

REFLECTIONS  
*SPIRITUALITY & SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE*

ROME-ASSISI June 4-11, 2023

RATIONALE

As we navigate through the “breakdown” of our times the real work of humankind must be to inspire, educate and network as we prepare for the new Era. Therefore, transformation must be the key issue which we need to work for. Twenty-five years ago, when the first *Spirituality & Sustainability Conference* was created with Thomas Berry as our visiting scholar, the intent was exactly this. Today, with a greater clarity of vision we have become aware that we need to reach a greater number of eco-spiritual individuals and organizations working towards transformation. Keeping in mind that personal transformation must be of the greatest importance and with that the work of transforming our societies. (Elisabetta Ferrero & Joe Holland)

It has been said in many ways that we are the ‘nexus’ of the Evolutionary transformation that is taking place. Pope Francis has said to Catholics and to all the people of the Earth that we must save “our common house” (*Laudato Sii*). We must integrate the voices of the youth, women, indigenous people, and the wild. What we are called to do is an *inner* transformation -- a mystical way of being, connecting to the sources, to the sacred sites, and with rituals. We will develop an enlightened vision based on solidarity, sharing, and respect of life and all beings. And then, an *outer* transformation; with actions, practices, networking with young eco-spiritual leaders, with Umbrian and local industries, organizations, and farms.

ROME & ASSISI

Our programs involve sharing our efforts, learning from our successes, and exploring synergies and collaborative opportunities. A major focus of our gathering is to explore various efforts to transform institutional practices and social and economic policies, highlighting participants’ work. In the past Spirituality and Sustainability gatherings, we have brought together leaders of diverse organizations seeking to facilitate transformative change based on global ethics and spiritual values. Moreover, we have made a special effort to include young leaders who will carry this work forward.

Major topics include articulating the new narrative, which answers such questions as: What is the long journey of evolution and human history calling us toward? What is development really for? What does the current evolutionary transition require of us, facing the many existential challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and the suffering of the many poor and vulnerable humans. We need to discuss how to advance education for global citizenship for inclusive planetary identities, which widens our circle of compassion and care to include all present and future members of the community of life on Earth, our common home. Of paramount importance is the need of promoting social and economic policies for transformative change in the global, United

Nations' efforts to implement the sustainable development goals of "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," and the Paris and Glasgow agreements for getting to Net Zero in carbon emissions -- and enhancing the contributions that religious, spiritual, and global ethics-based organizations can make to a new development paradigm that promotes full human development for all in a flourishing Earth community.

On the first day, we shall journey to Rome and the Vatican, where we shall dialogue with Fr. Josh, Coordinator of Ecology and Creation in the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Fr. Josh will also celebrate an Ecumenical Earth Mass. The Dicastery is the Secretariat for the *Laudato Si'* Movement, which is mobilizing Catholics (and others) to change their lifestyles, advance climate justice, and contribute to the implementation of the sustainable development goals. These efforts are guided by Pope Francis' Encyclical which was inspired by St. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*. Our gathering in Rome will culminate with an Ecumenical Earth Mass celebrated by Fr. Josh in the gardens of *Suore della Carita' Santa Antida Thouret*.

The next five days will be spent in Assisi, the home of St. Francis, who exemplified awakening to a felt sense of unity with all life, all creatures, and to unity with the numinous, creative source of all that is. We will journey up Mt. Subasio to the Hermitage where Francis and his followers lived, taking time to engage in contemplative practices in these sacred places. Throughout the conference, participants will share their own spiritual practices, and we will visit St. Clare's Cloister in San Damiano and other holy places for prayer and meditation. Besides important daily sessions to achieve the Conference's goals our days will include long meals featuring local cuisines, ample free time to enjoy the *piazza*, and tours to explore the historical sites, such as the Basilica, in which Giotto's frescos illustrate major events in St. Francis' life and the shift in perspective central to the transition to the Renaissance.

We invite you to join us in our seven-day Conference focused on contemplation and action for social and ecological renewal. We anticipate between 30 and 40 participants. We hope you will join us in this transformative event!

From the Desk of Elisabetta Ferrero, PhD., and Rick Clugston, PhD.

For the *Spirituality & Sustainability Conference 2023*