

***Laudato si'***

**Conscience-Driven Approach  
towards Environmental  
Conservation**

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# Introduction

The earth is not a mere environmental reality but a **creature** – created by God, through God, and for God.

Hence, a call to have a sense of God in Creation and to cultivate a Creator-Creation consciousness while relating with the earth

# Analogical Relationship

In *Laudato si* Pope Francis uses analogy to depict the relationship between Humanity and the Earth: as a sister, a mother and a home, hence a relationship of CARE and RESPECT

**Why a sister?** Like siblings sharing parents and ancestry, humanity shares with the earth the same creative origin that is God.

**Why a mother?** Like a caring and loving mother who begets and feeds children, the earth together with its components provides for humanity air, water, and other resources to survival and growth.

**Why a home?** Like a domicile which harbours and shelters its inhabitants, the earth sustains humanity. Like a home which accommodates inhabitants with multiplicity and diversity, the earth shelters a diversity of animate and inanimate realities which have a synergetic relationship and mutuality.

## ***Analogical Relationship (contd.)***

Both analogies of a mother and of a home, carry the sense of priority of being. Just as a child is born by a mother and born in a home, humanity is reminded to respect the earth as preceding humanity in being, hence a calling to HUMILITY; a reminder that the earth can and has ever existed without humanity but humanity cannot and has never existed without the earth.

# Human Approaches to the Earth

- 1. Egocentrism:** The SELF is at the centre of the earth. This is in levels: an individual person, an individual community, an individual company, an individual country. An individual (person, community, company or state is the measure of what the earth is meant for).
- 2. Homocentrism:** Humanity is at the centre. Prosperity and human welfare are given priority at the expense of other existents.
- 3. Biocentrism:** Life and ecology at the centre. All inclusive life and ecological equilibrium are given a rightful importance.
- 4. Theocentrism:** God is at the centre. God is taken as the beginning and end of the earth. He is taken as the sustainer of the earth. It is an approach which encourages transcendence.

# The supremacy of Theocentricism

Theocentricism is the most ideal mode of relating with the world because

- a) It brings on board the Creator-Creature consciousness when humanity relates with the earth.
- b) It recognizes the presence of God among His creatures in the form of providence.
- c) It takes the earth as not a mere reality for sensual wondering but a springboard for contemplation, prayer and glorification of the Creator.
- d) It takes the earth as contributing to the revelation of the creative and provident power of God.
- e) It invites humanity to the role of stewardship which goes hand in hand with responsibility and accountability.

# Support of Theocentricism

## I. The Bible

- a) Ps. 148:7-10
- b) Ps. 96:11-12
- c) Job. 12:7-10
- d) Col. 1:16-17
- e) Rom. 11:36

## *Support of Theocentricism (contd.)*

### **II. Fathers of the Church**

- ✓ **St Basil of Caesarea:**
  - The world is a divine work (**masterpiece**) of art which prompts contemplation on the wisdom of the Master Artist.
  - Creation (the earth and its components) is training ground and object for humanity to know the Creator.
- ✓ **St Clement of Alexandria:** contemplation of the nature is the contemplation of God.
- ✓ Contemplation of nature reveals the power of God.



## *Support of Theocentricism: Fathers of the Church (contd.)*

- ✓ **St Athanasius:** The visible world reveals the invisible God.
- ✓ **St Ephreim:**
  - a sense of wonder on nature leads to the sense of wonder on God;
  - God the Creator engraved His picture both in the Scriptures and in nature.

*Support of Theocentricism: Fathers of the Church (contd.)*

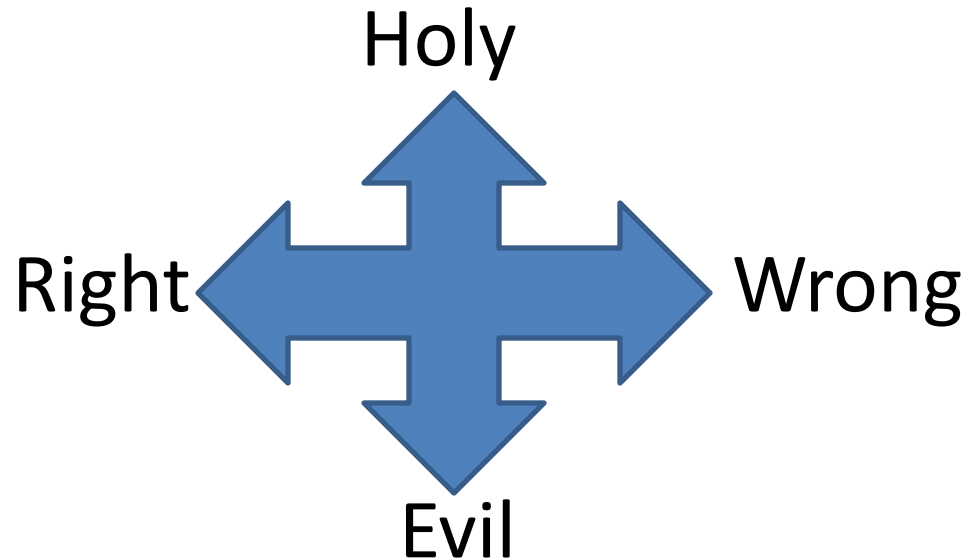
- ✓ **St Bonaventure:**
  - the earth is the revelation of the divine power, wisdom, and benevolence;
  - Humanity experiences the earth as a starting point of ascending to God the Creator
- ✓ **St Thomas Aquinas:** every creature on earth is a manifestation of God, but in the most perfect manner it is the order and harmony among creatures, and loyalty to the purpose of their creation

# Hierarchy of Goodness among Creatures

For St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas all creatures were created by God **differently** and **unequally**. They are in a chain of hierarchy which St Thomas Aquinas termed as **Order of Conservation** or **Instrumental Order of Beings**. The order is: soil-plants-animals-human beings. This means, the lower in hierarchy contributes to the being of the higher. The lower is preserved for the higher but not vice versa. The human being therefore, may not be sacrificed for the wellbeing of the lower but the vice versa is justifiable.

# Environmental Socio-Ethical Status Quo

## a) Ethics Matrix Concern



***The environmental socio-moral status quo is:***

- Going for what is right and avoid what is wrong rather than going for what is Holy and avoiding what is Evil.

## b) Institutionalized Deception

- Extravagance/Consumerism (irresponsible consumption) in the name of **civilization**
- Eco-ego-Idolatry: a shift from using nature to adore God: humanity either adores nature or uses nature to adore humanity.

# Socio-Pastoral Consequences of Environmental Degradation

- a) Environment and poverty
- b) Environment and hunger and thirst (food and water insecurity)
- c) Environment and ethnic conflicts
- d) Environment and witchcraft
- e) Environment and migration/displacement
- f) Environment and criminality
- g) Environment and widening gaps of inequality
- h) Environment and hygienic insecurity
- i) Environment and faith-challenge

# Pastoral Responses in the Light of Theocentricism

## a) Formation of consciences:

- Having the sense of divine providence in creation (Respect for the Author of environment)
- Cultivation the sense of care for the environment
- Cultivation of the sense of moderate and proportional use of natural resources. This involves avoiding environmental extravagancy, cow-boy economy, adoption of water-efficient lifestyles

## *Pastoral measures contd.*

### **b) Preaching Ecological conversion**

- Having a sense of **sin** when degrading the environment (sin of disrupting order and harmony)
- Having a sense of God's **mercy** in relation to environmental degradation
- Doing **penance** in various ways of restoration such as planting trees, defending nature, raising voices against degradation.



# ***Pastoral Measures contd.***

## **c) Preaching cultivation of the Ecology of virtues:**

- **Love** for creation
- **Humility** when relating to nature
- **Moderation** when using natural resources
- **Responsibility** and **accountability** to God in relation to creation (a sense of being a keeper of oneself).
- **Stewardship** (care) rather appropriation and lordship over creation.
- **Prudence** when relating with irrational animals
- **Wisdom** of discerning how to carry out stewardship.
- **Justice** of rendering each creature its due.

# Thank You

