



Catholic Social Teaching

Paul Pham

Professor Dr. Russell Butkus, University of Portland

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The Church and Social Justice

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2. In the 1990s Pope John Paul II introduced the "ecological question" into CST. In this essay trace the "greening of Catholicism" from Rome to the Pacific Northwest using papal documents and statements, pastoral letters of the USCCB, concluding with an analysis of the Columbia River Pastoral Letter. In your analysis be sure to address the concept of stewardship, sacramentality and how certain aspects of CST (e.g. the common good) are being interpreted and expanded to address environmental degradation. Be sure to make references to specific documents in your analysis.

3. The principle and concept of the common good is arguably one of the most important norms of CST. In this essay assess the historical development of the common good from *Rerum Novarum* (1891) to current documents that deal with the environmental crisis. In your treatment of this principle be sure to highlight important episcopal statements (e.g. *Pacem in Terris*) that made a major contribution in the way CST interprets the common good. In the final section of your essay discuss the relationship between sustainability and CST particularly in light of the common good and the work of justice.

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1 INTRODUCTION

For anyone who believes in God, who created the world and then pronounced it "very good" (Gn. 1:31), abuse of God's creation is an ethical, religious, and theological issue of critical importance. Thus Catholic Social Teaching has been examining its conscience to discern where it has traditionally had responsibility in the exploitation of the earth, and how it can foster a nourishing relationship with the world that we live in.

The study to follow explores the trail of the "greening of Catholicism" from Rome to the Pacific Northwest using Papal documents, statements and Episcopal letters then concluding with an analysis of the Columbia River Pastoral Letter. This study exams the concept of stewardship, sacramentality and the common good as how it addresses the environmental degradation. An analysis of the historical development of the common good from *Rerum Novarum* to current documents that deal with the environmental crisis will also be attempted. The relationship between sustainability and CST particularly in light of the common good and the work of justice will also be discussed.

2 SIGN OF THE TIME

There is nothing mysterious about the fact that the natural world has been in significant decline in many ways for over a century. Due to modifications and manipulations caused by human beings, our planet is becoming increasingly hotter, stormier and suffers from decreasing biodiversity; the global warming disaster is unfolding in slow-motion, as our generation and the next count the days. The situation is worsening as we are polluting our life-support systems of soil, water, and air with toxic waste. Many pollutants that have already been released into the atmosphere or seeped into the ground cannot be contained. We are making the planet unhealthy for life. Through burning, logging, or industrial showers of acid rain we are destroying the earth's forests and ruining the trees that create and purify the air we breathe. We pump billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the air, altering atmospheric chemistry and ultimately warming the planet. Through the chemicals used in refrigerators, and several industrial processes, we have torn holes in the protective ozone layer that shields life on earth from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Our oceans are littered with plastic and mangled with sewage; many animal and plant species are being harvested to extinction; and the wetlands that provide their spawning ground are being drained or overbuilt. We are turning fertile soil into deserts through insensitive agricultural methods, losing roughly eighteen billion tons of topsoil every year. The world is running out of usable farmland; starvation looms.¹

Reports concerning ecological issues are alarming; the UN Development Program, the UN Environmental Program, the World Bank, and the World Resources Institute reported the following statistical data:

Half of the world's wetlands were lost last century. Logging and conversion have shrunk the world's forest by half. Nine percent of the world's tree species are at risk of extinction. Fishing fleets are 40 percent larger than the oceans can sustain. Since 1980, the global economy has tripled in size and population, growing by 30 percent to 6 billion people. Dams, diversions or canals fragment almost 60 percent of the world's rivers. Twenty percent of the world's freshwater fish are extinct, threatened or endangered.²

The environmental degradation and the ecological crisis have become a predominant sign of the times and it is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation. Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, no. 34 exhorts the care for God's creation:

The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to 'use and misuse,' or to dispose of things as one pleases. ...when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity.³

The ecological issues are the world's problems and burdens for generations to come as the U.S. Bishops in their letter "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good" put it:

Global climate change is ... about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the human environment and the natural environment.⁴

These important environmental issues continue to be explored by scientists, and they require urgent attention and immediate action.

3 THE TRAIL OF "GREENING OF CATHOLICISM" BEGINNING W/ ROME

Ecological concern has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents at both universal and regional levels. Modern CST recognizes and affirms the seriousness of the ecological question as a significant sign of our times in light of the Sacred Scriptures. The Biblical tradition calls believers to care for God's creation and all of God's children. As creation unfolded under God's loving hand, God saw all that He had made and found it "very good" (Genesis 1: 31). God created the human person in His "divine image" placing the human creature at the summit of the created order. "Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person who is not just something but someone." God also blesses the other creatures who share the earth and makes clear the connection that exists between all living things (Genesis 1:27-31). God calls us as His stewards to care for the garden He created. The natural world serves as a source of inspiration for our faith and our love for the Creator.⁵ A Biblical story that brings wisdom for restoring the Earth is the story of Noah and the ark (Genesis 6-

9). In Noah's story, God places an extremely high value on biodiversity. The humans were limited to Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives, but the priority was biodiversity, one pair of every living creature to keep the integrity of creation intact so that the Earth after the flood can be restored.⁶ Many prophets in the Hebrew Bible spoke about ecological crises we face today. It takes some translation to connect their saying to today's world, Hosea 4:1-3 spoke about humans wound the earth is an example. Moving to the New Testament, we are given some valuable wisdom for redemption of the Earth in Romans 8:18-25, all creation awaits redemption.

To address contemporary questions, such as climate change, Catholics bring a long tradition of applying Church's social teachings to complex issues. CST, which is rooted in Scripture and the tradition of the Church, is an instrument of evangelization and expresses the social doctrine of the Church outlining ethical principles to guide the development of a morally just society. These principles are particularly applicable to the many challenging social, political, economic and ecological questions of our times. There are three themes from Catholic Social Teaching that apply in a particular way to the Church's concern for the environment. First, concern for the environment calls us to respect human life and dignity. Second, as the world becomes increasingly interdependent, we have a call to promote the common good and the virtue of solidarity. Thirdly, in caring for the environment, we have a special responsibility to the poor and vulnerable, who are most affected by the devastation of the global warming disaster. Their lives, homes, children and work are most at risk. Ironically, they contribute least to the problems of global climate change but bear the greatest burdens because they have the least capacity to escape. We need to share an abiding love for God's gift of creation and moral responsibility to care for God's creation both human and nature. Our response to global climate change is a sign of our respect for God's creation and moral measure of our faith and stewardship. Global climate change is about the one human family. It is about our responsibility to the poor and the vulnerable and those generations yet unborn. The voices and the presence of the poor and vulnerable are often missing in debates and decisions on climate change. We need to advocate public officials to help ensure those voices are heard, their needs addressed, and their burdens eased.⁷

3.1 GAUDIUM ET SPES, VATICAN II, 1965

Gaudium et Spes is the first social teaching to represent opinions of the world's bishops. Many considered one of the most distinctive achievements of the Second Vatican Council is *Gaudium et Spes* that signaled a pastoral and methodological shift in the Church's approach to the modern world. It probably best identified by the phrase, "signs of the times," a primary expression of the focus and intent of the Pastoral Constitution⁸:

...the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come... (no. 4)⁹

According to Dr. Russell Butkus of the University of Portland, *Gaudium et Spes* punctuated a genuine shift toward the world and the Church's commitment "to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time." Nevertheless, when *Gaudium et Spes* was circulated in 1965 the deterioration of earth's bio-physical environment was just beginning to emerge as a scientific concern and was not, consequently, identified by the Council as a "problem with special urgency."¹⁰ It however alludes to human activity over the natural resources:

Like other areas of social life, the economy of today is marked by man's increasing domination over nature, by closer and more intense relationships between ...countries and their mutual dependence... (no. 63)¹¹

Thus, the environmental crisis of our time is the "sign of the time" that the *Gaudium et Spes* mentioned.

Human beings are earth creatures in both scientific and theological perspective, are fundamentally constituted by ecological relationships with and dependency on the earth's biosphere. Theologically these should be understood as primary associations within the community of creation. It is clear that *Gaudium et Spes* embraced the transcendental worth and dignity of the human person as the focus of its approach to modernity. Nevertheless, in keeping with its historical perspective, the Pastoral Constitution sought to interpret the meaning of human dignity from a historical, social and cultural context.¹²

Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For **by his innermost nature man is a social being**, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential. (no. 12)¹³

The demands of human dignity are also ecologically conditioned. Adapting the language of the Pastoral Constitution, Dr. Russell Butkus and Dr. Steven Kolmes propose that "by their innermost nature human beings are ecological beings, and unless they relate to the earth correctly they can neither live nor develop their potential." This ecological interpretation of human dignity is consistent with the Pastoral Constitution's approach of historicity in defining the human person on one hand, and its desire to elaborate on the meaning of human dignity within the context of the signs of the times.¹⁴

In light of the human person's unique dignity and pre-eminent place within creation, "the relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his identity. The United States Catholic bishops in *Renewing the Earth* echo the notion of human dignity in relationship with the earth, as stewards, "we seek to explore the links between concern for the person and for the earth, between natural ecology and social ecology. The web of life is one."¹⁵

The implications for Catholic Social Teaching for an ecological interpretation of human dignity are the issue of human rights, defined here as the minimal conditions necessary to protect and promote human dignity. This requires the expansion of Catholic rights theory to include a full array of environmental rights chief among which is the right to a safe environment. Pope John Paul II anticipated this necessity when he declared in 1990 that

"The right to a safe environment is ever more insistently presented today as a right that must be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights." Dr. Butkus and Dr. Kolmes conclude that:

It is our position that, in the face of global climate change and the impact scenarios outlined above, that human dignity, particularly of the most vulnerable human persons, cannot be promoted, protected or maintained under the current ecological conditions of increasing global mean temperatures, de-stabilization of the earth's climate system and the potentially devastating impacts on human societies. Within the framework of Catholic Social Teaching, however, the notion of human rights—as the primary conditions whereby human dignity is ensured—is inherently related to a theory and concept of justice.¹⁶

3.2 OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS - POPE PAUL VI, 1971

In 1971, Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic letter, asks Christian to turn to new perceptions of the environmental issue and to warn the consequences of the environmental degradation in order to take on responsibility, together with the rest of the world, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all:

...the dramatic and unexpected consequence of human activity, man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace - pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity - but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family (no. 21).¹⁷

3.3 SOLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS - POPE JOHN PAUL II, 1987

In 1987, Pope John Paul II addresses his ecological concern in his letter as a sign of respect for an eco-justice and consequently a fair distribution of the results of true development:

Among today's positive signs we must also mention a greater realization of the limits of available resources, find of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter. Today this is called ecological concern (no. 26).¹⁸

The Pope calls for the moral character of development that respect the natural world, which the ancient Greeks alluding precisely to the order which distinguishes it--called the "cosmos".

The first consideration is ... that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate, animals, plants, the natural elements simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the "cosmos". The second consideration is based on the realization which is perhaps more urgent that 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. The third consideration refers directly to the consequences of a certain type of development on the quality of life in the industrialized zones. We all know that the direct or indirect result of industrialization is, ever more frequently, the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population (no. 34).¹⁹

3.4 PEACE W/ GOD THE CREATOR, PEACE W/ ALL OF CREATION, JP II

In 1990, Pope John Paul II states a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by conflicts but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life.²⁰

The ecological crisis is a moral problem as the Pope declared.

The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man (no. 7).²¹

In the light of Catholic social teaching regarding global solidarity that we are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences, Pope John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis On Social Concern* has called solidarity a virtue (no. 38). It is the virtue, he says, by which we demonstrate "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good ... because we are all really responsible for all." Solidarity means that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world. In response to the ecological crisis, Pope John Paul II expanded this notion of solidarity to a new level:

The ecological crisis reveals the *urgent moral need for a new solidarity*, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized. States must increasingly share responsibility, in complimentary ways, for the promotion of a natural and social environment that is both peaceful and healthy... No plan or organization, however, will be able to effect the necessary changes unless world leaders are truly convinced of the absolute need for this new solidarity, which is demanded of them by the ecological crisis and which is essential for peace (no. 10).²²

In conclusion, the Pope declares the urgency for an education in ecological responsibility: responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth.

This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. Its purpose cannot be ideological or political. It must not be based on a rejection of the modern world or a vague desire to return to some "paradise lost". Instead, a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental and governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family, where the child learns to respect his neighbor and to love nature (no. 13).²³

3.5 CENTESIMUS ANNUS, JOHN PAUL II, 1991

In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II referred to "the ecological question" in terms of the impacts of consumerism, the resources of the earth, and the destruction of the natural environment:

Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In their desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, people consume the resources of the earth and their own lives in an excessive and disordered way. At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day (no. 37).²⁴

"It is the task of the State to provide for the defense and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces", the Pope said (no. 40).²⁵ Finally, Pope John Paul II urges to make changes in established lifestyles in order to limit the waste of environmental and human resources, thus enabling every individual and all the peoples of the earth to have a sufficient share of those resources.²⁶

4 THE RESPONSE TO "GREEN CATHOLICISM" OF THE U.S.' CHURCH

In response to Rome's ecological concerns, the Church in the U.S. has responded with an expansion of Catholic Social Thought. Episcopal letters and statements have been issued including *Strangers and Guests* (Catholic bishops of twelve Midwestern states, 1984), *Economic Justice for All* (USCCB, 1986), *Renewing the Earth* (USCCB, 1991), *The Columbia River Watershed* (Catholic Bishops on the Region, 2001), and *Global Climate Change*, (USCCB, 2001). These significant documents represent an initial raid into the conscience and seriousness of climate change and the implications of applying Catholic Social Teaching to this global phenomenon for the purpose of providing an ethical basis for the response of Christian and people of good will.

4.1 THE ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL, NCCB, 1986

In the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter *the Economic Justice for All*, the "signs of the times" among many challenges to U.S. economy are the central role of U.S. in a global economy; mobility of capital and technology affects jobs worldwide; and depletion of natural resources. The U.S. bishops ask to re-evaluate tax and welfare systems to provide services and human dignity. U.S. should be fairer in trade with developing nations. Church must model good management, fair wages, and ethical investment. Concerns for environment and sustainability are addressed:

All people share a common ecological environment that is under increasing pressure. Depletion of soil, water and other natural resources endangers the future. Pollution of air and water threatens the delicate balance of the biosphere on which future generations will depend. The resources of the earth have been created by God for the benefit of all, and we who are alive today hold them in trust. This is a challenge to develop a new ecological ethic that will help shape a future that is both just and sustainable (no. 12).²⁷

Furthermore, the Bishops asked business and finance the duty to be faithful trustees of the resources at their disposal. This applies first of all to land and natural resources. Short-term profits reaped at the cost of depletion of natural resources or the pollution of the environment violates this trust. The economy must also adequately protect the environment and the nation's natural resources.²⁸

In examining environmental questions, the concept of the "common good" is central in promoting the dignity, unity, and equality of all people. The common good also requires a concern for not only the people but for the natural as well. It compels us to work towards an effective stewardship of the natural resources including U.S. agriculture stated, the Bishops:

Such stewardship is a contribution to the common good that is difficult to assess in purely economic terms, because it involves the care of resources entrusted to us by our Creator for the benefit of all. Responsibility for the stewardship of these resources rests on society as a whole. Since farmers make their living from the use of this endowment, however, they bear a particular obligation to be caring stewards of soil and water. They fulfill this obligation by participating in soil and water conservation programs, using farm practices that

enhance the quality of the resources, and maintaining prime farmland in food production rather than letting it be converted to nonfarm uses (no. 238).²⁹

The NCCB calls for conversion and common action, to new forms of stewardship and service to especially the poor and vulnerable who often do not have the economic and technological resources to either adapt to or ward off the expected impacts of climate change. Heat waves, droughts, and storms and consequent economic costs will fall most heavily upon the poor:

We ask you to become more informed and active citizens, using your voices and votes to speak for the voiceless, to defend the poor and the vulnerable and to advance the common good. We are called to shape a constituency of conscience, measuring every policy by how it touches the least, the lost, and the left-out among us (no. 27).³⁰

4.2 RENEWING THE EARTH, USCCB, 1991

In 1991, the U.S. Bishops issued a pastoral statement to highlight the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis, to link questions of ecology and poverty, environment and development. It is also to explore the links between concern for the person and for the earth, between natural ecology and social ecology.³¹

The U.S. Bishops stress the moral and ethical dimension of ecological crisis:

As moral teachers, we intend to lift up the moral and ethical dimensions of these issues. We find much to affirm in and learn from the environmental movement: its devotion to nature, its recognition of limits and connections, its urgent appeal for sustainable and ecologically sound policies....³²

The U.S. Bishops regard the concept of stewardship as caring for the goods of the earth that we humans do not set the ultimate standards, but rather, be creative in finding ways to make the earth prosper:

Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. It is a difficult balance, requiring both a sense of limits and a spirit of experimentation. Even as we rejoice in earth's goodness and in the beauty of nature, stewardship places upon us responsibility for the well-being of all God's creatures.³³

The bishops proclaim a "sacramental universe" as the whole universe where God is dwelling. Earth, a very small, uniquely blessed corner of that universe, gifted with unique natural blessings, is humanity's home.

For many people, the environmental movement has reawakened appreciation of the truth that, through the created gifts of nature, men and women encounter their Creator. The Christian vision of a sacramental universe—a world that discloses the Creator's presence by visible and tangible signs—can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once again.³⁴

Finally, the ultimate aim of justice in all its forms is the creation and maintenance of the common good. Along with the concept of justice, this is also a longstanding aspect of Catholic Social Teaching. In this pastoral statement, the Bishops declared an additional interpretation of the common good as the planetary and universal common good:

Ecological concern has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and

everyone is responsible, although those most responsible are often the least affected. The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic” and the bishops defined it as “the Planetary Common Good.”³⁵

4.3 THE COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED, 2001

The bishops of the Arch(dioceses) of the Northwest and Nelsen, Canada issued on January 8, 2001 a pastoral statement, *The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good*. The bishops established a consultation process with scholars, in whom Dr. Russell Butkus of the University of Portland plays a primary role, and scientists over a three year period listening to community leaders and representatives of interested organizations in many communities along the watershed which is an important component of ecology system according to Dr. Russell Butkus and Dr. Steven A. Kolmes. This is because the present pattern of agriculture and development is unusually out of touch with the reality of water supplies that it needs to be highlighted. Watersheds are real entities, and the fact that we ignore them is a major contributor to the newly minted expression "water will be the next oil."³⁶

The bishops of the Northwestern states address the Columbia watershed letter to Catholic community and to all people of good will with the hope to develop and implement an integrated spiritual, social and ecological vision for the Columbia watershed, a vision that promotes justice for people and stewardship of creation.³⁷ This letter links the common good with habitat, community and ecological region emphasizing the integration and interrelatedness of these domains of human and non-human habitation.³⁸ This unique international endeavor among bishops and Catholics in the region has helped raise an ethical concern for the future use of the river.³⁹

In this regional pastoral letter, the bishops define stewardship as the traditional Christian expression of the role of people in relation to creation as the goods of the earth are gifts from God, intended for the benefit of all.

Stewards, as caretakers for the things of God, are called to use wisely and distribute justly the goods of God's earth to meet the needs of God's children. They are to care for the earth as their home and as a beautiful revelation of the creativity, goodness and love of God. ... The individual members of the human family are called to respect both creation and Creator and are responsible for that part of the earth entrusted to their stewardship...⁴⁰

The bishops critique businesses that cause environmental damages but encourage industrial operations with good stewardships:

Mining has provided jobs and funded schools, but its residues sometimes leave the land and waters tainted. In the watershed, one finds examples of huge cleanup sites as well as environmentally dangerous working conditions. By contrast, there are also industrial operations that stand as models of respect for people's health and which exemplify a proper stewardship of the watershed.⁴¹

The concern of consumerism surpassed stewardship is addressed in this letter:

As people have become more absorbed by material things and less conscious of spiritual and social relationships, consumerism has replaced compassion, and exploitation of the earth has replaced stewardship. There is a need for a spiritual conversion to a better and deeper sense of stewardship for God's creation and responsibility for our communities. This global reality touches our watershed, and it is important to take stock of it and envision a transformed future for our region.⁴²

The bishops' vision of stewardship is that the peoples of the region are conscious of their stewardship responsibilities. They conserve regional goods carefully.

They work in factories that recycle resources, efficiently utilize inputs, have little or no waste materials that need disposition except to be recycled into other goods, and release clean emissions and cleaned effluents into the environment. They work to develop an international and intergenerational consciousness of, and respect for, the needs of the entire watershed – its people, animals, birds, fish and plants. In the vision, forests are managed wisely and trees and associated vegetation of varied ages and diverse types flourish.⁴³

The bishops envision signs of hope amid the problems of the watershed:

Many people live responsibly from, and work with, the gifts and goods of the Columbia and its tributaries. Many understand that their own or others' actions have caused harm. They are striving to guide human activities and shape corporate operations and community consciousness with the ethics of stewardship of creation.⁴⁴

The bishops teach that the common good demands a proper respect for the land, the air and the water to assure that when we have passed through this land it remains habitable and productive for those who come after us.⁴⁵ The flexible adaptation of the common good is a strong evident in this pastoral letter. In this unique and creative application of Catholic social teaching, the Columbia River Watershed is defined as a common good wherein the principle of the common good is applied to an ecological region as well as local community and landscape.⁴⁶ The Pacific NW bishops present to the communities within the Columbia Basin the notion of common good even on private property, the Bishops state that

In the concept of the common good, community and individual needs to take priority over private wants. The right to own and use private property is not seen as an absolute individual right; this right must be exercised responsibly for the benefit of the owner and the community as a whole. Property must be used wisely as a trust from God to the civil owner. Public property use should reflect its status as a community benefit to be conserved as a good both in itself and for what it can provide to meet human needs... Environmental degradation can be particularly harmful to the unborn, the young and the elderly.... We call upon all men and women of good will to be good stewards of the human lives entrusted to them and to work diligently and respectfully to preserve this greatest of resources. We urge all private property owners and all managers of public lands to be good stewards of God's land, to restore and conserve that land, and to promote human communities integrated with regional ecosystems.⁴⁷

"Conserve the Watershed as a Common Good", the Bishops note that

The Columbia River Watershed is home to people and to a variety of other creatures. This shared habitat needs to be nurtured and carefully conserved if all its inhabitants are to live in an integrated and interrelated manner.⁴⁸

Lastly, the key concept that the bishops apply to the entire discussion is simply respect:

Industry must respect people and nature and take particular care to be cognizant of its impact on the common good. People must exercise a basic respect for one another, for God, for other creatures and for

the environment. Individuals also need to respect the rights of others, including those engaged in agriculture, mining, forestry and the like.⁴⁹

5 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMON GOOD

The principle of the common good is the most important characteristic of Catholic social teaching. The common good is understood as the social conditions that allow people to reach their full human potential including 1) respect for the person by realizing dignity of the human person, 2) social well-being, reflected in social structures that promote development and make accessible what is necessary for a truly human life and 3) peace and security. The Compendium of The Social Doctrine of the Church (no. 167) stated:

The demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are strictly connected to respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights. These demands concern above all the commitment to peace, the organization of the State's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all...⁵⁰

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society and nature, to the common good. The fundamental message of Sacred Scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of God, and sees in his being in the image of God the element that characterizes and distinguishes him. Because humans are social beings, they can find their fulfillment and pursue their individual good when they come together in stable groups with the purpose of attaining a common good. In examining environmental questions, the concept of the "common good" is central in promoting the dignity, unity, and equality of all people. Achieving the common good requires us to recognize that we exist "with and for" others and that we act in such a way that respects and protects the fundamental rights of all humans.⁵¹ The common good also requires a concern for not only the people of today but for future generations as the Compendium of The Social Doctrine of the Church (no. 352) stated:

Nor must one forget the contribution that every nation is required in duty to make towards a true worldwide cooperation for the common good of the whole of humanity and for future generations also.⁵²

The study to follow attempts to identify some key historical stages that highlight the development and expansion of the concept in modern Catholic social teaching beginning with *Rerum Novarum* (1891). Based on the analysis above, it is important to recognize that the norm of the common good is an evolving and flexible principle that can and has been applied to multiple spheres or levels of human activity and it has been interpreted and its meaning expanded in direct response to ecology and the environmental crisis.⁵³

5.1 RERUM NOVARUM, 1891

Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter on the Condition of Labor is the first comprehensive document of social justice; it brings the subject of workers' rights to light. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical promotes human dignity through just distribution of wealth and presents inequality that creates a decline of morality. Workers have basic human rights

that adhere to Natural Law, which says all humans are equal. Rights include the right to work, to own private property, to receive a just wage, and to organize into workers' associations. Employers and employees each have rights and responsibilities: while the worker should not riot to create a situation of conflict with the employer, the employer should maintain an environment respecting worker's dignity.

Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter defined the common good in terms of the nation-state and in reference to the rights of individuals.⁵⁴ For examples, the Pope condemns the states (socialists) taking the rights of private property owner:

... socialists... are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights...But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community (no. 4).⁵⁵

Pope Leo XIII boldly criticizes the state is manifestly against justice because every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own.

This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation...it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession.... (no. 6).

The rights here spoken of, belonging to each individual man, are seen in much stronger right when considered in relation to man's social and domestic obligations (no. 12).⁵⁶

At this stage of development the common good meant the social collection of individual rights and the state plays the "chief role" of ensuring the common good.⁵⁷

5.2 QUADRAGESIMO ANNO, 1931

In commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI gave details of the positive impact *Rerum Novarum* has had on the social order, through the church, civil authorities, and now-flourishing unions.

Quadragesimo Anno stresses that a new situation warrants a new response. The document charges that capitalism's free competition has destroyed itself, with the state having become a "slave" serving its greed. Also, while the lot of workers has improved in the Western World, it has deteriorated elsewhere. Warns against a communist solution, however, because communism condones violence and abolishes private property. Labor and capital need each other. A just wage is necessary so workers can acquire private property. Quadragesimo Anno also introduces the concept of "subsidiarity," saying social problems should be resolved on more local levels first.

Quadragesimo Anno continued to define the significance of the common good in terms of the nation-state but with a particular emphasis on social and economic conditions. The state has the responsibility to reform the social order, since economic affairs can't be left to free enterprise alone. Public intervention in labor-

management disputes approved; international economic cooperation urged.⁵⁸ With regard to civil authority, Pope Leo XIII, boldly breaking through the confines imposed by Liberalism, fearlessly taught that

government must not be thought a mere guardian of law and of good order, but rather must put forth every effort so that "through the entire scheme of laws and institutions . . . both public and individual well-being may develop spontaneously out of the very structure and administration of the State." Just freedom of action must, of course, be left both to individual citizens and to families, yet only on condition that the common good be preserved and wrong to any individual be abolished. The function of the rulers of the State, moreover, is to watch over the community and its parts; but in protecting private individuals in their rights, chief consideration ought to be given to the weak and the poor (no. 25).⁵⁹

The significance of this papal encyclical is that Pope Pius XI recognized that promoting the common good would require the re-structuring of socio-economic institutions. In this regard the introduction of social justice, in relation to the common good, is a major development in the tradition of Catholic social teaching. Moved by the inequality between rich and poor caused by the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and rocked the world, Pope Pius XI wrote⁶⁰:

To each, therefore, must be given his own share of goods, and the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice (no.58).⁶¹

The papal letter recognize that human dignity is constituted by social systems and that in order to ensure the common good, these social systems need to be restructured and transformed⁶², for example:

...the worker's human dignity in it must be recognized. It therefore cannot be bought and sold like a commodity. Nevertheless, as the situation now stands, hiring and offering for hire in the so-called labor market separate men into two divisions, as into battle lines. ...Everyone understands that this grave evil which is plunging all human society to destruction must be remedied as soon as possible. But complete cure will not come until this opposition has been abolished and well-ordered members of the social body - Industries and Professions - are constituted in which men may have their place, not according to the position each has in the labor market but according to the respective social functions which each performs.... (no. 83).⁶³

5.3 PACEM IN TERRIS, 1963

The only way to guarantee peace is to ensure a foundation that consists of specific social rights and responsibilities. The bulk of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem In Terris* (Peace on Earth), detailing rights and responsibilities that ought to exist (1) between people, (2) between people and their public authorities, (3) between states, and (4) among people and nations at the level of the world community. Some specifics: cultural changes demand that women have more rights; justice, right reason, and human dignity demand that the arms race must cease; the United Nations needs to be strengthened.

In addition to articulating the first comprehensive list of human rights in Catholic social teaching, *Pacem In Terris*, expanded the meaning of the common good beyond the nation state to include the entire human race.⁶⁴ In the words of Pope Pius XII:

The calamity of a world war, with the economic and social ruin and the moral excesses and dissolution that accompany it, must not on any account be permitted to engulf the human race for a third time (no. 59).⁶⁵

...We exhort Our sons to take an active part in public life, and to work together for the benefit of the whole human race, as well as for their own political communities (no. 146).⁶⁶

In *Pacem In Terris*, the universal common good requires the encouragement in all nations of every kind of reciprocity between citizens and their intermediate societies. On one hand the common good is ensured when nation-states guarantee the totality of rights of individuals, and on the other hand it is also promoted in reference to the common good of the entire human community. Pope John introduced the notion that the common good, as an ethical norm, may be applied to various levels of human activity whether it is the national or international field of social interaction.⁶⁷

By broadening the traditional notion from its limits within a defined polity (city- or nation-state) to extend to “the universal common good”, this term however introduced questions pertaining to “the entire human family” which could not be addressed by normal political means, such as treaties and summit meetings. Such issues included those arising from the greater interdependence of states as well as those affecting the world as a whole. Nevertheless, linking the common good with all humanity prepared the way for successive developments in interpreting and expanding the common good during the Second Vatican Council and beyond.⁶⁸

5.4 GAUDIUM ET SPES, VATICAN II, 1965

Gaudium et Spes has been the key document that shaped the life of the Church since the Second Vatican Council. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church continued the identification of the common good with the entire human race but with a broader view of the complexity and historicity of its application. Consequently, the Council Fathers defined the common good as the sum total of those conditions of social life which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. This notion of the common good places a primacy on the flourishing of individual human beings—spiritually, intellectually, culturally, and financially—through participation in solidarity with others. It stands in direct opposition to any system of government which denies the conditions for the whole human race. As the church’s fathers said:⁶⁹

Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family (no. 26).⁷⁰

5.5 POPULORUM PROGRESSIO, 1967

Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* taught that the church, in response to Jesus' teachings, must foster human progress -progress not understood solely in terms of economic and technological advances, but in terms of fostering full human potential (i.e., social, cultural, and spiritual). Wider disparity between rich and poor nations, exasperated by an inequity in trade relations that free trade is unable to correct: developing nations, exporters of cheap raw goods to industrialized nations, are unable to pay for expensive manufactured goods of industrialized nations. There was urgency to these problems, Pope Paul VI says:

“growing disparity tempts the poor to violence and revolution as possible solutions. Since the goods of the earth belong to all, the right to private property is subordinate: ‘the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations’” (no. 49).⁷¹

The encyclical added new dimensions to the requirements of the common good. While the document does not provide a full-blown definition of the common good, they did identify specific needs, the fulfillment of which are necessary to promote the common good on national and international levels.⁷² The Pope called for

institutions that will promote, coordinate and direct international collaboration among nations until a new juridical order is firmly established and fully ratified (no. 78).⁷³

Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* is just as valid today as it was when written 40 years ago. The Pope showed a "vision for the future that should lead beyond ideologies and power struggles toward the concept of what he calls authentic development." Authentic development must foster the development of each person and of the whole person. In authentic development, economics are not to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. The thrust of Pope Paul's thought is that no economic model can be absolute. Capitalism and a market economy have undoubted value, but they too must be written in the conditional. Pope Paul VI echoed the teaching of the Fathers of the Church in stressing the principle of the universal destination of the goods of creation. This principle, which has been applied to themes like land reform, must today find its place in reflection on those common goods of our global world: the environment, land, water and above all to knowledge and intellectual property.

5.6 OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS, 1971

On the 80th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Octogesima Adveniens* continued the same theme of its predecessors evolving the notions of common good with the title *A Call to Action*. Pope Paul VI's addresses urbanization and the new social problems it has created such as a new loneliness and specific problems for youth, women, and the "new poor." The document stresses personal responsibility on the part of Christians in

seeing that injustice is challenged. In combating injustice, the Pope urges the need to focus on political action, not just economic action. Encourages individual Christians and local churches to apply gospel principles of justice to contemporary situations and take appropriate political action for the sake of common good.

The first “Call to Action” explicitly addressed the “dynamism” of Catholic social teaching indicating that “It develops through reflection applied to the changing situations of this world” and, given its “rich experience” can undertake “daring and creative innovations”

...If today the problems seem original in their breadth and their urgency, is man without the means of solving them? It is with all its dynamism that the social teaching of the Church accompanies men in their search. ... It develops through reflection applied to the changing situations of this world, under the driving force of the Gospel as the source of renewal when its message is accepted in its totality and with all its demands. ... it draws upon its rich experience of many centuries ...(no. 42).⁷⁴

Secondly, the encyclical acknowledged different but interrelated spheres of human community, and gave new emphasis to human interdependence on the international level, to which Catholic social teaching must be applied.

Third, Pope Paul’s letter was the first papal encyclical to identify environmental degradation as a new “wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family”

...ill-considered exploitation of nature pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity ...thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family (no. 21).⁷⁵

These innovations prepare the way for the recognition that the bio-physical environment is incorporated into the common good in the social encyclicals of Pope John Paul II and eventually to the idea that the common good is planetary in its scope.⁷⁶

5.7 SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS, 1987

While praising the optimism and innovation of Populorum progression - the document being commemorated - world economy is in flux, debt, unemployment, and recession hitting affluent and poor nations alike. Emergence of "superdevelopment," an excessive availability of goods leading to consumerism and waste; existence of "structures of sin"; international trade discriminates against developing countries. This leads to the inclusion of the “ecological question” into *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* teaching. Pope John Paul links economic development with ecological concern in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* by declaring

the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter. Today this is called ecological concern (no. 26).⁷⁷

In 37 making the case that “the moral character of development” requires “respect for the beings which constitute the natural world,” Pope John Paul highlights three issues: (1) That humanity must consider the “mutual

connection” of living and non-living aspects of the natural world as part of an “ordered system,” (2) That some natural resources are non-renewable and must be made available to future generations, and (3) That society must be mindful of the consequences of “haphazard development” particularly in relation to industrialization and “the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis no. 34).⁷⁸

5.8 CENTESIMUS ANNUS, 1991

The *Centesimus Annus* marked the 100th anniversary of Catholic social teaching, thus using Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* as its frame of reference, looks to the “new things” (Rerum Novarum) shaping the world today. While democracy and social conflict are each discussed, the fall of “real socialism” in the Eastern Bloc nations invites a lengthy discussion of communism and capitalism. The “fundamental error of socialism” is that it's based on an atheistic view of humanity instead of a transcendent one; leads to a “social order without reference to the person's dignity and responsibility.” Distinguishing, on the one hand, between “unbridled,” “radical,” or “primitive” capitalism and, on the other hand, a “business economy” that serves and protects the human person, “it would appear that, on the level of individual nations and international relations, the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs” (no. 34). Capitalism also recognizes the freedom of the human person. Warns, however, against: (1) Elevating capitalism, as an economic tool, to the level of an all-encompassing ideology and (2) the consumeristic tendency of modern capitalistic societies, saying it cheapens the person, harms society, and ultimately poisons the planet and this is where Pope John Paul inserts the “ecological question” and makes distinctions between environmental ecology, human ecology and social ecology. The significant is the state's task “to provide for the defense and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments.” (no. 40) In its commentary on this issue, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states that

“Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good . . .” (no. 466).

A reasonable interpretation would conclude that the natural environment and its ecological processes is included in the common good and that the care of the bio-physical world is a moral obligation without which the common good can not be maintained.⁷⁹

5.9 U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

In the pastoral statement by the U.S. Catholic Bishops *Renewing the Earth*, the Bishops provided new language and a new dimension to the common good as one of the distinctive marks of a Catholic approach to environmental

questions. By that they meant not that the idea of the common good was in any way copyrighted by the Catholic Church. Rather, the bishops intended to say that as a cardinal principle of Catholic political ethics, it could be expected to guide Catholic advocacy on environment issues. The U.S. bishops further specified the common good in ecological terms as “the planetary common good,”⁸⁰ that is the good of the earth as a natural system. In this section of the letter the Bishops acknowledge the evolving characteristics of the common good and make the point that the ecological crisis “has heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is.”⁸¹ Moreover this pastoral statement makes the claim that “The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic.”⁸² The Bishops re-visit the same idea in their letter on *Global Climate Change* (2001). In their reflection on climate change and Catholic social teaching, the Bishops link the universal common good with climate, which is “by its very nature part of the planetary commons” (Global Climate Change 7)⁸³. Quoting Pope John Paul II, the bishops wrote “‘various aspects ‘of the ecological crisis’ demonstrate the need for concerted efforts aimed at establishing duties and obligations that belong to individuals, peoples, states and the international community.’” The bishops continued, again citing the pope,

“the state has the task of providing for the defense and preservation of the common good such as the natural and human environment, which cannot be defended simply by market forces.”⁸⁴

In identifying issues related to the planetary common good as of special concern to Catholics, the bishops were saying that as a universal Church, fundamentally oriented to the unity of the human family, it would be appropriate for Christians to take special interest and responsibility for those ecological problems affecting the world as a whole. Global climate change would be such an issue. Insofar as the common good is recognized outside Catholic circles, or is implicit in other kinds of arguments, it may also offer a standard for public assessment of government policy on global warming as well.

For the discussion of global equity, there is one implication of the common good that deserves our attention, namely, the responsibility of public authorities to the (universal) common good. As the end of all government, in the Catholic tradition, promotion and defense of the common good is understood to be the fundamental responsibility of all public officials. The indifference of the rich nations to the poor appears in attitudes toward global climate change. The disposition “to contribute widely and generously to the common good” has just not been there in the formulation of U.S. policy.⁸⁵ The Kyoto Protocol - an example of the type of international legislation dictated by the norm of social justice—designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, has never been ratified by the U. S. while the United States, with four percent of the world's population, is responsible for 25 percent of the world's heat-trapping gases.

In short, care for the environment is part of care for the common good - the environment is one of the "common goods" which are the shared responsibility of the human race. We have to reject some of the easy assumptions such as that the human race, because God had given it dominion over the world, had an unlimited freedom to despoil the natural environment for its own purposes. Those who feel moved to a loving care for the internal balances of nature are responding to a deep religious instinct implanted within them by God. Their intuition tells them that the human race takes its place on this planet as a gift and privilege, and needs to cultivate what the Church calls a "religious respect for the integrity of creation" (CCC, paragraph 2415).⁸⁶

Our environmental "common goods" are not only available for careful use and enjoyment today, but are held in trust for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Public authorities must never treat them as having no intrinsic worth, nor do commercial concerns see them merely as sources of profit or loss. Regarded in those terms, the environment is a great repository of natural wealth, belonging to all humanity, present and future, freely and equally. Because of this environmental mortgage that the future holds over the present, none of this natural wealth can be owned outright, as if nobody but the owner had any say in its disposal. Each generation takes the natural environment on loan, and must return it after use in as good or better condition as when it was first borrowed.

Finally, the prime duties of public authorities must become the careful conservation of this environmental dimension of the "common good". Damage to the environment is no respecter of frontiers, and damage done by one generation has the capacity to damage future generations: these are among the most powerful reasons for desiring the creation of effective global authorities responsible for the common good at international level.⁸⁷

6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY AND CST

Catholic Social Teaching of common good is most appropriate for developing an interpretation of sustainability and ethical action in response to global climate change. The concept of justice is a longstanding aspect of CST. Justice has been primarily defined in relationship to rights and the mitigation of rights conflicts among human actors.⁸⁸ The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to families, to local, regional and international communities. The unique feature of social justice is that it directly assumes the necessity of institutional reform and social transformation in order to protect human

rights and promote the common good. When applied to the impact and vulnerability scenarios of climate change, it is obvious that this is a matter of social justice on a global level.⁸⁹

The right of poor countries and peoples to development has been a persistent theme of Catholic social teaching as has the duty of developed countries to offer support to this process. Catholic social teaching opposes growth for growth's sake and accepts the environmental limits to growth. It is critical of what Pope John Paul II calls "super-" or "hyper-development" in consumer societies. The Church's conception of integral or authentic development also regards the availability of material goods as only a limited part of the human good which also includes social, cultural and spiritual goods, which are squeezed out of human experience in the excessive commercialization driving advanced consumer societies today.⁹⁰

The idea of unlimited economic growth in consumer societies is based ultimately on the premise that an infinitely increasing rate of productivity is compatible with a finite global supply of natural resources. This model provided by over-consuming societies is a dual threat to ecosystems and to global political stability. Add to this the legitimate aspiration of impoverished societies to emulate over-consuming societies in how they live, and it compounds the threat. The combined phenomena of rapid population growth and over consumption are a serious ecological concern that must be addressed by the global community. Clearly steps towards recycling, reuse, reduction and elimination of waste, are needed as human societies strive to become sustainable, that is, to learn how to live more like nature without impoverishing themselves or the future.⁹¹

Poorer developing nations are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change - even though they use less fossil fuel and produce less atmospheric pollution - to a far greater degree than developed nations who consume the most fossil fuel and produce the largest amount of greenhouse gases.⁹² The Bush's administration has objected that under the Kyoto Convention Third World "giants", like China and India, will not participate in first-stage reduction requirements. But, at present China, with a billion two hundred million people, accounts for less than half the total greenhouse emissions (11%) as compared with those for which the U.S. with its two hundred eighty million is responsible (25% of the total). Per capita, that means the Chinese, four to five times as populous as the United States, are responsible for only a small fraction of the production of greenhouse gases for which monstrous each American is responsible. Likewise with India, giants in population, China and India are far from monsters when it comes to greenhouse emissions. By both historic and current standards, neither is in the same class as the U.S. when it comes to greenhouse gas production. So, the notion that first stage reduction targets are unfair to the United States is founded on confusion that the size of a nation's population alone is an indicator of its impact on the greenhouse problem. As the results, the Kyoto Protocol was abandoned by the Bush administration in 2001. Morality itself demands the United States to make some conscious sacrifice for the sake of the planetary common good. For

one, moral integrity requires that the United States accept responsibility for its enormous role in contributing to global warming. Moral accountability before the world community demands that we in the United States take direct responsibility for cleaning up the global nest we have so amply soiled.

Practically speaking, with the effects of greenhouse emissions expected to accelerate decades into the future, with emissions so much greater in the 1990s than previously anticipated, how can we realistically expect that trading will solve the problem? Deliberate, direct cuts in greenhouse emissions will inevitably prove unavoidable. Our nation needs to get on with structuring a responsible policy, beginning with efforts at compliance with the existing international agreements.⁹³

In the context of global climate change, the preferential option for the poor would favor policies that attempt to mitigate greenhouse gases even as they assist the poor to develop. In addition, preference for the poor would entail attending to preventing and to remedying the expected destructive impact of global warming on poor regions of the world. Accordingly, it would cut against notions of the primacy of national interest, narrowly conceived, in favor of humanity, and particularly that portion of humanity most in need. Moreover, attention needs to be given, up front, to the negative impact of climate change on island states, coastal countries like Bangladesh, Southeast Asia and to tropical regions in general because they will bear the greatest change from climatic disruption and have the least capacity to escape.⁹⁴

Global Climate Change demands changes in lifestyle as the U.S. Bishops stated:

True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement. ...Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept...A renewed sense of sacrifice and restraint could make an essential contribution to addressing global climate change.⁹⁵

Acceptance of sacrifice is not inimical to technological transformation and innovation as ways of undertaking the needed change as we internalize costs; neither is it opposed to new social, legal and economic devices as means to address problems. Whatever the technical changes, absent the willingness to limit lifestyles and to sacrifice in the interest of a more equitable international economic and ecological order, without the determination to bear a rightful portion of the costs our selves, policy will be found wanting and the dimensions of the problem are likely to grow.⁹⁶ Changes of lifestyle to become earth friendly are painful to contemplate. When faced with changes, most people turn their attention to other matters. If we are to deal realistically and responsibly with our global situation, we need both spiritual deepening and a renewed sense of hope. If this hope is only a private or other-worldly one, it will not undergird wise policies. Hence, we need a vision of a possible hopeful future for the planet even if we cannot avoid all catastrophes. The New Testament image of hope is the Kingdom of God; throughout Christian

history a great variety of meanings have been read into that image. We need to give it a content that is fashioned in the teeth of the fullest recognition of the limits of our human situation.

Long-term, sustainable development, consistent with reducing and eventually reversing global warming, will require pursuit of an alternate technology path to which the wealthy nations can contribute through cooperation in technological innovation and technology transfer.⁹⁷ Scientifically based practical advice about how to help overcome global climate change is readily available including Clean Energy Economy, Adoption of Renewables, Enhanced Energy Efficiency and so on.

Population would be limited by individual choices in the context of Catholic doctrine rather than by pestilence, war, and famine. The society would be relatively stable, but there would also be a sense of jointly moving into a more fulfilling future. We need to consider some of the elements that may be involved in the achievement of societies that live with justice and dignity within the limits allowed by the renewable resources of the planet.

Finally, Catholic social teaching of solidarity is rooted in a vision of humanity as one family under God in which the goods of creation, insofar as they are at human disposal, are intended by the Creator for the good of all. Solidarity consists in the practical affirmation of the unity of the human family by working for the good of all people. With respect to climate change, solidarity entails: (1) the exercise of a sense of global responsibility which, as far as possible subordinates national and corporate interests to the planetary common good now and in the future; (2) the support and improvement of international and transnational mechanisms for addressing the problem of global warming, such as the Kyoto Convention; (3) as a matter of equity, it leads policymakers to attend to preventing and remedying the costs of climate change for poor countries, and (4) it urges the exploration of programs of abatement consistent with further socio-economic development of poor nations.⁹⁸

The pending questions are, at this juncture, are we ready even provisionally to begin to describe for ourselves and for the churches the shape of a hopeful future toward which our efforts may be rightly directed? If so, at what points does it support the fragmented concerns for justice, and the environment that guide most of our actions? At what points does it redirect our energies?

7 CONCLUSION:

"Caring for the environment is a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting the common good."⁹⁹ (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 466). Every individual and institution must accept responsibility for caring for God's creation, and "It is a responsibility that must mature on a basis of the global dimension of the present ecological crisis and the consequent necessity to meet it on a

worldwide level, since all beings are interdependent in the universal order established by the Creator."¹⁰⁰ (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 466). Every creature depends upon the same global ecology, a series of separate yet interdependent systems that provide air, food, water, and basic resources. The planetary commons, comprised of these shared resources, are easily exploited when we fail to recognize the interconnected nature of God's creation. Therefore, common effort is required to preserve God's gifts to us.¹⁰¹ This attention to the environment also must reflect the special concern for the poorest members of the human community, as poverty and environmental degradation often go hand in hand.¹⁰² (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 482, 483.) God created the bounty of the earth to be shared among all of his children, equitably and justly, and he commands us to be stewards of this great creation. As the U.S. Bishops stated, to embrace our role as stewards of God's creation, we must employ

restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we do not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of the poor and the environment.¹⁰³

In fulfilling these duties, we need to promote a focus on authentic development, encouraging the economic and spiritual advancement of the poorest people on earth.¹⁰⁴

In conclusion, we stand at an ecological crossroads where critical choices must be made. Those choices are at heart religious as we are called for a deeper respect for God's creation and engage in activities to protect the environment, promote sustainable communities and preserve the sanctity of creation. The decisions we make will decisively shape the quality of life for ourselves and generations to come.¹⁰⁵ As Christians, we need to open our hearts through scripture, tradition, prayer, theology and liturgy, and open our minds to learn and teach the issues among us and then open our hands to implement projects in the hope to restore the planet.

NOTES:

- ¹ Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit* (Notre Dame, Ind: Paulist Press, 1993), 6
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