Religions Enter the Ecological time
What is the role, the task and specific contribution of the religions, churches and religious institutions in our time of ecological disaster and the diminishment of the Earth and the Community of Life?
Religions come out of a time of deep alienation from the Cosmos, the Earth and her life.
Nature was the primordial religion and the source of revelation of Divine mysteries

Since the time of the flourishing of the great religions the human-Divine relationship was central
As Holy Scriptures emerged in various religions, this revelation overwhelmed the revelation from the natural world.

People moved to caves and deserts and left the “world”.

It left little care for the Earth and community of Life.
Black Death: 1347-1349.

One third of Europe was killed. Withdrawl from the world and nature.

Personal redemption became more and more the focus.
Now Religions, Churches and Religious Institutions are no longer onlookers at the merciless disruption of our planet. The last decades: enormous growth of awareness all over the world.
“When I observe the heavens, the work of your hands, - the moon and the stars you set in their place – what is then the human that you be mindful of him”...

Psalm 8
Religions, Churches, Religious Institutions are realizing that we are part of the destruction of the Earth.

An Eco-theology and Christian Earth-Spirituality are being developed.

2015: Laudato Si.

Christians and non-Christians all over the world embrace this document as a guideline in life.
Ecological Conversion

- The sacredness of Creation as a story
- A new morally coherent worldview
- The foundation: the absolute knowing that Creation is good, very good indeed.
If a man is not at peace with God, then Earth herself cannot be at peace.

Hosea 4.3
Theology, philosophy and science all speak of a harmonious universe, endowed with its own integrity, integral and dynamic balance.

We humans have to learn to respect that integrity.

We need to be reconnected again with the intimate processes of Earth.

John Paul II, On Ecological Conversion
The changes are profound and all comprising.

To preserve this sacred world of our origins from destruction, our great need is for renewal of the entire (Western) religious-spiritual tradition in relation to the integral functioning to the bio-systems of the Earth.

Th. Berry
We need to move from a spirituality of alienation of the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with it.
From a spirituality of the divine as revealed in verbal tradition to a spirituality of the divine revealed in the visible world around us.
From justice just simply to humans to a justice that includes the Earth community.

The destiny of Christianity will be determined to a large extent by its capacity to fulfill these three commitments.

Th. Berry
The Transformation

- Of our outlook on world and nature.
- Of our destiny and role in creation.
- Questions our Christian vocation till the very core.
- Will we take it to heart? What will such a transition entail?
Laudato Si
2015
To care for our Common Home
The core of our Christian vocation.
Now religions open up their traditions to embrace the planet as our home.

A deep sense of wonder and awe are being developed so that the human heart and mind can open up for the beauty of creation as the source of worship and spirituality.
How to engage in restoring Creation?

Now the different religions encourage humans to become a healing presence to the planet.

More and more people become aware of their role as planetary species. We are not only part of humankind, but of Earth-kind!

Religions can be a great asset for positive transformation and can help to shape the dialogue between religion and ecology.
How to bring religion and ecology together?
Some issues and challenges.

- Social and environmental issues can no longer be separate issues.
- We have to be critical: Buddhists, Native Americans and other first people are not necessarily more eco-friendly.
- We have to look at actions, not only at philosophies.
- Religions cannot give clear solutions to complex problems. Look for the cooperation with science.
- Scripture, rituals, prayers in religions come from a very different time and worldviews and need attunement to the present ecological situation.
There needs to be a great transformation in the view on Ethics as they are mainly coming out of an anthropocentric worldview.

How to inspire ecological theology, environmental ethics, grass-root actions from the perspective of the human–Earth relations? There is a lot of reflection and other work to be done.
The challenge for religious communities

- How can religious life be a vital contribution for that great transition?

- How can we develop the human-Earth relationship in our religious life?

- Are there specific challenges, roles, tasks of religious in the ecological crisis?
Religious (groups) have been early awakeners to the Ecological Crisis and the Call.

Genesisfarm, Blairstown, USA
The challenge to religious life

The human - Earth relationship in relation to:

- Charism
- Deepened understanding of the vows
- Deepened understanding of Community- (life)
- Education and formation of new members
- Spirituality and celebrations
- Choice and expression of ministries
- Governance and leadership
Emergence of a Universal Humanity or Devolution and Mass Destruction?

Our Turn on the Spiral

We are living through another Quantum Jump

Post-Transition

Transition

Pre-Transition

Human Life

Animal Life

Life

Earth

Universe
How can we revision ourselves, our communities, our charism in the light of the New Story and the new awareness of the Oneness of all things?
We cannot heal in segments. The Planet cannot be saved in parts. The wellbeing of the human and the wellbeing of the whole Earth community are one.

How will our ministries and mission change, if we take the gifts, the needs, the energies of the local situation of Earth into consideration?
Are we ready to undertake the role of spiritual leaders, visionaries of our time?

Can we take our vows as a covenant with the Earth community to protect, defend and foster all resources and possibilities that we have received as community?
What is progress and wellbeing and how can we stay out of the snares of an extractive economy?
Can we hear the voice of the Divine in the sacred community of Life? Can we read the sacred scriptures of our trees, fields, waters, animals, air and our gardens?

Can we as Christians, religious be a strong presence in our bio-regions and be agents of developing new ethical principles – also for the non-human community?
“We will go into the future as a single sacred community of the human and the natural world, or we will both perish in the desert”.

Thomas Berry
2015

Inspiration:

Worldly Wonder. M. E. Tucker
Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase
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Praise be to you, Laudato Si

Pope Francis


Elly Verrijt MMS