

THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL ECOLOGY IN THE ENCYCLICAL *LAUDATO SI'*

Ryszard F. Sadowski

1. Introduction

In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis addresses the whole humanity, pointing to the dramatic environmental challenges faced by the world today. The Pope's appeal inscribes itself in the initiatives undertaken by various international bodies, national governments and non-governmental organizations that formulate their positions in the perspective of The United Nations Climate Change Conference COP-21 in Paris. The Pope's message presents the Catholic perspective on contemporary environmental threats and provides Christians and representatives of other religions as well as non-believers with an incentive to care for the Earth—the common home of all living beings. Pope Francis continues the social teachings of his predecessors who likewise addressed the threats and challenges of the modern world.

In its teaching, the Catholic Church is not confined to supernatural and eschatological issues. Being deeply concerned about earthly realities, Christianity addresses its followers and all people of good will on issues relating to problems experienced by societies, or even by the whole of humanity regardless of faith. Catholic social teaching can be traced back to the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which presented the Catholic Church's response to the unrest and social conflicts that emerged in the nineteenth century when our civilization entered the period of industrialization.

The Church's teaching on social issues underwent intense development after World War II, in response to the dynamic historical changes. In 1961 Pope John XXIII issued *Mater et Magistra*, whose content is well expressed in the subtitle: "On Christianity and Social Progress." The pope requested rich countries to provide aid to countries suffering from paucity. The documents of the Second Vatican Council illustrate a significant

development of the Church's social doctrine. The encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967), in which Pope Paul VI emphasized the responsibility of developed countries for developing countries and pointed to the relationship between economic development and peace, is also an important voice in matters relating to the whole of humanity. This body of social doctrine is the context for Pope Francis' appeal to the world contained in *Laudato Si'*.

Pope Francis presents a diagnosis of the contemporary crisis, but also defines goals and ways of moving towards an integral ecology that would imply concern for both nature and man in all dimensions of his life. In this sense, the Pope's ecological thought demonstrates that Catholic social doctrine has always tried to find an equilibrium between concern for the whole of society, especially for the weakest and poorest, and respect for human liberty, including the right to private property.¹

This study will present Pope Francis' concept of integral ecology, pointing to its inspirations and sources both in the medieval mind of St Francis of Assisi and in works of modern thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, Thomas Berry and Leonardo Boff. In addition, the concept of integral ecology developed by Pope Francis seems to elaborate and systematize the work of John Paul II and Benedict XVI on the concern for all creation.

2. Philosophical Inspirations of Pope Francis' Concept of Integral Ecology

Although *Laudato Si'* contains no direct references to the philosophical thought of Jacques Maritain, it seems that the Christian vision of integral humanism worked out by the French philosopher has at least an indirect impact.² In all

¹ Stanisław Adamiak and Damian Walczak, "Catholic Social Teaching, Sustainable Development and Social Solidarity in the Context of Social Security," *Copernican Journal of Finance & Accounting* 3/1 (2014) 14.

² John J. Conley, "An Elusive Integral Ecology," *America; The National Catholic Review* 213/3 (2015) 27.

probability this impact is indirect, resulting from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which was significantly influenced by Maritain's thought.³ Many scholars maintain that the council confirmed and developed Maritain's opinion about the integral character of the Christian mission in the world, as well as the inseparability of the spiritual and material spheres of human life. This fundamental idea of Maritain's social philosophy was confirmed by the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: "One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith that many profess and the practice of their daily lives."⁴

There are also many analogies between the integral ecology of Pope Francis and the integral humanism of Jacques Maritain, whose concept of humanism was a response to the secularist humanist currents that rejected the spiritual dimension of man. Integral humanism emphasizes the supreme value of man in relation to social and economic determinants of human existence. The human person is understood here as a unified whole.⁵

The integrity of Maritain's thought consists also in his concern for both dimensions of human existence. He asserts, "In the perspectives of this integral humanism, there is no occasion to choose, so as to sacrifice one or the other, between the vertical movement toward eternal life (present and actually begun here below) and the horizontal movement whereby the substance and creative forces of man are progressively revealed in history. These two movements should be pursued at the same time."⁶ According to Maritain, those two perspectives cannot be considered separately, since man's activity in the vertical dimension comprises his activity in the horizontal dimension.

³ Eduardo J. Echeverria, "Nature and Grace: The Theological Foundations of Jacques Maritain's Public Philosophy," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 4/2 (2001) 264-265.

⁴ Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (Rome, 1965) 43.

⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2011) 9.

⁶ Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics* 10.

Man formed by integral humanism is not limited to building material civilization, but also seeks spiritual inspirations.⁷

Maritain's thought seems to be consistent with the teachings of Pope Francis expressed in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The Pope clearly favours the primacy of God in our lives, although he stresses that man's salvation depends on the way he leads his earthly life. The Pope's concern for integral human development fully agrees with Maritain's idea of parallel development of all human dimensions. Moreover, Francis' encouragement of active involvement in the protection of Earth, addressed to Christians and all people of good will, agrees with the role attributed by Maritain to Christians in society.

Pope Francis' approach toward ecology is certainly influenced by the intellectual atmosphere of the century. Modern research clearly shows the complexity and manifold conditionings involved in the environmental crisis. It is, therefore, not possible to establish one model of social life or attain homeostasis of the Earth's ecosystems by influencing individual components. In order to understand the complex processes governing nature and the related civilization, it was necessary to develop new research methods capturing reality in an interdisciplinary, holistic, systemic and integral way. It seems that the model developed in the twentieth century had at least an indirect impact on the shape of the integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis.

The idea might have been influenced by such concepts as holism, pioneered by Jan Christiaan Smuts, the general systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, or the integral theory of Ken Wilber.⁸ Wilber's approach is particularly noteworthy here,

⁷ Jacques Maritain, "Christian Humanism," *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain: Selected Readings*, ed. Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward (Garden City: Image Books, 1965) 168.

⁸ Sunny Y. Auyang, "Foundations of Complex-system Theories," *Economics, Evolutionary Biology, and Statistical Physics* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* (New York: Braziller, 1969); Ken Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2012).

because it is used in many branches of knowledge and provides grounds for Wilber's own concept of integral ecology⁹ which, because it coincides terminologically with the expression used in Pope Francis's encyclical, is particularly interesting for the present paper. Most likely, the term 'integral ecology' was first used by Hillary B. More in 1968.¹⁰ However, it was popularized in the scientific literature of the 1990s by three thinkers: Ken Wilber, the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, and the cultural historian Thomas Berry.¹¹

Wilber's concept of integral ecology was based on his AQAL (all-quadrant, all-level) model. The intellectual ideas of this scholar were transferred to the explicitly ecological ground by two scholars, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and Michael Zimmerman, in a book entitled *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (2009).¹² Their approach to integral ecology is, however, very different from the Pope's, and there are indications that their ideas did not provide a direct inspiration for Pope Francis. The essential differences consist in the fact that Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman's concept has a clearly theoretical nature, while Pope Francis' teaching is practical and aimed at stirring the public opinion in the world in order to stimulate responsible concern for all creation. Moreover, they differ in their notion of integrity. While Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman understand integrity as holistic treatment of all material dimensions of the reality, the Pope advocates the wider sense of a comprehensive approach to interrelated issues: concern for the environment, for the poor, and for the preservation of peace.¹³ Concern for

⁹ Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000); Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and Michael E. Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2009).

¹⁰ Hilary B Moore, *Marine Ecology* (New York: J. Wiley, 1968).

¹¹ Sam Mickey, Adam Robbert and Laura Reddick, "The Quest for Integral Ecology," *Integral Review* 9/3 (2013) 16.

¹² Mickey, Robbert and Reddick 17.

¹³ Francis, *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home* (Rome, 24 May 2015) 10. Hereafter *LS*.

man is an essential element of Pope Francis' integral ecology: man must be provided with conditions for integral development, natural and supernatural. Francis' understanding of integrity is also expressed in his idea of life community, which includes both humans and other living organisms. The Pope's integral approach is also well illustrated in his teaching on intergenerational responsibility and solidarity. We can conclude that the Pope extends his understanding of integrity both with respect to its content and in its temporal and supernatural scope.

An analysis of Francis's encyclical shows a possible influence of Leonardo Boff. Although the Pope never refers directly to Boff's work, there are some congruities between their ideas. This influence is highly probable since the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires must have been acquainted with Boff's controversial works, which had a big impact on liberation theology in South America. Traces of Boff's thoughts can be found in the text of the encyclical, where in paragraph 49 the Pope uses an expression "cry of the earth and cry of the poor," which is a characteristic element of the titles of several publications by Boff.¹⁴

Boff defines ecology as an integral evolutionary vision combining three approaches to ecology: environmental vision, social ecology and deep ecology. These approaches deal with: (1) the material dimension of creation; (2) the social, economic and political issues relating to ecology; and (3) the spiritual, ethical and religious issues related with respect for the natural world and human responsibility for it.¹⁵

¹⁴ Leonardo Boff and Virgilio P. Elizondo, *Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995); Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997); Leonardo Boff and Virgilio P. Elizondo, "Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor," *Concilium: International Journal of Theology* 5 (1995) ix-xii.

¹⁵ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009) 300-301.

The versions of integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis and Boff contain many points of convergence. Like the pope, Boff sees the need to combine theoretical aspects of ecology with practical environmental activities in order to respond adequately to the multifaceted character of the current crisis. According to Boff, “[we] can articulate all these aspects with a view to founding a new alliance between societies and nature, which will result in the conservation of the patrimony of the earth, socio-cosmic wellbeing, and the maintenance of conditions that will allow evolution to continue on the course it has now been following for some fifteen thousand million years.”¹⁶ Another similarity consists in highlighting the importance of an emotional relation to nature, expressed in an admiration for nature, and compassion towards the most needy members of the Earth community, both humans and other creatures.¹⁷ A similar concern for the poor and an emphasis on the social dimension of the contemporary ecological crisis is clearly seen in Pope Francis’ concept of integral ecology.

Thomas Berry, a Catholic priest of the Passionist order, proposed another version of integral ecology. Although, again, Pope Francis makes no direct mention of Berry’s concept in his encyclical, he might have been indirectly influenced by Boff’s publications, which invoke Thomas Berry’s concepts.¹⁸ Pope Francis’ universal approach to the community of creation may indicate an influence from Berry, given that the latter refers to the cosmic dimension, and that the cosmogenetic principle is the basis of his approach to integral ecology. This coincides with Pope Francis’ understanding of the community, which he extends beyond the perspective of our planet and defines as a community of the universe—a splendid universal communion.¹⁹

¹⁶ Boff and Elizondo, “Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,” ix.

¹⁷ *LS* 49, 11; Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* 11-12.

¹⁸ Mickey, Robbert and Reddick 16; Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* 74, 106.

¹⁹ *LS* 220.

Francis' postulate of restoring the harmony between man and nature, man and other people as well as man and God, seems to correspond with the concept of the ecozoic era formulated by Thomas Berry. It refers to the latest stage in the history of mankind, one that will overcome the technological era that brought about a radical disruption of the harmony between man and the world. Berry argues that an important role in re-establishing this harmony must be played by science. Science will allow us to rediscover the principles guiding the evolution of the universe from its beginning, through the formation of our planet, the origin of life and, finally, to the emergence of consciousness.²⁰ It seems that both Francis and Berry agree on the need to return to the original harmony between man and nature and on the crucial role of science in this respect. What links the two thoughts is also their optimism about overcoming the contemporary ecological crisis. As Berry postulates, "Sensitized to guidance from the very structure and functioning of the universe, we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture."²¹ Pope Francis, in turn, encourages us to look boldly to the future of man and the world: "May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope."²²

Many congruities between Jacques Maritain's integral humanism and the various versions of integral ecology formulated by Wilber, Boff and Berry, and Pope Francis' approach towards integral ecology may indicate that at least some of the ideas of these thinkers provided an inspiration to the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

3. Harbingers of Integral Ecology in the Teaching of John Paul II

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis continues and expands the thought of John Paul II, whom he refers to 37 times.

²⁰ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988) 44-45.

²¹ Berry 137.

²² *LS* 244.

Although Francis is the first Pope who issued a document devoted entirely to environmental threats, John Paul II repeatedly discussed this subject.

John Paul II's concept of 'human ecology' is particularly noteworthy here. As Stanisław Jaromi notes, this concept dates back to the pope's first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, devoted to the relationship between man and nature (nos. 14-17)²³ and, especially, to human obligations toward the created world: "It was the Creator's will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble 'master' and 'guardian', and not as a heedless 'exploiter' and 'destroyer'."²⁴ In turn, in the encyclical *Centesimus annus* the Pope says:

In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the human environment, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried—though much less than they should be—about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, because they realize that each of these species makes its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic "human ecology".²⁵

The term 'human ecology' appears recurrently in John Paul II's teaching. Michał Wyrostkiewicz indicates that this concept derives from anthropology, and is based on the assumptions of natural science, philosophy and theology. It emphasizes that man must be viewed in personalistic terms and in relationship with nature. Human ecology analyses the natural human environment which provides conditions for man's integral development and which comprises nature, society and man as an integral part.²⁶

²³ Stanisław Jaromi, *Ecologia humana—chrześcijańska odpowiedź na kryzys ekologiczny* (Kraków: Bratni Zew, 2004) 34.

²⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (Rome, 1979) 15.

²⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (Rome, 1991) 38.

²⁶ Michał Wyrostkiewicz, *Ekologia ludzka: Osoba i jej środowisko z perspektywy teologicznomoralnej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007) 54-55.

The encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* was another important step in the development of John Paul II's approach to ecology. "To defend and promote life, to show reverence and love for it, is a task which God entrusts to every man, calling him as his living image to share in his own lordship over the world."²⁷ Moreover, the Pope emphasizes human responsibility for nature, his habitat, and points out that this responsibility extends to future generations. Characterizing the relationship of man to nature, he states, moreover, that it should embrace all aspects: "from the preservation of the natural habitats of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to 'human ecology' properly speaking."²⁸

Another important element of John Paul II's approach to human ecology is intergenerational responsibility addressed by the Pope less than six months after the publication of *Our Common Future*, which defined the concept of sustainable development and highlighted the issue of intergenerational responsibility. In the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, the pope signalled the problem of depleting natural resources of our planet. "Natural resources are limited; some are not, as it is said, renewable. Using them as if they were inexhaustible, with absolute dominion, seriously endangers their availability not only for the present generation but above all for generations to come."²⁹ The pope developed this idea a few years later, emphasizing the general obligation to take responsibility for the state of our planet: "It is necessary, however, that the entire human community—individuals, States and international bodies—take seriously the responsibility that is theirs."³⁰ The pope emphasized that man "cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations."³¹

²⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (Rome, 1995) 42.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 42.

²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Rome, 1987) 34.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (Rome, 1 January 1990) 6.

³¹ John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* 6.

Stanislaw Jaromi points to two ways of understanding human ecology postulated by John Paul II. In a narrower sense, the term applies to the social environment, the welfare of the family, the quality of interpersonal relations, respect for human nature and for the full personal development of man. A wider understanding of human ecology extends this concept to the sphere of human responsibility for the whole of nature, the ecological balance, and even order in the cosmic perspective. Both the narrower and broader understanding of human ecology has a clearly anthropocentric character. Apart from pointing to the human right to benefit from nature, it also underlines man's duties towards it. The papal approach to ecology extends the range of issues concerning the attitude of man toward nature and is a harmonious combination of natural and social theories as well as issues related to humanities, culture and the Christian doctrine about the Creator, who directs the processes of the world's evolution.³² John Paul II's concept of human ecology should be understood in the context of his view of Christian activity in the field of social activity. The Pope points out two temptations facing the followers of Christ:

The temptation of being so strongly interested in Church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural, and political world; and the temptation of legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world.³³

This brief presentation of John Paul II's concept of human ecology points to its convergence with the integral ecology of Pope Francis. Both concepts advocate responsible concern for the entire community of life emphasizing its intergenerational dimension. In addition, both approaches highlight the importance

³² Jaromi 35-37.

³³ John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (Rome, 1988) 2.

of integral human development, since man's activity is manifested at the social and economic level, on which he satisfies his needs, but also at the environmental level, on which he takes care of the needs of nature. Both concepts are clearly anthropocentric, however, in a modern sense of the term, i.e., with the principles of sustainable development elaborated in the report *Our Common Future*.

4. Harbingers of Integral Ecology in the Teaching of Benedict XVI

Laudato Si' also develops the thought of Benedict XVI and contains up to 31 references to his teaching. Benedict XVI frequently and willingly undertook the subject of conservation.

Although the pope did not present a clear statement on ecology, in his works he often referred to the term 'ecology of man'³⁴ and recurrently addressed the ecological crisis and issues important for integral ecology which include, among others, intergenerational responsibility and common dealing with the urgent problems of the contemporary world: poverty, threats to peace and environmental degradation.³⁵ In his *Message for World Day of Peace* of 1 January 2010, the pope emphasized that the present generation should feel gratitude to earlier generations and reminds it of its obligations towards future generations.³⁶

In the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI emphasizes a close relationship between the development of civilization and human responsibility towards nature. Although he clearly states that man has the right to use the natural resources to satisfy his material and spiritual needs, he also emphasizes the human obligation to preserve the internal

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Address in the Bundestag* (Berlin, 22 September 2011).

³⁵ Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Rome, 2009) 48.

³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* 8.

balance of all creation.³⁷ The pope contends that environmental issues cannot be solved in isolation from the issues closely related to it. He indicates the need for combined treatment of such issues as the model of development, a vision of man and his attitude to other people and nature. Benedict XVI is convinced that the current state of the 'ecological health' of our planet is a derivative of the cultural and moral crisis of man.³⁸

With respect to the ecological crisis, Benedict XVI advocates strengthening the unity of the human family so that it is able to share its possessions with those in need. This, in his opinion, may prevent further degradation of the environment and restore its balance.³⁹ Furthermore, the pope points out that it is impossible to protect nature without building justice, peace and solidarity between the rich and the poor.⁴⁰ In a speech delivered together with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, Pope Benedict XVI enumerated the negative consequences of an unlimited economic and technological progress that affects both man and other creatures.⁴¹

The above examples illustrate the degree of coincidence between Benedict XVI's teaching and that of *Laudato Si'*. The issues of social justice, intergenerational solidarity, common solution of global problems and concern for the poor hold an important place in the concept of integral ecology promoted by Francis.

³⁷ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* 48.

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* 5.

³⁹ Benedict XVI, *Message to Mr Jacques Diouf, Director General of FAO on the Occasion of World Food Day 2010* (Rome, 15 October 2010).

⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, *Speech to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See* (Rome, 11 January 2010).

⁴¹ Benedict XVI and Bartholomew I, *Common Declaration* (Phanar, Turkey, 30 November 2006).

5. The Basic Characteristics of Pope Francis' Integral Ecology

Laudato Si' allows us to identify the essential elements of the concept of ecology presented by Pope Francis. Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, presented the basic ideas of Pope Francis' integral ecology. A few months before the publication of the encyclical the cardinal gave a lecture entitled "Integral Ecology and the Horizon of Hope: Concern for the Poor and for Creation in the Ministry of Pope Francis."⁴² He stated that the pope's idea of integral ecology is the key to the proper presentation of such issues as human ecology, development and natural environment. Implementation of integral ecology will make it possible to combine those issues. Cardinal Turkson singled out four principles that underpin the pope's concept of integral ecology.⁴³

First principle: the call to be protectors is integral and all-embracing.

Second principle: care for creation is a virtue in its own right.

Third principle: we will—we must—care for what we cherish and revere.

Fourth principle: the call to dialogue and a new global solidarity.

Turkson sums up the message of integral ecology in the statement that all people are called to care for nature and for man, since those two concerns cannot be separated if we want to achieve authentic and sustainable human development. This is also confirmed by the scientific data on climate change. All people of good will must therefore care for the human being and

⁴² Peter Turkson, "Integral Ecology and the Horizon of Hope," Maynooth, 5 March 2015, <www.iustitiaepax.va/content/dam/giustiziaepax/presidenteinterventi/2015/President_2015-03-5TrocaireLecture.pdf>, (accessed 22 September 2015).

⁴³ Turkson 3-11.

respect the laws governing nature. This concern is a virtue in itself.⁴⁴

Moreover, in order to solve the problem of poverty or climate change it is imperative to unify legislation, policies and goals. However, these issues cannot be solved without a moral transformation of man. St Francis of Assisi with his undivided love for creatures and the poor can serve as an example here. In the opinion of Cardinal Turkson, Pope Francis is convinced that a truly practical and sustainable integral approach to ecology cannot be based exclusively on scientific grounds and refer only to economics, law and policy, thus reducing the reality to what is material. St Francis comes to our aid, pointing to the importance of admiration for nature, appreciation of its beauty and valuing our bond with it. Only our deep respect for creation, based on kinship with nature and closeness with God and other men, can complete the scientific approach to nature and shape the attitude of an integral concern for mankind and the world.⁴⁵ Pope Francis contends that integral ecology provides the basis for justice and development, and calls for new global solidarity, which cannot be limited to its international dimension. This solidarity must embrace all, both communities and individuals, regardless of the possibilities they have. Even the smallest action can bring positive results.⁴⁶

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, recurrently uses the term 'integral ecology' and devotes to this theme the entire fourth chapter of his encyclical. However, the Pope calls for implementing integrated ecology and points to the inadequacy of the existing approaches which are limited to science and biology, and overlook the human element expressed, inter alia, in admiration, respect, love and a sense of brotherhood with nature.⁴⁷ Pope Francis clearly states that today's challenges demand adopting an approach that takes into account all aspects of the global crisis. Fragmented knowledge and unilateral study

⁴⁴ Turkson 3, 6.

⁴⁵ Turkson 8.

⁴⁶ Turkson 10.

⁴⁷ *LS* 11.

are in fact a new form of ignorance, if they are not combined with a broader vision of the reality. At the same time, it seems necessary to challenge the existing models of development, production and consumption in order to implement integral ecology.⁴⁸

Economic ecology constitutes an important step here as it helps adopt a wider view of reality. The state of the environment forces us to analyse the functioning of the society, i.e., its economy, behaviours and ways of understanding reality. The changes that have taken place in nature make it impossible to seek solutions to specific problems. The search for integral solutions that take into account interactions of natural systems and their interactions with social systems have major significance. The pope clearly states: “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”⁴⁹

Pointing to a new direction for the economy, one that would lead to an overcoming of the contemporary crisis, the pope stresses the role of science in recognition of the relationship between nature and man, and warns against economic models aimed at simplifying processes and profiting at the expense of nature and man. Environmental problems cannot be solved in isolation from the condition of man, his family and work, the urban context, and even his relationship to other people and himself.⁵⁰ According to the pope, social ecology is crucial for combining together a number of natural and social elements that affect both the condition of nature and the quality of human life, and it should take on an institutional form and embrace the family, communities, and even nations and international relations in order to regulate inter-human relationships. All wrongs committed in this area result in

⁴⁸ *LS* 137-138.

⁴⁹ *LS* 139.

⁵⁰ *LS* 140-141.

injustice and violence, which also has repercussions on the environment.⁵¹

Pope Francis believes that cultural ecology is another important step towards adopting integral ecology understood as concern for the whole world heritage, both natural and historical, artistic and cultural, forming the human environment. Only by combining all those elements can we hope to create comfortable living conditions. The pope emphasizes the originality and specificity of different cultures and the need to consider them in the development of the human relationship to nature.⁵² Stressing the importance of cultural diversity, Francis points to the dangers of cultural homogenization induced by consumerist lifestyle promoted by a globalized economy. Today, we are dealing with an attempt to develop universal legal and technical solutions that fail to take into account local cultural conditions and, moreover, weaken the activity of local people. While the imposed standards should accommodate local cultural conditionings, the proposed solutions must be flexible and dynamic, since static, rigid and purely technical solutions focused on the symptoms do not get to the root of contemporary problems. The pope also points to the concept of life quality and encourages considering it in the specific cultural context of a given human community.⁵³

Analysing the current world situation, Pope Francis indicates that environmental degradation in a given area can be dangerous for the local community and can thus contribute to the impoverishment of its culture, which, in his opinion, is more dangerous than the extinction of certain species of flora or fauna.⁵⁴ The threat of cultural impoverishment calls for a particular concern about traditional cultures, which should be incorporated in the implementation of environmental projects in their local areas. A relationship between representatives of particular cultures and their habitat strengthens their motivation

⁵¹ *LS* 142.

⁵² *LS* 143.

⁵³ *LS* 144.

⁵⁴ *LS* 145.

to protect nature. The pope also points out that in various parts of the world these traditional communities are pressed to move to other areas, while their original territories are used for economic purposes that often lead to the degradation of nature and culture.⁵⁵

Another important element of integral ecology is concern for improving the quality of human life. The pope calls this the “human ecology of everyday life.”⁵⁶ Aware of the challenges faced by people living in large urban centres and the degradation of the environment in which they live, the pope encourages us to use our inherent creativity and generosity in overcoming environmental constraints. The quality of life depends not only on the external environment but also on the atmosphere of the local community and individual mental attitude. Shortages resulting from environmental degradation can be compensated by developing close, hearty human relationships that can help create an authentic community. Such a transformation of human internal attitudes enables man to lead a dignified life even in the most unfavourable conditions of the external environment.⁵⁷ Otherwise, people experiencing overcrowding and anonymity, isolated by their egoism, will be particularly prone to manipulation and conflicts with the law. This, in turn, may lead to a sense of uprootedness that promotes violence and anti-social attitudes, and sometimes even inhuman behaviour.⁵⁸

The Pope also emphasizes the role of those responsible for the shape of the space inhabited by people, and underlines the link between the quality of urban space and human behaviour. Urban areas, due to their design, should shape in their inhabitants a sense of belonging and rootedness. Symbolisms, the so-called municipal key points and space available to all residents, play an important role in this process and may lead to integration of the local community. By promoting a sense of

⁵⁵ *LS* 146.

⁵⁶ *LS* 147.

⁵⁷ *LS* 148.

⁵⁸ *LS* 149.

belonging they can help create true community—“us”.⁵⁹ Referring to the overcrowded suburbs of big cities inhabited by impoverished masses the Pope points to the responsibility of governments to find humane ways of solving this issue. According to the Pope, the core question of ‘human ecology’ is accommodation, which is crucial for starting a family and for human dignity. Transport is another important problem addressed by Francis. Concern for the availability of good transport to all urban residents is becoming a pressing issue in many modern cities and provides a response to the needs of man and nature which is being destroyed by vehicle emissions.⁶⁰

Stressing that ‘human ecology’ is part of ‘integral ecology,’ Pope Francis shows the relationship between human life according to the moral law inscribed in our nature and the possibility of creating a more dignified environment. Referring to Benedict XVI, he warns against manipulation of human nature and encourages protecting it. Getting to know and accept one’s own body with respect for the differences of gender is, according to the Pope, essential for recognizing oneself in the encounter with others, accepting the gift of another human being and being able to offer oneself to another person. Mutual self-offering, with the complementarity of the gifts of femininity and masculinity, is an enriching experience.⁶¹

Mentioning human ecology, the Pope stresses the category of the common good inherent in it, which implies respect for man with his basic and inalienable rights enabling integral human development. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to ensure social security and social peace. According to the Pope, it cannot be achieved without solidarity between the rich and the poor or without giving priority to the needs of the poor.⁶²

⁵⁹ *LS* 150-151.

⁶⁰ *LS* 152-153.

⁶¹ *LS* 155.

⁶² *LS* 156-158.

An important element of Pope Francis' integral ecology is intergenerational justice signalled by him two years before the publication of *Laudato Si'*. The Pope pointed out a close relationship between man and all living beings, stressed human responsibility for the created world and warned against the greedy exploitation of nature that affects the lives of the present and future generations.⁶³ He also stressed the link between intergenerational solidarity and the common good.⁶⁴

The Pope asks what kind of world we want to leave to future generations, and his concern is not limited to the condition of wildlife in this world. Francis takes an integrated look at the future and, apart from the natural world, takes into account also the human world with its values, culture and meaning. Only such an integral vision can bring significant results, in the form of proper conditions for integral development of future generations.⁶⁵

Ethical and cultural human degradation leading to ecological degradation is, according to Pope, an obstacle to taking effective measures to ensure the well being of future generations. Extreme individualism, excessive and short-sighted consumerism and selfish striving after immediate gratification underlie many of today's social problems. The Pope also points out that it is difficult to persuade people to care for the future poor if they are not sensitive to the poor of today. Solidarity between people teaches them to show also intergenerational solidarity.⁶⁶

Pope Francis also emphasizes the existential dimension of integral ecology. In his opinion, it should lead to the recovery of human harmony with creation through reflection on the lifestyle and the ideals present in culture. This will be possible thanks to contemplation of the presence of the Creator in nature and in man.⁶⁷ In addition, the Pope draws attention to the practical

⁶³ Francis, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Rome, 2013) 215.

⁶⁴ *LS* 159.

⁶⁵ *LS* 160.

⁶⁶ *LS* 162.

⁶⁷ *LS* 225.

dimension of integral ecology, which consists of simple, everyday gestures that break with the mentality of violence, exploitation and selfishness. Such an attitude is an antidote to the rampant consumption that ultimately leads to the destruction of life in all its forms.⁶⁸

6. Conclusion

An analysis of *Laudato Si'* indicates that it continues and develops the earlier teaching of the Church on global environmental challenges. The date of its publication, in the wake of the Climate Summit COP 21 in Paris, is not arbitrary. The Pope's strategy was made clear in his speeches made during his visit to the United States and before the UN General Assembly. His initiative became a catalyst for mobilizing non-governmental organizations and national governments for greater commitment to climate protection. This initiative also inspired the leaders of the other major religions to intensify their activity with respect to climate protection. The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change serves as a good example here.⁶⁹

Although *Laudato Si'* appeared relatively recently, it has inspired numerous studies evaluating the Pope's teaching on the style of human presence in the world. It is worth noting that Francis' idea of integrity is much more 'integral' than the previous concepts. The encyclical's subtitle, "On Care for Our Common Home," well illustrates that fact. The Pope, for example, expands the scope of the community beyond the reality of our planet to humans and other representatives of animate and inanimate nature, speaking even of the universal communion of all creation—a splendid universal communion.⁷⁰ The time perspective is also important here, as the Pope encourages intergenerational responsibility and

⁶⁸ LS 230.

⁶⁹ *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* <<http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/>> (accessed 25 September 2015).

⁷⁰ LS 220.

solidarity. Another aspect of Pope Francis' teaching is that it includes both material and cultural dimensions of reality. The uniqueness of this approach is particularly evident in his view of man that embraces concern for all aspects of human existence, with a clear emphasis on the spiritual and eschatological dimension. We can conclude that the Pope extends our understanding of integrity to include substantial, temporal and spiritual aspects.

From the perspective of research works carried out at the Institute of Ecology and Bioethics at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, two elements of Pope Francis' integral ecology seem to be of particular interest, namely, the need for the human person's rootedness and the simultaneous concern for nature and culture, which is a prerequisite for a prosperous human future.

In the section entitled "Ecology of Daily Life," Pope Francis talks about the difficulties of living in the crowded suburbs of big cities, indicating the need for respecting common urban spaces, visual perspectives and the so-called urban key points. All these elements constitute the basis for a sense of belonging and rootedness, and they unite the urban population.⁷¹ Pope Francis' thought seems to remain fully in line with the contemporary research on human behaviour. Ethologists point to the consequences of phylogenetically programmed mechanisms of human behaviour and warn against any attempts at artificial cultural unification. This agrees with the Pope's call for the protection of cultures. Cultural differences should, in fact, be treated as wealth rather than hindrances. According to Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, a necessary condition for the integration of different groups of people is maintaining inner peace, identified by ethologists with protection of the identity of ethnic and political groups. Being ethnically rooted in a small community enables man to create larger communities.⁷²

⁷¹ LS 151.

⁷² Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *In der Falle des Kurzzeitdenkens* (München: Piper, 1998) 158-173; Zbigniew Łepko, "Filozoficzna relewancja etologii," *Seminare* 20 (2004) 237-238.

Protection of cultural diversity, postulated by the Pope, is linked with the question he posed in the context of intergenerational responsibility. “When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values.”⁷³ The content of the encyclical clearly indicates that our concern for future generations should not only secure the proper environment necessary for life in the biological dimension, but also protect culture in all its richness, which is essential to authentic integral human development. Pope Francis’ ideas can be completed by the postulate of Konrad Lorenz, who points to the need of protecting the humanity of man, which is seriously threatened today by civilizational processes.⁷⁴ The aim is, therefore, to create such conditions that will allow protecting the environment, culture and humanity of man. Only an integral concern about the three elements of the world heritage is a guarantee of prosperity for future generations. To paraphrase Konrad Lorenz, we can say that it is not the question of man’s survival on the earth, but of man’s survival in a human manner.⁷⁵ This, in turn, will only be possible if, apart from protecting the natural environment, we also protect culture and man himself. The encyclical *Laudato Si’* is, certainly, a step that brings us closer to achieving this goal.

ABSTRACT

This article presents the essential elements of the integral ecology of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*. The thought of Pope Francis is an expansion of the teachings of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

⁷³ LS 160.

⁷⁴ Konrad Lorenz, *Civilized Man’s Eight Deadly Sins* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) 11-103; Franz M. Wuketits, *Zivilisation in der Sackgasse: Plädoyer für eine artgerechte Menschenhaltung* (Murnau a. Staffelsee: Mankau Verlag, 2012).

⁷⁵ Konrad Lorenz, *The Waning of Humaneness* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1989); Ryszard F. Sadowski, *Filozoficzny spór o rolę chrześcijaństwa w kwestii ekologicznej* (Warszawa: TNFS, 2015) 204.

Among the other influences on the Pope's integral ecology are also the humanism of Jacques Maritain and the various versions of integral ecology represented by Ken Wilber, Leonardo Boff and Thomas Berry. In addition, this study emphasizes the integrity of the Pope's concern for the world, manifested in the postulate for the protection of nature, culture and the human being in all dimensions of life.