

Ecological Spirituality

On Care for Our Common Home

Ted Bergh

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The *Laudato Si Action Platform* is an action plan based on Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si (Praise God) – On Care for Our Common Home*. Ecological Spirituality is one of seven goals and essential to implementing the spirit of *Laudato Si* into our everyday life. Practice of Ecological Spirituality will lead to "Transformation of hearts and minds toward greater love of God, each other, and creation." (Pope Francis *Laudato Si*).



Ecological Spirituality is comprised of five principles outlined here:

1. All life is sacred. All life is connected

All species (including humans) rely on the sun, atmosphere, water, earth, and the interaction with these life sources to survive and thrive. This combination of Earth elements and the interaction of species form a web of life known as an ecosystem. When an ecosystem and the species within an ecosystem are threatened by environmental deterioration then all life in that ecosystem may be threatened. Extreme weather events such as heat waves, drought, violent storms, floods, wildfires, sea level rise and including long term weather pattern changes are threatening species and ecosystems. A record number of species are faced with extinction. All the natural world (God's creation) is sacred and has a sacred right to life.

2. The Earth is loaned from future generations

The Earth is the life source – "Our Common Home" for all species and because of this, it is hard to understand how we allow the Earth to be so seriously damaged. Extractive economies claim all rights to resources and include rights to irreversible damage an ecosystem ability to support life. Ecosystem destruction at the extreme leads to deserts and wastelands that are unable to support life. Our earthly home will be the home of our children and grandchildren. Will the environment that we leave behind be sufficient for our grandchildren to survive and prosper?

3. Mercy / Equity

The poor and vulnerable benefit least and suffer most from environmental change. Extreme weather and pollution are examples of disproportionately high costs on the poor, the environment, and future generations. Ecosystem destruction benefits and costs are not distributed with mercy and equity. The earth and the natural world are not a bank providing wealth or a dump to dispose of waste. Extractive economies damage ecosystems and claim all rights to profit from resources and do not incur all cost for discarded waste. Social justice principles of human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity call for an equitable distribution.

4. Nature is disrupted in the near term but not subverted in the long term.

Extraction techniques and energy production are examples of altering ecology and natural cycles. In natural systems/ecosystems nothing is consumed – only reused and recycled. Technical systems cause natural cycle breakdown in the short term since the natural system cannot replace resources used (examples are soil, forests, ocean fisheries). Extreme weather (heat, flood, drought, wind, storms, wildfires, glacial/polar melt) frequency increase when natural (carbon) systems are disrupted. Over the long-term nature will come into balance and not be subverted. Many species may perish in the interim due to extreme weather and destruction of ecosystems. Future generations will struggle if harsher climate conditions prevail.

5. Ecological spirituality is a life choice

Ecological spiritual practice is to benefit all living beings. Technology centered lifestyles disrupt the environment and our spiritual well-being. Ecological consistent activity will respect/repair/restore natural Earth systems for future generations. Our awareness of Earth and creation should be part of our spiritual practice. St Francis of Assisi modeled this behavior in his life. Sustainable action (recycling, composting, meatless meals, reduced energy use, native plants...) and system change advocacy are spiritually encouraged. Enjoying, participating, and acting in unison with nature is part of our being.

Ecological spirituality “...can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of the world.” (LS 216) And “...without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity” (LS 216) our efforts will fall short. The practice of Ecological Spirituality begins with being aware of physical surroundings and time in the quiet of nature. Staying in prayer and being open to the principles of *Laudato Si* will lead us to grow and live more closely in the spirit of creation. “If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behavior. (LS. 215.)

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