

Chapter 4

Integral ecology

Taking into account every aspect of the global crisis: integral ecology

Par. 137

1. Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology

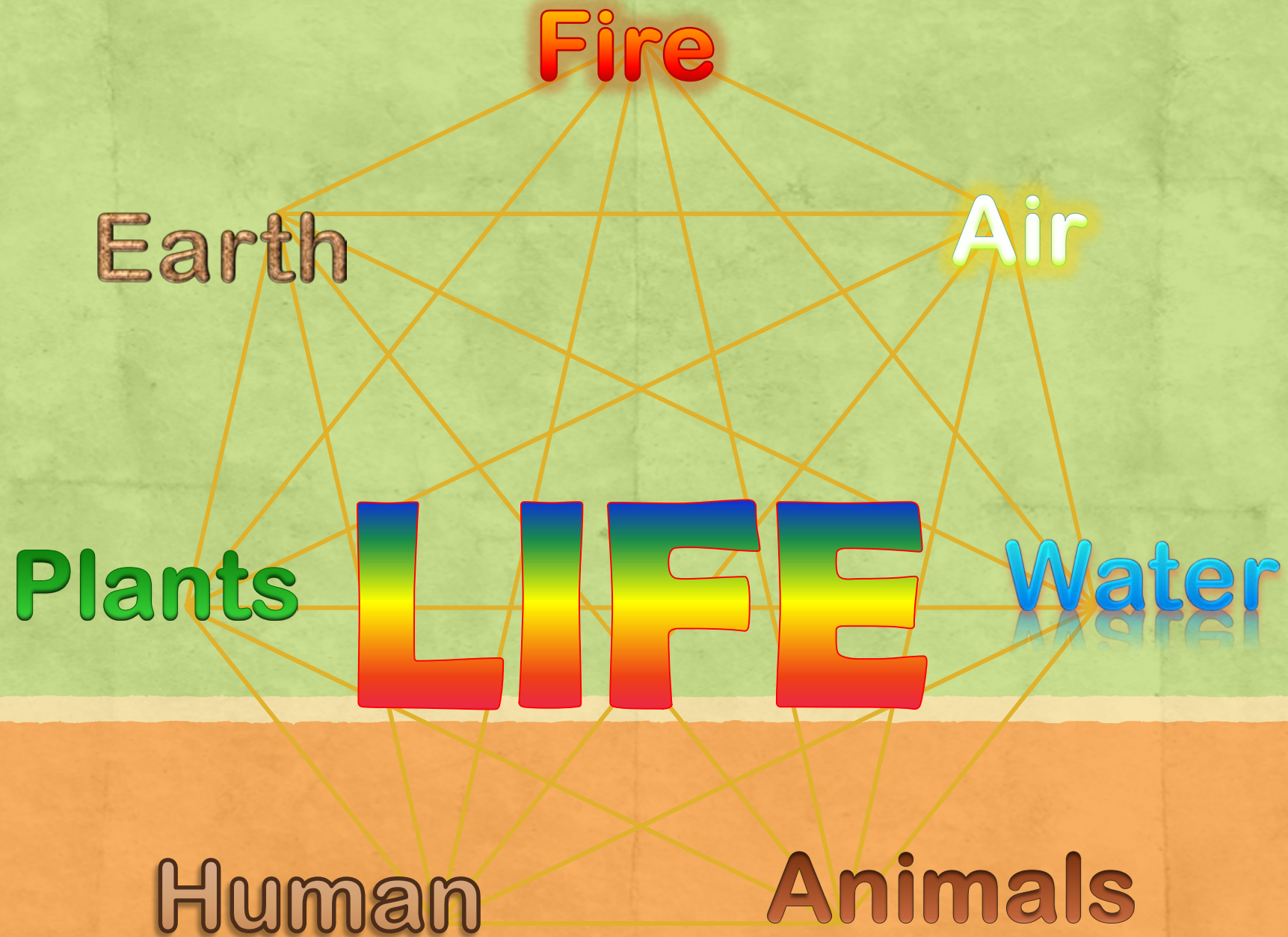
Ecology is the study of the relationships between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. It cannot be stressed enough how everything is connected.

Different aspects of the planet are interrelated – physical, chemical, biological, so too living species, are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand.

A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings.

Par. 138

When we speak of environment, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it.



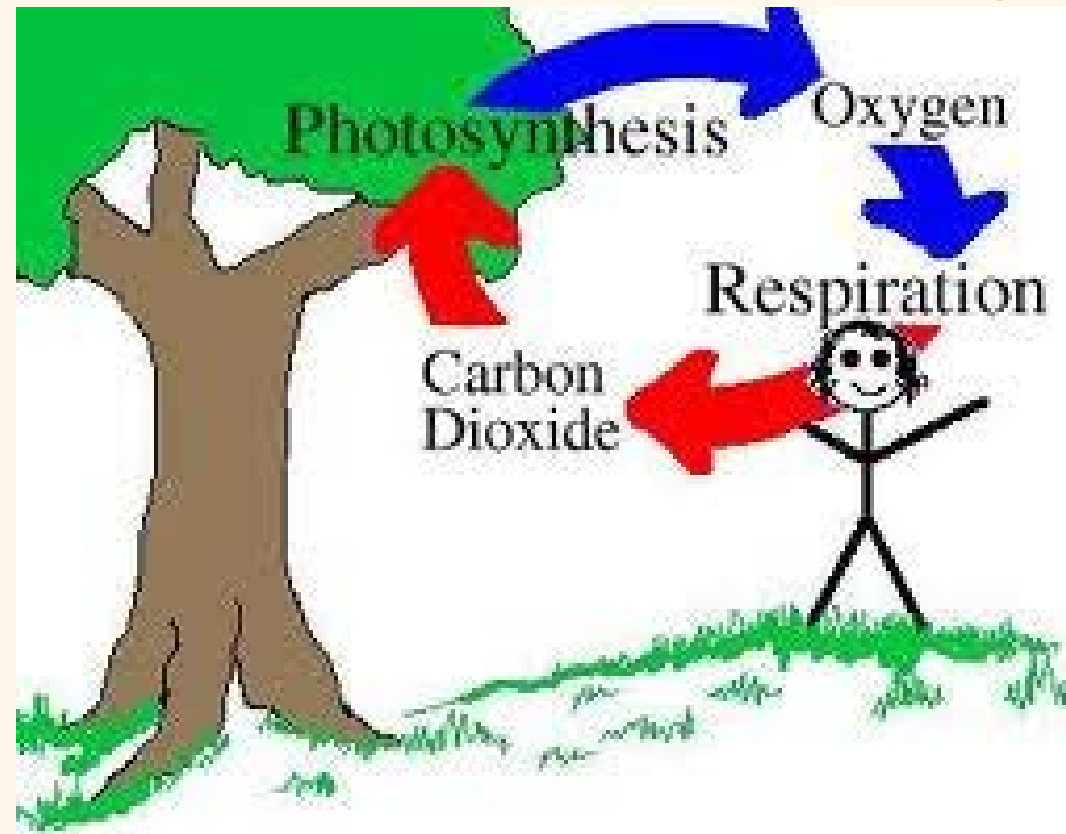
We are nature too

Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live.

We are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it.

We aren't faced with two separate crisis, one environmental and one social. But one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.

Pa. 139



In the web of **LIFE** ...

***everything is INTERRELATED**

***everything is INTERCONNECTED**

***everything is INTERDEPENDENT**

The “eco systems”



Ecosystems are not just useful, but have an intrinsic value.

Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself .

The same is true for the ecosystems, from which we depend for our existence.

We need to study and know how the ecosystems function . A reality previously given to us and in need of our respect and protection.

When we speak of “sustainable use” we always have to consider each ecosystem’s regenerative ability...

Par. 140

Photo ecosystems, source internet (nat. Geo.)

The need for an economic ecology

- We need an economic ecology because we need a broad vision, of reality.
- The protection of the environment is in fact “an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in separation from it”.
- We need humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision.

Par. 141



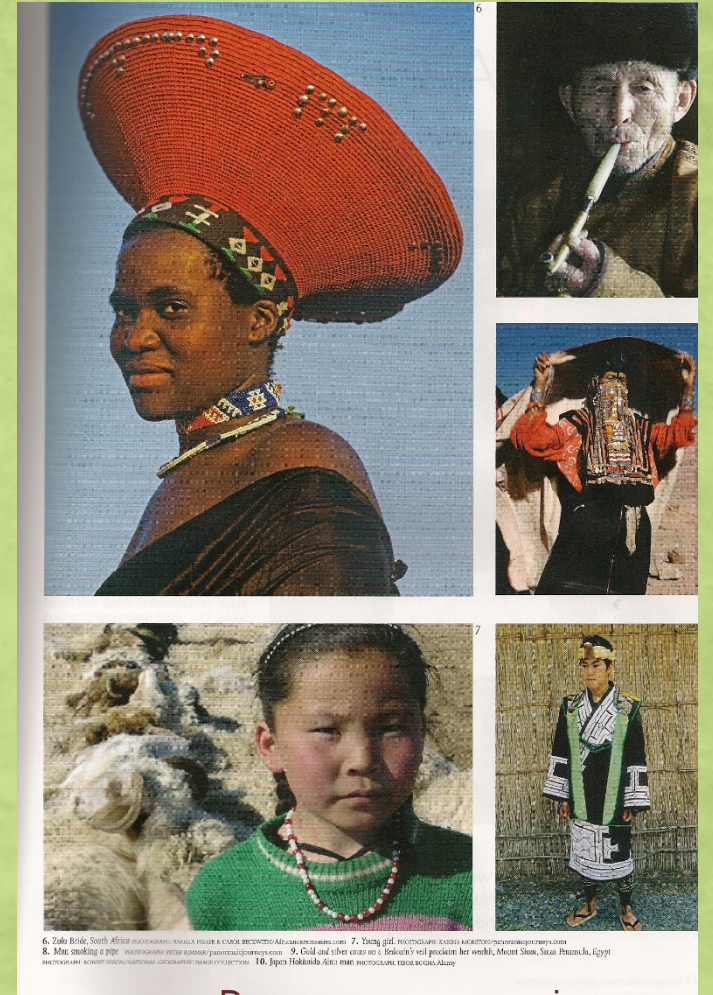
The Health of Society's institutions and the quality of life.

- “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment” (Pope Benedictus XVI)
- Social ecology is needed: from the family, the wider local, national and international communities.
- Institutions regulate their relationships and anything that weakens them has negative consequences like injustice, violence, loss of freedom.
- Laws may be well framed, also for the environment, but are often being broken.

Par. 142

II. Cultural Ecology

- When we speak about the loss of biodiversity, we also have to see that with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony that is likewise under threat.
- This patrimony is a part of the shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city and areas.
- Preservation of original identity of a people, a place is needed.
- Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past. It is living, dynamic and participatory reality, which has to be taken into account as we rethink the relationship between beings and the environment.
- Par. 143



A consumerist vision of human beings encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of the community.

There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures and the active involvement from local people from within their proper culture.

Par.144

Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a longtime shaped the cultural identity and their sense of meaning of life and community.

The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious , or even more serious ,than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal.

Par. 145

Special care for the indigenous communities

It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions.

They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially regarding projects concerning their land.

Land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there. When they remain on the land, they themselves care for it best.

Par. 146



Photo: conference Justitia and Pax, 2008

III. Ecology of daily life

- Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life: the setting in which people live.
- These settings influence the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, homes, our workplaces and neighborhoods, as we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity. It is about places of simple beauty.

Par. 147

- In various places efforts to create ecological life environment are visible and beauty is created, even in very simple circumstances .Communities are created and persons feel to be held within a network of solidarity and belonging. In this way any place can be turned from being a hell into the setting of a dignified life.
- Par. 148

Situations of extreme poverty

Situations of extreme poverty can lead to incidents of brutality and crime.

The poor living situations can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behavior.

Here Pope Francis insists that love always proves more powerful.

Many people can weave bonds of belonging and togetherness.

This experience of communitarian salvation often generates creative ideas for the improvement of a building or a neighborhood.

Par. 149

Continuation: the importance of urban planning,

Par.150



Slum in Jakarta: photo source internet

Creating “green places” to live in cities and villages

There is the need to protect common areas where people feel at home.

Create a whole instead of isolated neighborhoods.

Preserve places that are kept as much as possible in original settings.

Par. 151

Lack of housing is a grave problem both in urban and rural settings. A major issue in human ecology.

If the poor need to be relocated, suffering has to be prevented when decent housing is offered.

Par. 152



Quality of life in cities and rural areas

Quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport.

Priority should be given to public transportation.

As standards of living rise, roads are more and more congested by private cars.

Par. 153

We should not overlook the situations in the rural areas where people often lack access to essential services.

Where workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights and sometimes even hope of a more dignified life.

Par.154



Situation Jakarta : Photo's personal collection, internet

Human Ecology: the relationship between human life and the moral law

This relationship is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment.

Pope Benedict XVI spoke of “an ecology of man”, based on the fact that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will”.

It implies that we have accept our body as God’s gift. If we do, we will welcome and accept the entire world as gift of the Father and our common home....

Special attention is given to acceptance of the special gift of both femininity and masculinity. This as foundation for the just relationship between man and woman.

Par. 155



IV. The Principle of the Common Good



Illustration source internet.

The common good 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 fulfilment" (GS, Vat. Council II)

It is a central and unifying principle of social ethics.

Par. 156

Underlying Principles of the Common Good...



Source ; internet

..are respect for the human person as such endowed with basic and inalienable rights for integral development. It has also to do with the welfare of society and the principle of subsidiarity.

The common good calls for social peace, the stability and order which cannot be achieved without concern for distributive justice. Society, the state in particular , has to defend and promote the common good. Par. 157

A summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poor.



In the present condition of global society, injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human right and considered expendable.

The principle of common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.

We need to recognize the consequences of this for the universal destination of the world's goods.

It demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of the deepest convictions as believers. Par. 158



V. Justice between the generations

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations.

What about those who come after us.... all the children of the earth , not just of the human family!

What kind of world are we leaving to future generations, to our children?

The environment is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it over to the next. (Portuguese bishops)

An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision.

Par. 159



What world will we leave to our children?



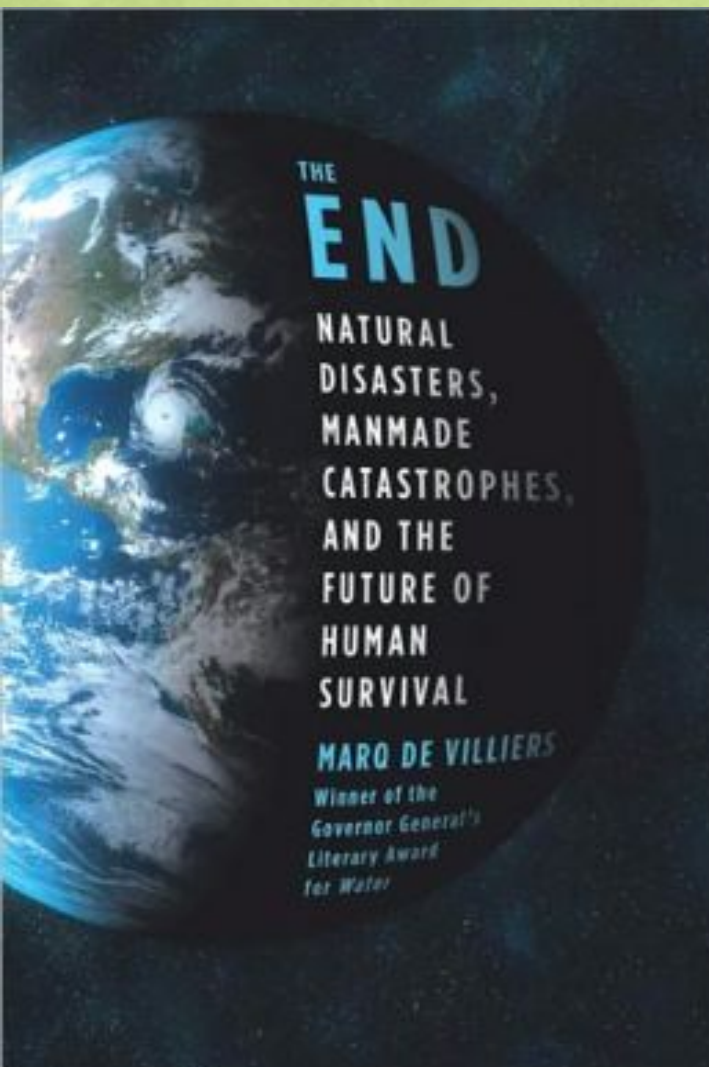
This question not only concerns the environment. We think also of the general direction, its meaning and values.

Our concern for ecology will not bring fruits, if we do not reflect on these questions.

We are led to deeper questions like what is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here, and what is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What does the earth need of us?

Not only because of future generations, but will we leave an habitable planet to our children? Par.16o

The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by decisive action, here and now



We may well be leaving to the coming generations debris, desolation and filth.

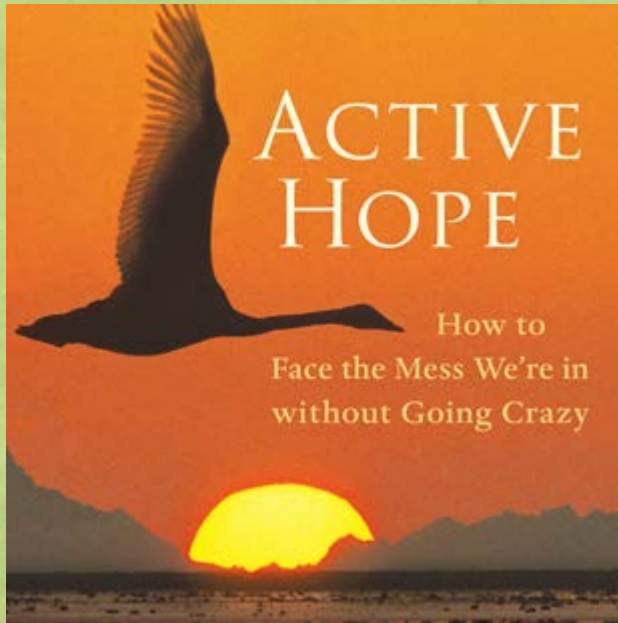
The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity, that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only cause catastrophes...

The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action.

Par.161

Will we take up this challenge, broaden our scope of present interests and keep the present day's poor and the future one in mind and heart?

Par. 162



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Active Hope is not wishful thinking.
Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued
By the Lone ranger or by some savior.
Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life
on whose behalf we act.
We belong to this world .
The web of life is calling us forth at this time.

Active Hope is a readiness to engage....

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This is the end of chapter 4: Integral Ecology
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Questions and reflections.

Chapter 4: Integral ecology

Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behavior, and the ways it grasps reality. We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis that 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.

Questions:

- 1. Why does Francis argue that “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” (139)?
- 2. What would it mean to have “an integrated approach to combating poverty , restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (139)?

3. Why does Francis think it is important for us to understand ecosystems and our relationship to them (140)?
4. Why do “we urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision”(141)?
5. Francis speaks of an “integral ecology” that combines environmental(138-140), economic(141), social (142), and cultural (143) ecologies. What does that mean? How does it work?
6. How does the environment of our homes, workplace, and neighborhoods affect our quality of life (147)?
7. How does poverty, overcrowding, lack of open spaces , and poor housing affect the poor (149)? Why are these environmental issues?

8. What does Francis mean by “the common good” (156)?

9. What are the consequences of seeing the earth as a gift that we have freely received and must share with others and that also belongs to those who will follow us (159)?

10. “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us” (160)?

11. Why does Francis say, “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain” (161)?

12. What does Francis mean when he says, “An ethical and cultural decline ... has accompanied the deterioration of the environment” (162)?