



## God's Earth – Our Home

### Study 4

*How then do we respond?*

*integral ecology, the great dialogue and social action*

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects both its human and social dimensions... Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. This necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society, and the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected... 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... The gravity of this crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity..."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (137, 138,139, 201)

### Comment

Pope Francis has catalogued the many aspects that make up our present crisis. (Chapter 1) He has outlined an understanding of 'creation' that sees human beings as intimately connected with all of creation. When we see ourselves in this way, he argues, then we act differently. (Chapter 2) +Francis has also looked at the human roots of our 'ecological crisis' – sin. (Chapter 3).

At the beginning of chapter 4 +Francis reiterates that the 'ecological crisis', is in fact a human crisis. Everything is connected and so an *integral ecology* must address all aspects of life as well as 'nature'. When a society is rightly ordered – “the fruit of righteousness is shalom, its effect will be quietness and confidence for ever” (Isaiah 32:17)

In Chapter 5, +Francis calls for a great dialogue at every level and in every aspect of society. He envisions a renewal of society, politics and economy in the service of humanity for the common good. (156, 189)

All this can seem quite overpowering. Can 'dialogue' really provide the way forward? How will such a dialogue proceed? Where do we begin?

Fr. Barron reminds us that the 'here but coming kingdom of God', is about the presence of God in Christ breaking into our world. The church may not be all of the Kingdom, but according to the letter to the Ephesians, it is at the centre of God's redemptive activity in his creation (Eph,1:22) The letter to the Ephesians then goes on to outline what this community of the presence of Christ looks like.

## **Task 1**

On your own, read Ephesians 2:8-10. Commit it to memory... When you are all ready, try reciting it to each other. ☺

Then read carefully from Ephesians 4:1-7, and from 4:11-5:2. Considering these last readings answer:

- What two metaphors does Paul use to describe our life together as the church? What in essence do these metaphors point to?
- What for you are two key verses in describing how we are to live together?
- In light of the above, do you think describing church as "a community of resistance" is valid? Why?
- How will such a life, lived together in Christ be of use as we begin to take the care of God's creation seriously?