



*The Earth Icon*  
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### EARTH OUR SHARED HOME

One of the gifts we have received from the twentieth century is a picture of Earth as our shared home. The human community of the twenty-first century can see Earth as a blue-green planet set against the darkness of interstellar space. We are able to think of our home planet in the context of the vast distances of the Milky Way Galaxy and of the roughly one hundred billion galaxies that make up the observable universe, and be led to a new appreciation of Earth's beauty and hospitality to life. We can see human beings as part of a global community, interconnected with other species and with the life systems of our planet. This represents a precious new moment in human cultural history.

At the same time we are confronted by the damage human beings are doing to the atmosphere, the soil,

the rivers and the seas of Earth. It is becoming more and more obvious that if we continue to destroy the great forests and clear the bush, if we continue reckless exploitation of the land, the rivers, and the seas, if we continue to lose habitats, what we will pass on to our descendants will be an impoverished and far more sterile place. We are in the midst of a process that, if allowed to continue, will end in the destruction of much of what we have come to treasure.

### EVERYTHING IS INTERCONNECTED

Everything is interconnected. The continued use of fossil fuels, like the vast amounts of coal mined in my own land, Australia, contributes to rapid climate change that will bring terrible suffering to human beings and a further acceleration in the extinction of other species. Already uncounted and unnamed species are being lost forever.

All of this will have an unimaginable impact on human beings, but it is also obviously far more than a human problem. The loss of biodiversity is a *theological* issue. When human beings cause the extinction of other species, they destroy creatures made by God. They damage a mode of God's self-revelation.

### ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

As the sense of the global crisis deepens, there is a growing movement of people committed to finding an alternative way forward, an ecological movement. It is made up of people from diverse backgrounds—farmers, artists, scientists, trade unionists, business leaders, school children, and politicians, among many others. They are connected in a common love for the Earth and its creatures.

I am convinced that this movement, along with the interrelated movements committed to justice for the poor of the Earth and to the full equality of women, represents a central way in which the Spirit of God is at work in our world today.

Religious faith has an important contribution to make to the ecological movement. It can give meaning and motivation, build an ecological ethos, and contribute to the foundations of an ecological ethics. For many people around the globe religious faith continues to provide fundamental meaning. For such people, ecological commitment can receive its deepest grounding only at a religious level.

For those who belong to the Christian community, ultimate meaning is found in the idea that God is with us in Jesus of Nazareth and in the grace of the Holy Spirit. This means that the fundamental task of a Christian ecological theology is to show the inner relationship between faith in Jesus of Nazareth and ecological commitment.

An extract from Fr Denis Edwards *Ecology at the Heart of Creation* 2006. Freely available at <https://sri.campion.ox.ac.uk/open-access-laudato-si-integral-ecology-collection>

### AN ECOLOGICAL EXAMEN

*The Ignatian examen is a way of cultivating greater mindfulness of God's presence in our lives. The practice is grounded in the belief that we experience God's movements in our feelings, moods, actions and desires - in our lived experience. In this we recognise God's ceaseless invitation to come closer, to be one with God.*

*The Examen can be used to cultivate ecological sensitivity and a heightened awareness of God's presence in all of creation.*

*How is God inviting us personally to see creation, and how are we responding?*

### GRATITUDE

Begin with thanksgiving and gratitude for the reflection of God's beauty and blessing in all of creation. Ask: Where was I most aware of this gift today?

### AWARENESS

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes see creation as God does. Do I see the see the beauty of creation and hear the cries of the earth and of the poor? Ask the Holy Spirit how we might protect and care for the earth and the poor.

### UNDERSTANDING

What challenges and joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation? How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and stand in solidarity with creation and with the poor?

### CONVERSION

Ask for the grace of conversion towards ecological justice and reconciliation. Where have I failed to respond to God in the needs of creation?

### RECONCILIATION

Ask for the grace to see the incarnate Christ in the dynamic interconnections of all creation.