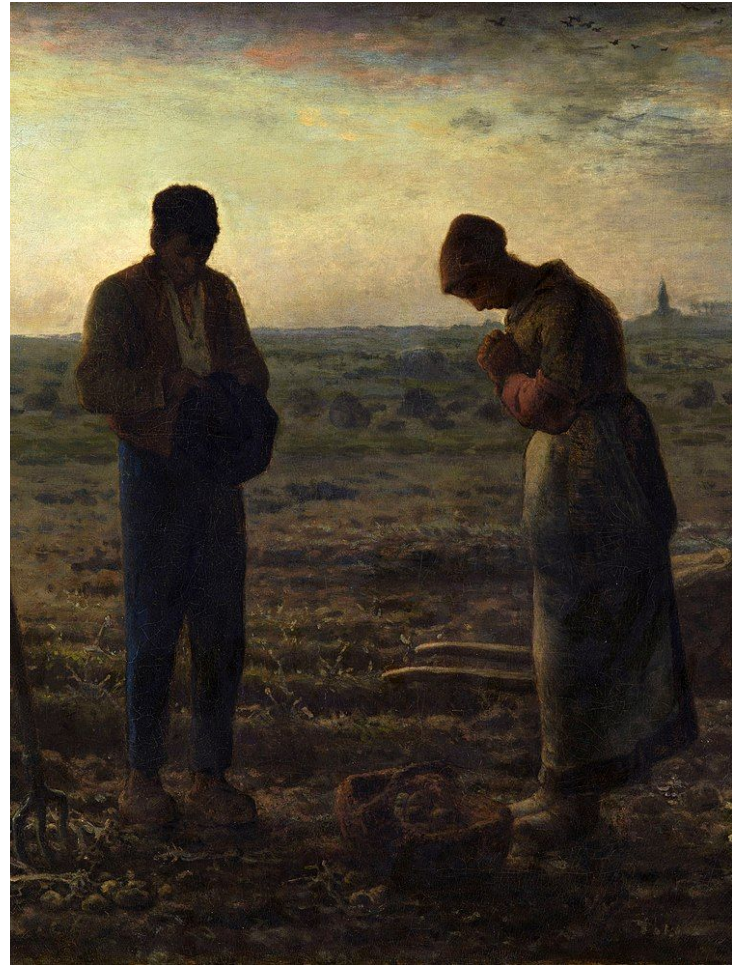
Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

“This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails... **At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person**; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure.” (91)



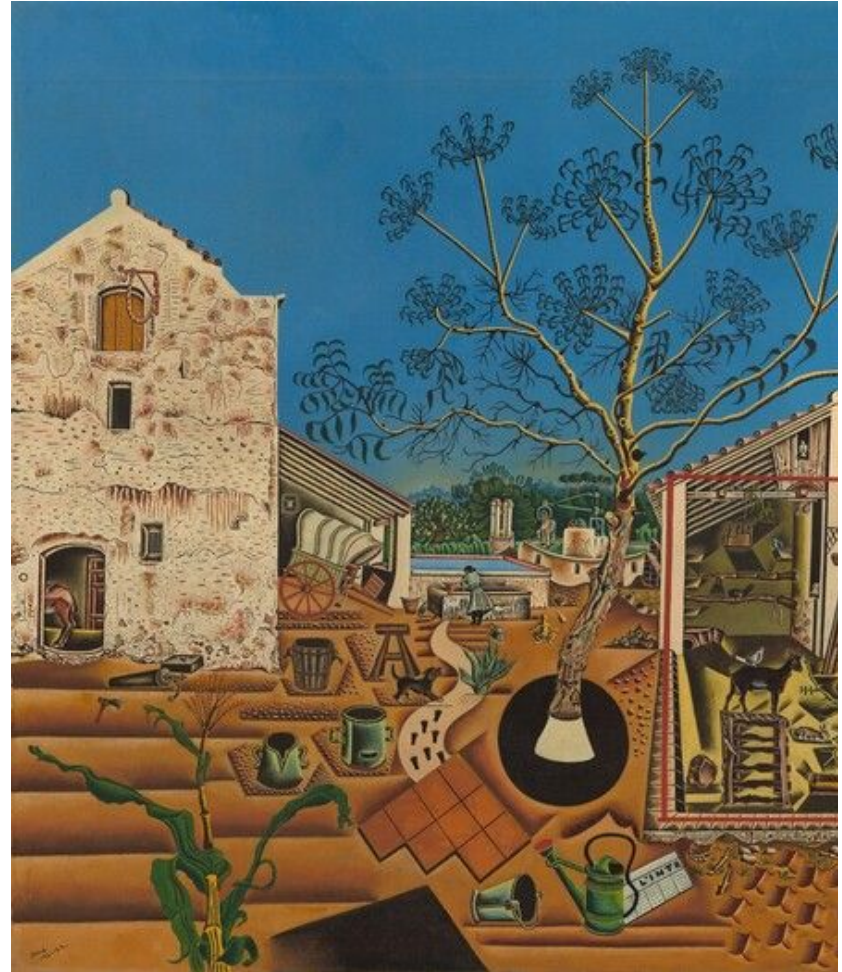
Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

“At one extreme, we find those who doggedly uphold the myth of progress and tell us that ecological problems will solve themselves simply with the application of new technology and without any need for ethical considerations or deep change. At the other extreme are **those who view men and women and all their interventions as no more than a threat, jeopardizing the global ecosystem, and consequently the presence of human beings on the planet should be reduced and all forms of intervention prohibited.** Viable future scenarios will have to be generated between these extremes.” (60)



Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

“Judaean-Christian thought demythologized nature. While continuing to admire its grandeur and immensity, it no longer saw nature as divine. In doing so, it emphasizes all the more our human responsibility for nature. This rediscovery of nature can never be at the cost of the freedom and responsibility of human beings who, as part of the world, have the duty to cultivate their abilities in order to protect it and develop its potential. If we acknowledge the value and the fragility of nature and, at the same time, our God-given abilities, we can finally leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress. A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power.” (78)



Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

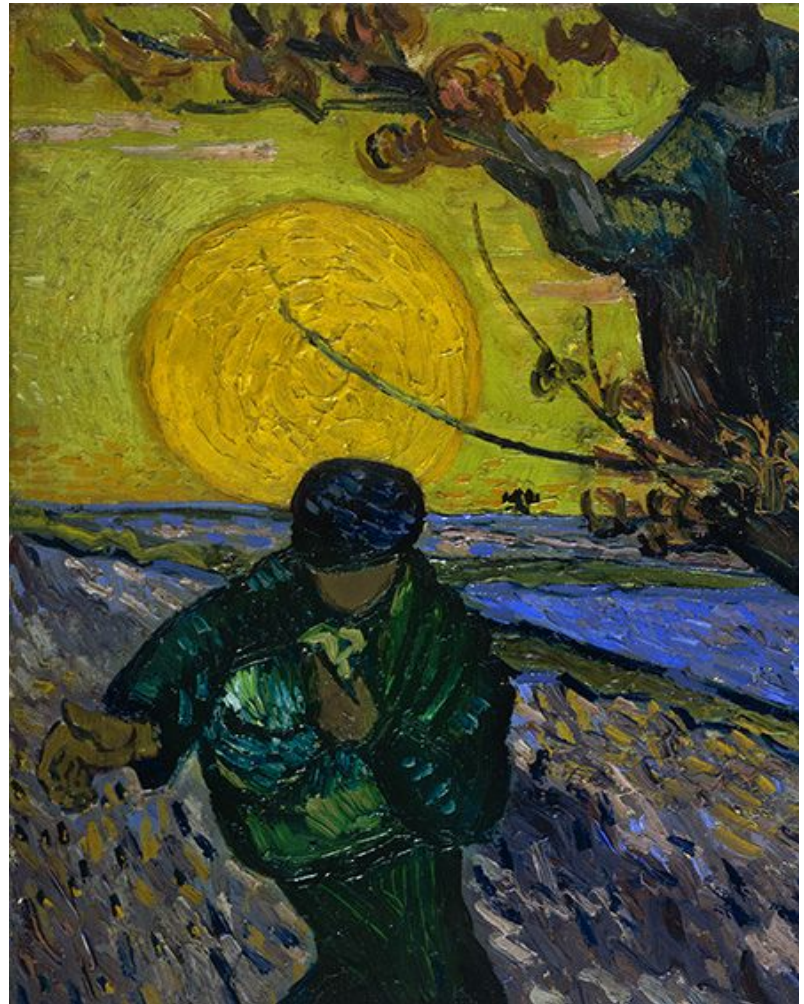
“The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that **human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.**

According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.”
(66)



Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.”
(92)



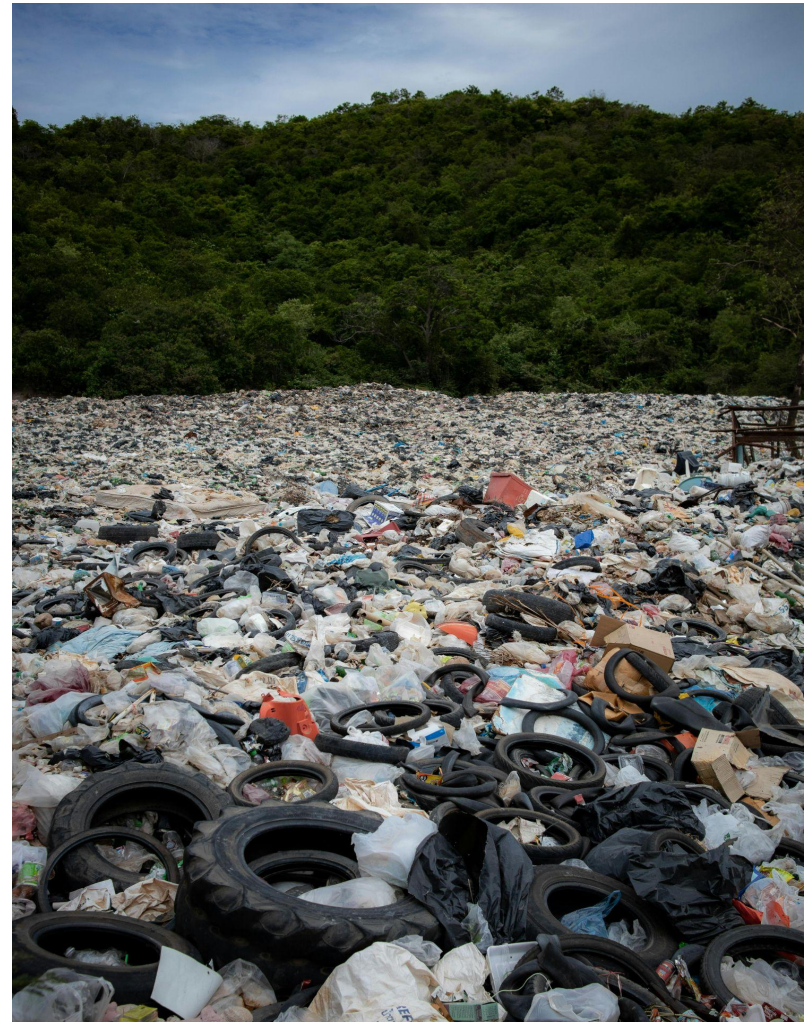
Sanctity and Dignity of Humanity

"To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption. Besides, we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and "whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor." (50).



Integral Ecology

“In the story of Noah, God threatens to do away with humanity because of its constant failure to fulfil the requirements of justice and peace: “I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen 6:13). These **ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.**” (70)



Integral Ecology

“It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical and biological – are interrelated, so too **living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand**. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings.” (138)



Integral Ecology

“When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. **We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.**” (31).



Integral Ecology

“There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever.” (25).



Integral Ecology

“It is foreseeable that, **once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars**, albeit under the guise of noble claims. War always does grave harm to the environment and to the cultural riches of peoples, risks which are magnified when one considers nuclear arms and biological weapons.” (57)



Integral Ecology

“Greater scarcity of water will lead to an increase in the cost of food and the various products which depend on its use. Some studies warn that an acute water shortage may occur within a few decades unless urgent action is taken. The environmental repercussions could affect billions of people; it is also conceivable that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century.” (31).



Integral Ecology

“The health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment. In this sense, social ecology is necessarily institutional, and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national and international communities. Within each social stratum, and between them, institutions develop to regulate human relationships. **Anything which weakens social institutions has negative consequences, such as injustice, violence and loss of freedom.**” (142).



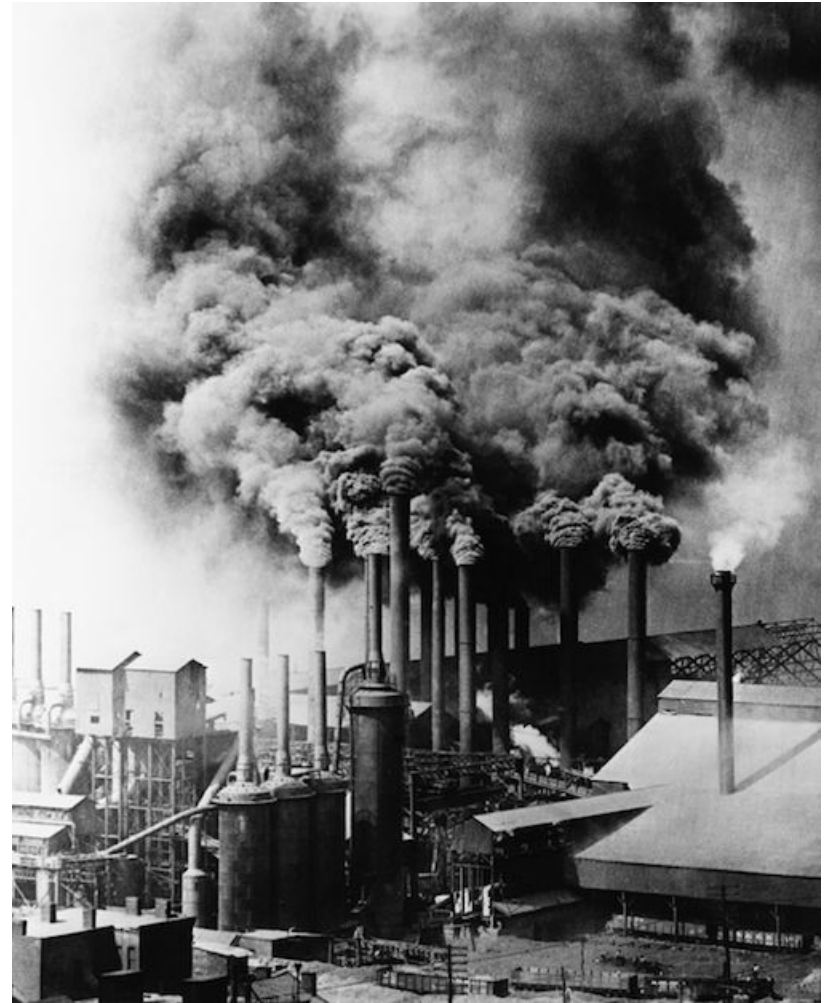
The Technocratic Paradigm

“Technology absorbs everything into its ironclad logic.” (108)



The Technocratic Paradigm

“Our freedom fades when it is handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest, and of violence. In this sense, we stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint.” (105)



The Technocratic Paradigm

“The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, **businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved.**” (198)



The Technocratic Paradigm

“if in some cases sustainable development were to involve new forms of growth, then in other cases, given the insatiable and irresponsible growth produced over many decades, we need also to think of containing growth by setting some reasonable limits and even retracing our steps before it is too late. We know how unsustainable is the behaviour of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity. That is why **the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth.**” (193)



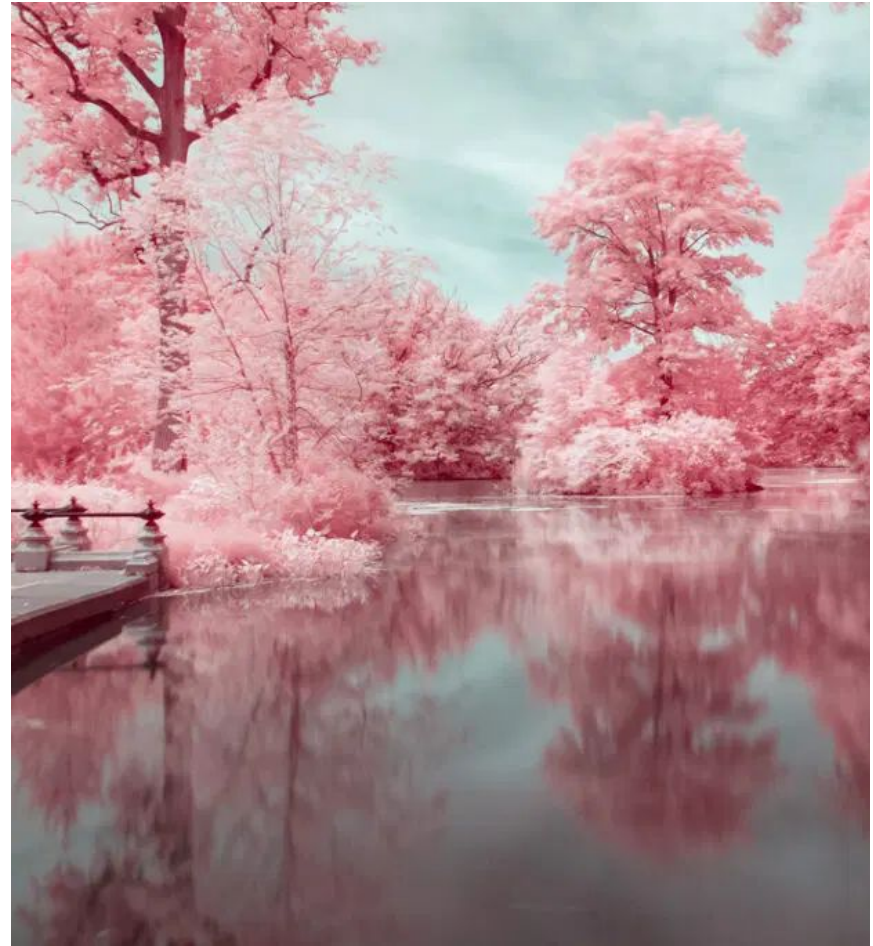
The Technocratic Paradigm

“Liberation from the dominant technocratic paradigm does in fact happen sometimes, for example, when cooperatives of small producers adopt less polluting means of production, and opt for a non-consumerist model of life, recreation and community. Or when technology is directed primarily to resolving people’s concrete problems, truly helping them live with more dignity and less suffering. Or indeed when the desire to create and contemplate beauty manages to overcome reductionism through a kind of salvation which occurs in beauty and in those who behold it. An authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed.” (108)



Ecological Conversion

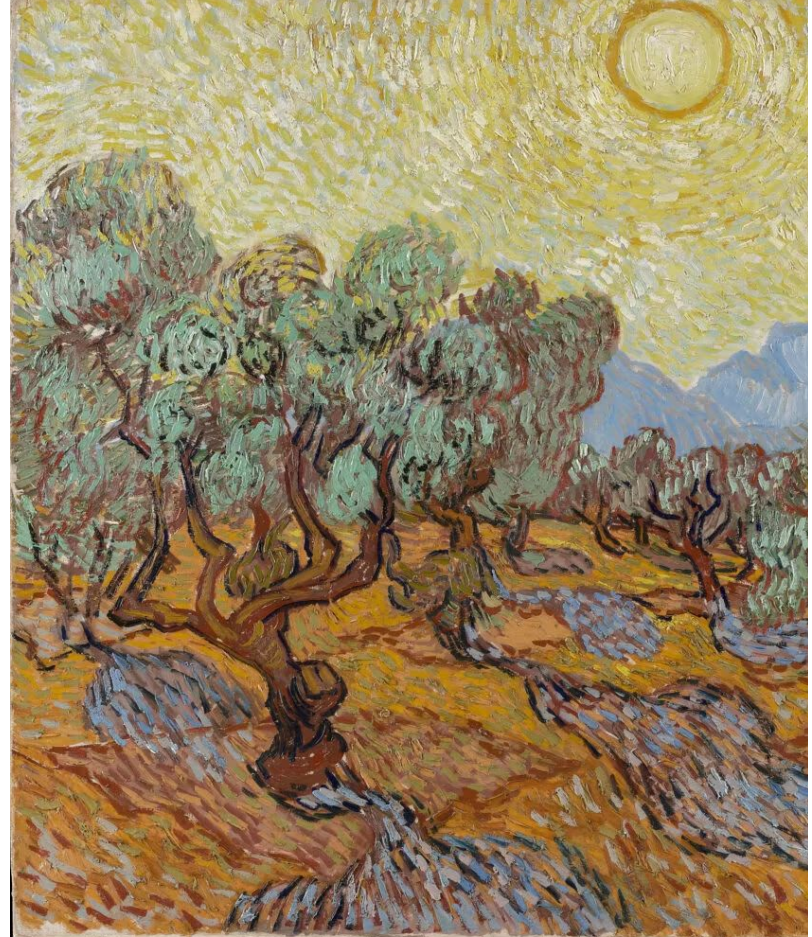
“I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. **More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone.**” (216)



Ecological Conversion

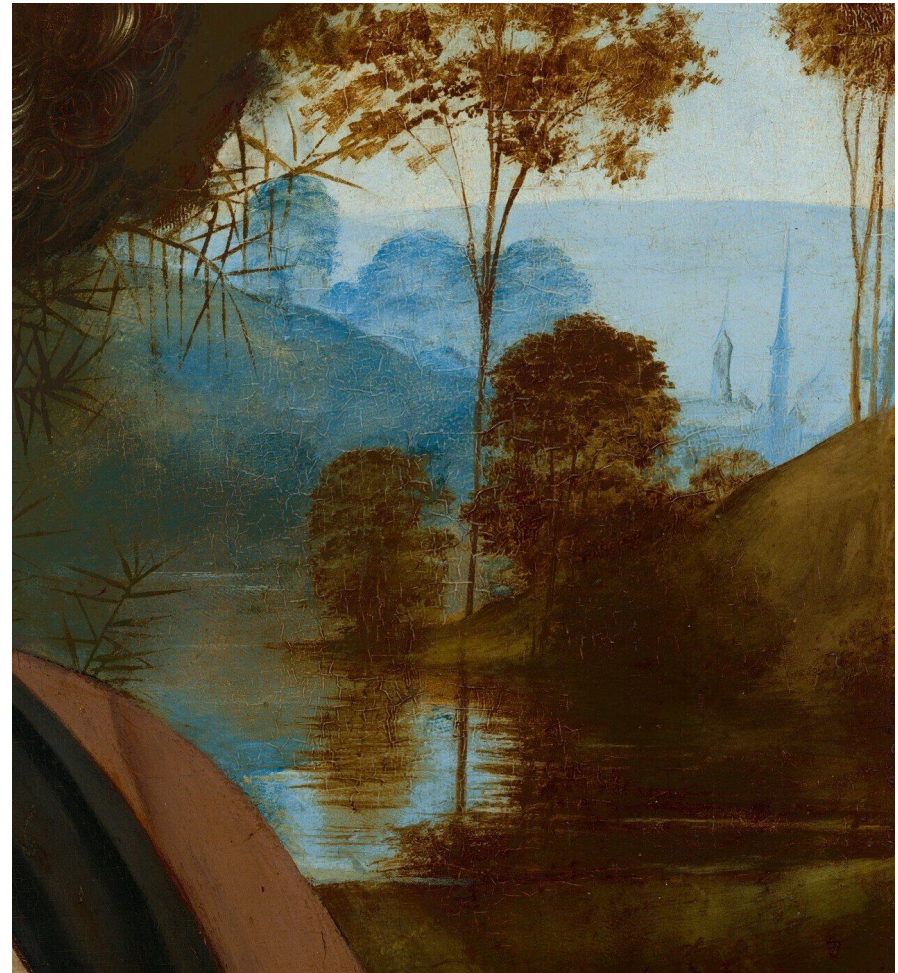
“Our openness to others, each of whom is a *thou* capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility as human persons. **A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the *Thou* of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.**

Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, locking us into a stifling immanence.” (119)



Ecological Conversion

“A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. **To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment.** Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures.”
(222)



Ecological Conversion

“We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full.” (226)

