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**VOLUME 6, SPECIAL ISSUE 1**  
**MARCH 2017**

***LAUDATO SI' AND NORTHERN APPALACHIA***

*Edited by* William J. Collinge,  
Christine Cusick,  
and Christopher McMahon



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## A Note from the Editors

THE PAPERS IN THIS COLLECTION were delivered as part of the conference, “*Laudato Si’* and Northern Appalachia: A Conference on the Environment and Catholic Social Teaching,” held at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, PA, on October 21, 2016. The purpose of the conference was to engage Pope Francis’s thought from the perspective of a variety of disciplines but with a focus on the concrete circumstances and history of the region (Upstate New York, Western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia). The region itself provides an especially poignant context for this engagement given its resilient people and breathtaking beauty, but also because the region bears the scars of environmental degradation and the frustrations of an economy anchored in industries connected to that degradation.

The conference and this volume are the product of collaboration between a variety of academics working in distinct academic disciplines at several different regional institutions. The Department of Theology at Saint Vincent College organized the conference and secured institutional support from the Dean of the School of Humanities and Fine Arts, Fr. Rene Kollar, O.S.B., as well as the support of Academic Vice President Dr. John Smetanka, Br. Norman Hipps, O.S.B., the President of Saint Vincent, and Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, O.S.B., of Saint Vincent Archabbey. This plenary institutional support was complemented by the organizational efforts of a team of section conveners from four different institutions located in the region: Dr. William Collinge (Mount St. Mary’s University) chaired the section on history and public policy; Dr. Christine Cusick (Seton Hill University) chaired the section on environmental literature; Br. Albert Garr, O.S.B. (Saint Vincent College), chaired the section on environmental literature; and Dr. Jessica Wroblewski (Wheeling Jesuit University) chaired the section on theology.

Readers will note the eclectic character of the present volume (e.g., literary criticism, communication theory, history, moral theology, sacramental theology) and the variety of perspectives as well (e.g., New Deal social engineering, “theology of the body,” ecofeminism, Lonergan, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia). Both this eclecticism and this variety were intentional. The first environmental encyclical from Rome provokes attention from a variety of fields and perspec-

tives, for it seems that the environmental crisis, and the ecological conversion and integral ecology it summons, demand it. It is our hope as the editors of the volume that the thoughts offered here will serve as a catalyst for ongoing efforts to think and act in ways that promote concrete practices of redemptive recovery in the regions of the country and the world most affected by environmental injustice.

–William J. Collinge, Christine Cusick, & Christopher  
McMahon

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CONTENTS

The Significance of Pope Francis’s Prophetic Call: ‘Care for Our Common Home’ for Northern Appalachia <i>Anne Clifford</i> .....	1
Sustainable Communities and Eucharistic Communities: <i>Laudato Si’</i> , Northern Appalachia, and Redemptive Recovery. <i>Lucas Briola</i> .....	22
An Integral Eucharist? Pope Francis, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Ecology’s Relationship to Eucharist <i>Derek Hostetter</i> .....	34
Pope Francis, Theology of the Body, Ecology, and Encounter <i>Robert Ryan</i> .....	56
The Catholic Worker Farm in Lincoln County, West Virginia, 1970-1990: An Experiment in Sustainable Community <i>William J. Collinge</i> .....	74
The Catholic Workers and “Green” Civic Republicanism in Lincoln County, WV: 1969-1979 <i>Jinny A. Turman</i> .....	94
Discerning a Catholic Environmental Ethos: Three Episodes in the Growth of Environmental Awareness in Western Pennsylvania <i>Tim Kelly</i> .....	114
The Consequences of Fossil Fuel Addiction in Schoharie County <i>Nancy M. Rourke</i> .....	125
<i>Laudato Si’</i> , Communication Ethics, and the Common Good: Toward a Dialogic Meeting amid Environmental Crisis <i>John H. Prellwitz</i> .....	144
<i>Strange as This Weather Has Been</i> : Teaching <i>Laudato Si’</i> and Ecofeminism <i>David von Schlichten</i> .....	159
At Home in Northern Appalachia: <i>Laudato Si’</i> and the Catholic Committee of Appalachia <i>Jessica Wroblewski</i> .....	169
Contributors.....	176

## The Significance of Pope Francis's Prophetic Call: 'Care for Our Common Home' for Northern Appalachia

Anne Clifford

SOME PEOPLE TODAY DENY or dismiss the importance of climate change and its effects, but a growing number of people around the world recognize it to be a human-induced problem in need of a solution for the sake of life on our planet.<sup>1</sup> Among the latter is Pope Francis, who on June 18, 2015, released *Laudato Si'*, the first papal encyclical to give in depth treatment to human induced climate change. In company with Pope Francis's concern for a life-sustaining world are Christian faith-based environmental groups in Northern Appalachia, who recognize that the roots of the growing contemporary environmental crisis are moral and spiritual in nature. It is fitting therefore that the applicability of Pope Francis's prophetic call, "Care for Our Common Home,"<sup>2</sup> for Northern Appalachia be given attention.

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<sup>1</sup> "Latin America, Africa More Concerned about Climate Change Compared with Other Regions," [www.pewglobal.org/2015/11/05/global-concern-about-climate-change-broad-support-for-limiting-emissions/climate-change-report-29/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/11/05/global-concern-about-climate-change-broad-support-for-limiting-emissions/climate-change-report-29/). This Pew Research Center survey, conducted in 2015, indicated that persons polled in Latin America (74%) and Africa (61%) were more concerned about climate change than persons polled in the United States (45%). Global climate research is traceable to the mid-1960s and Syukuro Manabe and Richard T. Wetherald, who affirmed that increases in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere caused primarily by industrial activity were the major cause of increases in temperature at the Earth's surface and in the troposphere. See S. Manabe and R. T. Wetherald, "Thermal equilibrium of the atmosphere with a given distribution of relative humidity," *Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences* 24, no. 3 (1967): 241-259. For more on the significance of this finding and of the importance of climate change science, see G. Thomas Farmer and John Cook, *Climate Change Science, Vol. 1* (New York: SpringerLink Content Provider, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis is not the first pope to address environmental concerns. Pope John Paul II addressed ecological concerns in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation," [w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19891208\\_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html), and Pope Benedict XVI did so as well in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," [w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliii-world-day-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html), and in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, nos. 48-51. To illustrate the Catholic Church's commitment to resolving

The term “prophetic” is an apt description for Pope Francis’s message in *Laudato Si’*. In keeping with God’s chosen messengers of the Old Testament, Pope Francis urges people today to embrace a new paradigm of justice, one “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 15). In ways that both continue and expand the biblically rooted prophetic tradition, Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* brings together love for God and “civic and political love” (*Laudato Si’*, title of Chapter V) to encourage people to embrace a “culture of care” (no. 229), especially for earth’s poverty-stricken people whose lives are impacted by climate change resulting from an increase in global temperature (no. 231).

It is significant that in *Laudato Si’* the term “poor” appears sixty times. This is due to the fact that the suffering of the poor, especially their lack of access to nourishing food, is increasing due to global warming and the accompanying frequency and intensity of destructive weather events, resulting in flooding in some areas and drought in others.<sup>3</sup>

While Pope Francis gives priority to the physical well-being of the world’s poor people, he explicitly links their poverty with that of the earth, which he describes as “among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (no. 2). He attributes the growing poverty of “our sister earth,” to anthropocentrism, lamenting “the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her” (no. 2). This harm is due to people seeing themselves as earth’s “lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will,” prompted by forgetfulness that “we ourselves are dust of the earth” (Gen 2:7; *Laudato Si’*, no. 2). Our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (no. 2).

Pope Francis gives attention to the plight of the poor several times on *Laudato Si’*, drawing attention to the fact that it is the poor people of our world who bear the heaviest burden of the abuse inflicted on our “sister earth” (no. 53). This fact prompts his call for a “preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters” (*LS*, no. 158), and

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environmental problems related to renewable energy, in 2010 Pope Benedict had 2,000 solar panels installed to provide electricity for Vatican City, news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/02/130228-environmental-pope-green-efficiency-vatican-city/.

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank predicts that without rapid, inclusive and climate-smart development together with emissions-reduction efforts that protect the poor, there could be more than 100 million additional people in poverty by 2030, particularly in Africa and South Asia. See World Bank, “Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty,” [www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2015/11/08/managing-the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-poverty](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2015/11/08/managing-the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-poverty).

his proposition that earth is not a possession of any time-bound generation because earth's limited resources are "on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next" (no. 159). He stresses that it is important that we "care for the ecosystem of the entire earth" (no. 167). These links of poor persons with the condition of the earth illustrate the core meaning he invests in the term "integral ecology"; it is at one and the same time a preferential option for the poor and a preferential option for the earth (no. 158).

### **THE APPLICABILITY OF *LAUDATO SI'* FOR NORTHERN APPALACHIA**

Enacting the two-fold option calls for mindfulness that each of earth's estimated 7.5 billion people<sup>4</sup> lives in a particular locale with its own economic and ecosystem concerns that contribute in differing ways and to varying degrees to the life-sustaining capacity of earth as a whole. This is certainly true for Appalachia, the name of a regional ecosystem in the North American continent east of the Mississippi River in which there is an approximately 1,500 mile long range of mountains with their own unique ecosystem.<sup>5</sup>

Although scholars define the boundaries of the region called "Appalachia" differently, for the sake of this article Northern Appalachia is envisioned as encompassing the Appalachian mountain areas of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, eastern Ohio and the northern forty-six of West Virginia's fifty-five counties.<sup>6</sup> In the five states one can experience mountain elevations of over 4,000 feet (1,200 meters) high, especially in West Virginia, rolling hills and lush valleys fed by springs and rivers. All of these have shaped the natural history and biodiversity of a region inhabited by a collection of interdependent plant and animal species that are able to survive the cold northern latitudes in the winter and to thrive in the warm summer months.

Noteworthy plant species in Northern Appalachia include deciduous broad-leaf trees, including multiple species of ash, hickory, maple and oak, evergreen needle-leaf conifers, including a variety of pine trees, mountain laurel, and evergreen broad-leaf holly trees. The areas

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, "Current World Population," [www.worldometer.info/world-population/](http://www.worldometer.info/world-population/).

<sup>5</sup> The Appalachian mountain chain includes the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Green Mountains of Vermont, the Berkshire Hills in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and eastern New York, the Catskill Mountains, also in New York, the Blue Ridge range in central Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Mountains, which cover parts of western Pennsylvania, northwestern Maryland, eastern Ohio, almost all of West Virginia, and the Blue Ridge range of Virginia and western North Carolina. The focus of this article is the Allegheny Mountains in Northern Appalachia.

<sup>6</sup> The boundaries for the Northern Appalachian region are based on the statistics provided by Kelvin M. Pollard, "Demographic and Socioeconomic Change in Appalachia", [www.arc.gov/assets/research\\_reports/A New Diversity Race and Ethnicity in Appalachia.pdf](http://www.arc.gov/assets/research_reports/A%20New%20Diversity%20Race%20and%20Ethnicity%20in%20Appalachia.pdf). Pollard is an employee of "Population Reference Bureau."

where these trees are found reportedly provide a habitat for 255 species of birds, 78 species of mammals, 58 species of reptiles, and 76 species of amphibians.<sup>7</sup> For generations, the people of Northern Appalachia have forged deep connections to its picturesque mountains and its streams and rivers and its diverse flora and fauna by engaging in farming, outdoor recreation, and spiritual renewal.

The ecosystem of the region, with its rich variety of flora and fauna, however, has been and continues to be diminished particularly in areas that have been damaged by industrial practices, which are not sustainable, used to extract its resources. This is especially true for coal and natural gas, both of which to varying degrees also contribute to global warming. If the variety of species that made Northern Appalachia one of the most biologically diverse in the temperate world is to be sustained, the people who call the region home must make the conservation of the region's ecosystem a priority.

A Catholic movement concerned with the impact of environmental damage in the Appalachian region reportedly began in 1972 with "a network of lay, religious, and ordained Catholics working in a variety of 'social outreach' ministries in mountain communities."<sup>8</sup> The efforts of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia were inspired by the Second Vatican Council's document "The Church in the Modern World" (1965) and its focus on "the joys and the hopes, the sorrows and the anxieties" of the world's people. The anxieties of the 1970s included the growing environmental impact of the removal of forests due to surface strip mining and the resulting damage to mountain watersheds.

Among the strategies for engagement that the Catholic Committee on Appalachia used was to send out "teams to interview the people,"<sup>9</sup> thereby valuing the life experience of their fellow Appalachians. The results of this effort served to pave the way for the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia's 1975 document "This Land Is Home to Me,"<sup>10</sup> which addressed environmental concerns in the region. Prior to this 1975 document, the Catholic Church had published numerous letters from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, but never before had there been a publication from regional bishops on common concerns.

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<sup>7</sup> Russell Mittermeier, Cristina Mittermeier, Patricio Gil, and John Pilgrim, eds., *Wilderness—Earth's Last Wild Places* (Washington, DC: Conservation International, 2003), 458-467.

<sup>8</sup> Jessica A. Wroblewski, "Wilderness or Wasteland," in *An Unexpected Wilderness: Christianity and the Natural World*, ed., Colleen Mary Carpenter (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 173. Wroblewski cites Michael Iafrate, "Decolonizing Appalachian Theology, Liberation and Beyond in the Post-Vatican II Grassroots Appalachian Church" (PhD dissertation proposal, University of Toronto, 2013), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Hedge, "Learning to Live in the Web of Life," *Cross Currents* 63, no. 4 (2013): 405.

<sup>10</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land Is Home to Me: A Pastoral Letter on Powerlessness in Appalachia by the Catholic Bishops of the Region (1975)* (Kentucky: Catholic Committee of Appalachia, 2007), 7-37.

“This Land Is Home to Me” is noteworthy not only because it was the first official regional Catholic Church document to focus on ecology, but also because it incorporated insights from Catholic people living among the twenty-five million Appalachians impacted by economic inequalities growing worse due to environmental damage to the region, principally resulting from strip mining coal extraction. This thirty-seven page document closed with a plea to all of the “people of God” to be instruments of hope—for even “in the wilderness of destruction the voice of God cries out for life.”<sup>11</sup>

Twenty years later a second pastoral from the Bishops of Appalachia was released by the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, titled “At Home in the Web of Life: A Pastoral Message on Sustainable Communities in Appalachia.”<sup>12</sup> By 1995 strip mining had escalated to mountain topping, which entails removing all – or a major portion – of the top of a mountain or ridge to expose and then extract its seams of bituminous coal. In “At Home in the Web of Life...” positions taken in “This Land Is Home to Me” are revisited and emphasis is given to establishing sustainable communities that are founded on Catholic social principles, including:

- Respect for the human dignity of each person with mindfulness that we as “co-creators with God ... share in God’s own creativity” (p. 73);
- Commitment to community in service to the common good (pp. 73-75);
- Encouragement for subsidiarity in which the role of large businesses is envisioned “to assist the local web of life” (pp. 75-76);
- Calls for ecologically sound practices, which honor the natural order of creation, become the major emphasis in local industries (pp. 77-78), and
- Insistence on the importance of long-term sustainable practices in which large companies put back into the social and ecological community as much as they take out (p. 78).

These applications of Catholic social principles<sup>13</sup> honor the limitations of Appalachia as a complex ecosystem, while calling for the expansion of value-based relationships with one’s neighbors. “At Home in the Web of Life” is drawn to a close with an appeal to the people of Appalachia to turn from selfish and destructive individualism and to turn to concern for “the common good of all people, the common good of

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<sup>11</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land Is Home to Me*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life: A Pastoral Message on Sustainable Communities in Appalachia (1995)* (Kentucky: Catholic Committee of Appalachia, 2007), 40-98.

<sup>13</sup> United States Catholic Bishops, “Catholic Social Principles,” [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/).

the entire ecosystem, [and] the common good of the whole web of life” (p. 98).

“This Land Is Home to Me” and “At Home in the Web of Life” and their calls for care of the earth bear witness to the importance of recognizing that humans and the environment upon which we depend are parts of an integrated whole. Clearly there are ways in which these documents anticipated Pope Francis’s emphases in *Laudato Si’*, including especially his call for enacting integral ecology. In his initial presentation of integral ecology, Pope Francis links the role of human choices, such as industrial practices, with the health of ecosystems and “calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human” (no. 11).

Later in the first chapter of his encyclical Pope Francis makes it clear that taking to heart what it means to be human does not replace being mindful that “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation” (no. 48). Pope Francis continues, “Today ... we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (no. 49).

To insure that his reader not miss the importance of his position, Pope Francis stresses, “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” (no. 139). Collectively these statements provide not only an apt description of what he means by “integral ecology,” but also draw attention the importance of achieving it today.

“Integral ecology” is a new concept for Catholic social teaching. The emphasis given to it in *Laudato Si’* invites further examination. Professors Sean Esbjorn-Hargens and Michael E. Zimmerman published a lengthy volume on *Integral Ecology* in 2009,<sup>14</sup> in which they propose that “integral ecology” is demanded by the complex developments of our time. These developments encompass not only Earth’s external global systems comprising atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere (with all dependent on each other in their mutu-

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<sup>14</sup> Sean Esbjorn-Hargens and Michael E. Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology, Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (Massachusetts and London: Integral Books, 2009). This is a 796-page book, which combines multi-disciplinary theories and research with case studies. In the book’s preface (xiii), the authors attribute “integral ecology” to Ken Wilber’s *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, 2001), 97-99.

ally-interacting operations), but also bring together these external systems with the internal dimensions of human persons, which at one and the same time are cultural, interpersonal, psychological, spiritual and religious. Integral ecology also acknowledges the importance of the science of climate change that encompasses many disciplines, which collectively affirm that human activity is the primary cause for most of the global warming in the past 150 years.

In *Integral Ecology* Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman treat a wide range of contributions to efforts to remedy climate change, including Christian scholars and groups. While they do not focus on the Catholic Committee of Appalachia and its documents, they do give attention to a broadly comparable Catholic association active in El Salvador, "Centro Bartolomé de las Casas," which is dedicated to effecting needed social change. Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman note that this group emphasizes interpreting the Bible in an "embodied manner," rather than in a literal way. They point out that by interpreting Genesis 1 in an "embodied manner" the members of "Centro Bartolomé de las Casas" avoid assuming that the directive for humans to exercise dominion over the earth (Genesis 1: 26-28) is "license" for human domination of earth and its resources. Instead they take into consideration the likely historical settings of the biblical accounts of creation, thereby encouraging its members to engage their "interior dimensions" in ways that not only deepen and transform their faith, but also provide them with motivation to integrate sustainability, ecology, spirituality and solidarity in their care for creation. The result is "Centro Bartolomé members link their efforts of raising environmental awareness to community building."<sup>15</sup> A similar dynamic characterizes the Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

Environmentalists critical of Biblical religion have long proposed that the first chapter of Genesis's presentation of humans as the pinnacle of a multi-staged creation is the major source of ecologically problematic anthropocentrism.<sup>16</sup> In chapter two of *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis demonstrates his awareness of the outcome of interpreting Genesis 1 literally and responds with an interpretation that exemplifies what Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman mean by an "embodied manner." Pope Francis emphasizes "the harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole" as being disrupted "by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations" (no. 66).

Pope Francis does not provide a specific source for this refusal of humans to accept their rightful role in the world, but the rationale for it can be traced to the influential seventeenth century scholar who

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<sup>15</sup> Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology*, 372-73.

<sup>16</sup> Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

served as Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, Francis Bacon (d. 1626). Bacon interpreted God granting the first man dominion over non-human creatures in Genesis 1:28 as evidence that human control (meaning domination) of nonhuman nature was surely God's will.<sup>17</sup> For those who appropriated Bacon's interpretation, knowledge is power and new mechanical inventions that refashion nature made possible by that knowledge are the force that drives history.

The impact of the so-called "divinely-ordained" human domination in the refashioning of nature was given attention two hundred and fifty years after Bacon in 1859, at a time in which the Industrial Revolution was under way. The Irish physicist John Tyndall presented research noting how fluctuations in water vapor and carbon dioxide caused by coal-fueled industries were contributing to an increase in heat radiation in earth's atmosphere.<sup>18</sup> This first significant step toward the science of global warming, later called the "Greenhouse Effect," was dismissed until 1956, when physicist Gilbert N. Plass confirmed that an increase in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in earth's atmosphere, due primarily to the combustion of fossil fuels, principally coal, was the major cause for detectable increases in the average global temperature.<sup>19</sup> Human domination of nature, a major characteristic of the Industrial Revolution in the predominantly Christian northern hemisphere, was making a damaging impact on the environment, one which continues today.

In *Laudato Si*'s second chapter, "The Gospel of Creation," Pope Francis is critical of interpretations of "dominion" entrusted by God to the first humans as legitimation for human domination of earth and its many forms of life. The pope makes it clear that Genesis 1:28 and its presentation of humans being created in God's image and entrusted with "dominion" is not a license for dominating and exploiting nature. He stresses that biblical creation texts are to be read with an appropriate hermeneutic that takes into account their context (no. 67). This matters because biblical scholars date Genesis 1 to the 500s B.C.E.—long before humans were able to inflict major damage on the planet.

Drawing attention to Genesis 2:15 and God's words directed to Adam to "till and keep the garden," Pope Francis speaks of humans "tilling" and "keeping" the earth as implying "a relationship of mutual

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon, Vol. IV (1857-74)*, cited by Peter Harrison, "Having Dominion, Genesis and the Mastery of Nature," in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives—Past and Present*, ed. R. J. Berry (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2006), 24.

<sup>18</sup> "The Discovery of Global Warming" (2015), [www.aip.org/history/climate/co2.htm](http://www.aip.org/history/climate/co2.htm).

<sup>19</sup> "The Discovery of Global Warming." Today environmental science affirms that an increase in emissions of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) gas is the second major cause of global warming.

responsibility between human beings and nature” (no. 67). Each human community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence (meaning survival), “but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations” (no. 67). Furthermore, to recognize the importance of earth-care is to embrace an “ecological conversion” that can prompt people to abandon their “misguided anthropocentrism” (no. 118-119) and to direct their God-given capacities to resolve the world’s pressing environmental problems (no. 220).

### **LAUDATO SI’ AND CARE FOR LIFE-SUSTAINING WATER**

Among the growing problems posing a threat to sustaining life today in many parts of the world is clean water. In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis speaks of water forty-eight times, primarily in the encyclical’s first chapter in which he draws attention to the growing water crisis in “Africa where many people have little or no access to safe drinking water” (no. 28), resulting in dysentery and other diseases that cause human suffering, including infant mortality (no. 29). He stresses that polluted water in areas in which poor people live is a tragedy that cannot be ignored (no. 29).

Pope Francis recognizes that water pollution problems that impact the poor are not unique to Africa. The status of water in the United States is not a topic Pope Francis specifically addresses, but he does speak of water pollution resulting from mining and other industrial activities, especially in areas lacking adequate regulations or controls (no. 29). He stresses that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival” (no. 30). He also takes note of mining projects that are undertaken “without regard for the degradation of nature and culture” (no. 146).

In Northern Appalachia ecologically unsound practices related to coal and natural gas extraction have been and still are causing loss of access to life-sustaining potable water. These practices pose a long term threat to what Pope Francis insists is “the right to a life consistent with ... inalienable [human] dignity” (no. 30).<sup>20</sup> They are also endangering animal and plant life.

Fossil fuels (carboniferous oil, coal, and gas, produced from the remains of plants living 300-400 million years ago) have been the dominant human harnessed energy sources for industry for over 300 years.<sup>21</sup> Currently the United States is the world’s second largest user

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<sup>20</sup> In Pope Francis’s address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, [w2.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/speeches/2015/September/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150925\\_onu-visita.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/speeches/2015/September/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html), he further explained that water is among the essential things that allow people “to be dignified agents of their own destiny.”

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, “How Fossil Fuels Were Formed,” [www.fe.doe.gov/education/energylessons/coal/gen\\_howformed.html](http://www.fe.doe.gov/education/energylessons/coal/gen_howformed.html), and “Coal, Our

of fossil fuels, responsible for approximately 19% of the world's total energy consumption<sup>22</sup> by burning petroleum (36%), natural gas (26%), and coal (20%).<sup>23</sup> Since of the three coal has the longest history and greatest impact on Northern Appalachia, coal production and use merit consideration first, with attention to their relationship to Pope Francis's emphasis on integral ecology.

### **1. COAL EXTRACTION BY MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL AND ITS IMPACT, ESPECIALLY ON WATER**

In 2013 the United States reportedly had six hundred underground coal mines in twenty-six of the fifty states. West Virginia had 184 bituminous mines, and Pennsylvania had seven anthracite mines and thirty-six bituminous mines.<sup>24</sup> Since 1992 massive strip-mining operations called "mountain-topping" have been replacing small-scale strip mining and traditional underground tunneling methods for coal extraction, especially in West Virginia and the southwestern Pennsylvania counties bordering West Virginia. A major contributing factor is that mountaintop removal (MTR) uses less human labor, thereby reducing the monetary cost of extracting the coal.<sup>25</sup>

There is however another cost exacted by the mountaintop removal method for mining coal to the physical and social landscape of Northern Appalachia. Mountaintop removal first requires uprooting and/or cutting down trees and removing vegetation, soil and rocks (collectively called "overburden") from a coal-rich mountain. Some mountaintop removal sites encompass twelve thousand acres. Once the clear-cutting is completed, large quantities of powerful explosives are inserted often in the holes left from uprooted trees, and mountaintop is then blown apart dispersing 400 to 600 vertical feet of rock and soil. When the bituminous coal seams are exposed, giant earth-moving machines remove the rocky soil with the coal seams, and huge trucks transport it to a place where it is then washed. The toxic waste water

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Most Abundant Fuel," [www.fe.doe.gov/education/energylessons/coal/gen\\_coal.html](http://www.fe.doe.gov/education/energylessons/coal/gen_coal.html).

<sup>22</sup> Since 2011 China has been the world's number one nation in energy consumption. Coal supplied the majority (nearly 66%) of China's total energy consumption in 2012. The second-largest source was petroleum and other combustible liquids, accounting for nearly 20% of the country's total energy consumption. See "China's Key Energy Statistics," [www.eia.gov/beta/international/country.cfm?iso=CHN](http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/country.cfm?iso=CHN).

<sup>23</sup> Mohammed S. Hashem, et al, "A Literature Survey of the Fracking Economic and Environmental Implications in the United States," *Procedia Engineering* 118 (2015), 169–176.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, "Coal, Our Most Abundant Fuel."

<sup>25</sup> Kelly Austin and Brett Clark, "Tearing Down Mountains: Using Spatial and Metabolic Analysis to Investigate the Socio-Ecological Contradictions of Coal Extraction in Appalachia," *Critical Sociology* 38, no. 3 (2012): 437-457.

called “slurry” is usually stored in abandoned underground mines and other isolated sites.<sup>26</sup>

The washed coal is then transported in huge trucks to a processing plant and shipped by truck or boat to where it can be burned as fuel. Needless to say, mountaintop removal causes major alterations of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including covering streams with rocks, changing the physicochemical quality in water flowing downstream, altering groundwater hydrology, destroying plant habitat, and damaging the quality of topsoil.<sup>27</sup>

Mountaintop removal coal companies are expected to return the coal removal sites to their former state. This is very difficult, however, because the massive rock debris usually cannot be securely piled as high or graded as steeply as the original mountaintop. There are large amounts of rock left over, which coal companies then deposit in hollows, gullies, and streams.<sup>28</sup> In addition the soil supporting plant life the major component of slurry cannot be replaced. Why then is mountaintop removal being permitted? The short answer is that it is happening due to coal companies being granted waivers from state agencies with the promise that there will be economic development of the newly flattened land. Yet less than three percent of so-called “reclaimed” mountaintop removal sites are being used for economic development, e.g., strip malls. According to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s impact statement on mountaintop removal in Appalachia, it may take hundreds of years for a forest to re-establish itself on mountain top mining sites. At present only a few sites have been successfully seeded with grass.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Julia Fox, “Mountain Top Removal in West Virginia: An Environmental Sacrifice Zone,” *Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action*, eds. Leslie King and Deborah McCarthy (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 16-19. Also see, Erik Reece, *Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness, Radical Strip Mining and the Devastation of Appalachia* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Roger A. Burke, et al, “Impacts of Mountaintop Removal and Valley Fill Coal Mining on C and N Processing in Terrestrial Soils and Headwater Streams,” *Water, Air, & Soil Pollution* 225, no. 8 (2014), 2081,

[link.springer.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/article/10.1007%2Fs11270-014-2081-z](http://link.springer.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/article/10.1007%2Fs11270-014-2081-z), and Michael B. Griffith, et al, “The Effects of Mountaintop Mines and Valley Fills on the Physicochemical Quality of Stream Ecosystems in the Central Appalachians: A Review,” *Science of the Total Environment*, Vols. 417–418 (2012), 1–12, c.els-cdn.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/S0048969711015087/1-s2.0-S0048969711015087-main.pdf?\_tid=bd0d3fce-b516-11e6-bee0-00000aacb35f&acdnat=1480302174\_c1cb888cb9fae9e\_bfdbd90f90f8fae97.

<sup>28</sup> M. A. Palmer, et al, “Mountaintop Mining Consequences,” *Science* 327, no. 5962 (2010): 148-149, [science.sciencemag.org/content/327/5962/148](http://science.sciencemag.org/content/327/5962/148). See also “Plundering Appalachia, the Tragedy of Mountain-Top Removal Coal Mining,” [www.plunderingappalachia.org/theissue.htm](http://www.plunderingappalachia.org/theissue.htm).

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “The Effects of Mountaintop Mines and Valley Fills on Aquatic Ecosystems of the Central Appalachian Coalfields,”

What is the major use for the coal that is extracted from underground mines and mountain-topping sites? Nine out of every ten tons of coal mined in the United States today are used to generate electricity, and nearly half of the electricity used in this country is coal-generated.<sup>30</sup> In 2012 West Virginia reportedly had six coal fueled power plants and Pennsylvania had seven.<sup>31</sup> These plants release air pollution, which is high in sulfur dioxide that contributes to acid rain, nitrous oxide that contributes to urban smog, and carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming. In addition, not only is mountain-topping radically scarring the landscape but also it is destroying the habitats of innumerable native species and negatively impacting the way of life for people who live near mountain-topped sites.

Although the United States government has had the “Federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act” since 1977, the report on its thirty year assessment before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources (2007) indicates that there have been constant problems related especially to the overburden resulting from the mountain removal and its storage in narrow hollows and valleys adjacent to mines, both of which impact water quality and contribute to flooding.<sup>32</sup>

The extraction of coal by mountaintop removal is the latest chapter in the long history of the coal industry in Appalachia. Where coal is concerned, West Virginia is somewhat unique, due in part to the fact that coal was discovered first in what would later become the United States of America in West Virginia in 1742.<sup>33</sup> That coal continues to be important to West Virginia is illustrated in a 2011 website posting from West Virginia’s then newly elected Governor, Earl Ray Tomblin, who emphasized: “It (coal) is woven into the very fabric of our state’s culture and it is vital to our economy.”<sup>34</sup>

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[cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/risk/recordisplay.cfm?deid=225743&CFID=66830774&CFTOKEN=93342467](http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/risk/recordisplay.cfm?deid=225743&CFID=66830774&CFTOKEN=93342467).

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, “Coal, Our Most Abundant Fuel.”

<sup>31</sup> Center for Median and Democracy, “Existing U.S. Coal Plants,” [www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Existing\\_U.S.Coal](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Existing_U.S.Coal).

<sup>32</sup> “Surface Mining Act,” Hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session to receive testimony on the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977: report on policy issues thirty years later (November 13, 2007), 37-38, [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110shrg40968/pdf/CHRG-110shrg40968.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110shrg40968/pdf/CHRG-110shrg40968.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> The discovery of coal in West Virginia is attributed to a European explorer John Peter Salling, who found coal in the area of Peytona and Racine. See “West Virginia Facts”, [www.wvgs.wvnet.edu/www/faq/faq.htm](http://www.wvgs.wvnet.edu/www/faq/faq.htm) on. See also Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, *West Virginia, A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 18.

<sup>34</sup> Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, “Coal Mining – Vital to West Virginia, Vital to the World,” [www.governor.wv.gov/media/columns/2011/Pages/CoalMining%E2%80%93VitaltoWestVirginia,VitaltotheWorld.aspx](http://www.governor.wv.gov/media/columns/2011/Pages/CoalMining%E2%80%93VitaltoWestVirginia,VitaltotheWorld.aspx).

The statement of Governor Tomblin on the role of coal in West Virginia points to an important element of Pope Francis's conception of integral ecology: analysis of environmental issues cannot be separated from their social impact (no. 158). A 2016 sociological study conducted by Aysha Bodenhamer points to the existence of a persistent "culture of coal" among West Virginians who have ties to the coal industry as current or former miners or have relatives who are or have been involved in coal extraction.<sup>35</sup> Her study indicates that many West Virginians credit the coal production of their state with playing a major role in America's economic success because it not only fuels 99% of the state's electricity but also generates electricity in other U.S. states and in other countries.<sup>36</sup> Bodenhamer attributes a "culture of coal" to a discernible tendency of many people to resist anything and anyone that is perceived as a threat to the hegemony of coal in the region, including challenges posed by environmentalists, especially if they are not West Virginia citizens.

Nevertheless, there is a growing number of West Virginians negatively critical of mountaintop removal extraction of coal because of its destruction of the natural landscape, its detrimental effects on homes due to flooding caused by the removal of trees and other vegetation and its negative impact on water, both wells and municipal water systems. Due to these problems, many people living near mountaintop removal sites in West Virginia are vulnerable to flooding and to cancer-causing toxins contaminating their wells and municipal water supplies.<sup>37</sup> Many are unable to leave mountaintop removal areas because the worth of their property has been degraded and they cannot afford to move. These people therefore feel both trapped and hopeless. A statement made by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* clearly fits the situation of Appalachian people negatively impacted by mountaintop removal, "A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us" (no. 101).

Fortunately there are groups, such as the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition,<sup>38</sup> an ecumenical alliance that includes that Catholic

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<sup>35</sup> Aysha Bodenhamer, "King Coal: A Study of Mountaintop Removal, Public Discourse, and Power in Appalachia," *Society & Natural Resources* 29, no. 10 (2016): 1139-1153.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, [www.eia.gov/state/?sid=WV](http://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=WV). Coal-fired electric power plants accounted for 94% of West Virginia's electricity generation in 2015, natural gas contributed 1.8%, and renewable energy resources—primarily hydroelectric power and wind energy—contributed 3.7%.

<sup>37</sup> For an account of Mountaintop Removal related water contamination with cancer-causing hydrocarbons negatively affecting municipal water systems, see Edward Thomas, "Intimidation Is a Strong Tool," *Mountaintops Do Not Grow Back: Stories of Living in the Midst of Mountaintop Removal Strip Mining*, ed. Carol Warren (West Virginia: Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, 2008), 17-20.

<sup>38</sup> Sponsors of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition include the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, Christians for the Mountains, West Virginia Council of

Committee of Appalachia, which are addressing the negative impact of mountaintop removal, especially on vulnerable people. OVEC is making active appeals for mountaintop removal companies to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) and the Clean Water Act.<sup>39</sup> Both acts are important because whether coal is extracted from underground mines or from mountain-topping, economic benefits derived from the use of coal have not come without serious cost to the environment.

Acid drainage from coal extraction has caused extensive pollution of streams and loss of fish and other wildlife. Both underground and above-ground coal extraction also result in disruption of groundwater resources, soil erosion, and scarring of the land. Government regulation of coal extraction and processing has reduced some harmful side effects, but many coal-related environmental problems persist, negatively impacting northern Appalachia.

Given the twenty year pattern of Appalachian bishops’ pastorals, there were expectations for a third pastoral related to ecology in 2015. The Appalachian Bishops apparently chose not to issue an official document, but a “grass-roots” effort by the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, headquartered in Spencer, West Virginia, did release a “people’s pastoral,” titled “The Telling Takes Us Home: Taking Our Place in the Stories that Shape Us.”<sup>40</sup> This document synthesizes information gleaned from interviewing local people, some of whom are economically poor.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the fact that this document was not from the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia is fitting, because, although papal encyclicals have been traditionally addressed to the bishops of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis makes it clear that his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is addressed to “every living person on this planet” (no. 3), so that together we can remedy current problems and envision how to best “care for our common home.”

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Churches (Government Concerns/Peace and Justice Program Units), and West Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, <http://ohvec.org/>.

<sup>39</sup> Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Inc.; West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Inc.; Sierra Club; Coal River Mountain Watch Inc., Plaintiffs–Appellants, v. Raven Crest Contracting, LLC, [caselaw.findlaw.com/us-4th-circuit/1741535.html](http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-4th-circuit/1741535.html).

<sup>40</sup> The Catholic Committee of Appalachia, “The Telling Takes Us Home: Taking Our Place in the Stories that Shape Us” (Spencer, WV, 2015). This People’s Pastoral was released five years after twenty-nine of the thirty-one miners working at the Upper Big Branch mine in Raleigh County, West Virginia, died in an explosion in April 2010.

<sup>41</sup> According to 2015 data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program, 17.9% of West Virginia’s residents, or 321,583 people, are living below the poverty line; in Pennsylvania 13.2% of its residents, or 1,629,995 people, are living below the poverty line. See “Number and Percentage of People in Poverty in the Past 12 Months by State and Puerto Rico,” [www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/acsbr15-01.pdf](http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/acsbr15-01.pdf).

## 2. NATURAL GAS EXTRACTION BY HYDRAULIC FRACTURING AND ITS IMPACT, ESPECIALLY ON WATER

Another energy producing, major water quality related development in northern Appalachia is hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas resources, touted as an effective way to lessen U.S. dependence on “foreign oil.” Hydraulic fracturing (a.k.a., “fracking”) is the process of drilling deep within shale rock formations located thousands of feet underground to extract natural gas, a cleaner burning fuel than coal. The drilling involves pumping a mixture of water, sand, and chemical additives into a mountain at high pressure to create microfractures in the shale, releasing the oil and natural gas that had been locked in the shale.<sup>42</sup>

In Appalachia the Marcellus Shale formation, named after Marcellus, New York, where it was first discovered, stretches roughly from mid New York, beneath nearly all of Pennsylvania and parts of Eastern Ohio and most of West Virginia for an estimated total of 95,000 subterranean square miles.<sup>43</sup> The Marcellus Shale formation is among the largest known gas fields in the world and it is located near one of the world's largest energy markets that includes major cities, namely New York City, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

The extraction of shale gas by hydraulic fracturing in the United States has grown from 0.2 trillion cubic feet in 1998 to 11.4 trillion cubic feet in 2013.<sup>44</sup> Predictions indicate that Marcellus Shale fracking could provide an estimated 410.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, enough to supply energy for the United States for the next four decades.<sup>45</sup> Fracking has been welcomed by cash-strapped landowners, due to its immediate economic benefit, and also by motel and restaurant owners who cater to the influx of workers fracking requires. These

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<sup>42</sup> The Environmental Protection Agency, “The Process of Hydraulic Fracturing,” [www.epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing/process-hydraulic-fracturing](http://www.epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing/process-hydraulic-fracturing).

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, “Modern Shale Gas Development in the United States: A Primer,” [energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/03/f0/ShaleGasPrimer\\_Online\\_4-2009.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/03/f0/ShaleGasPrimer_Online_4-2009.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Emily Clough and Derek Bell, “Just Fracking: A Distributive Environmental Justice Analysis of Unconventional Gas Development in Pennsylvania, USA,” *Environmental Research Letters* 11 (2016): 25001. The authors cite two studies conducted by Benjamin Sovacool et al., *Energy and Ethics: Justice and the Global Energy Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and the US Environmental Information Agency (2015).

<sup>45</sup> Qingmin Meng, “Spatial Analysis of Environment and Population at Risk of Natural Gas Fracking in the State of Pennsylvania,” *USA Science of the Total Environment*, no. 515-516C (2015): 198–206. This article gives attention to the 2011 Market Access Report on Global Shale Gas Resources from INTEK, an international energy management consulting firm located in Arlington, Virginia, [ac.els-cdn.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/S0048969715001667/1-s2.0-S0048969715001667-main.pdf?\\_tid=f1852108-8f24-11e6-8552-00000aacb362&acdnat=1476130131\\_955a617b0c01b8f2a74884000bdf661c](http://ac.els-cdn.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/S0048969715001667/1-s2.0-S0048969715001667-main.pdf?_tid=f1852108-8f24-11e6-8552-00000aacb362&acdnat=1476130131_955a617b0c01b8f2a74884000bdf661c), on 10/10/2016.

gains however come at a high cost, especially where potable water is concerned.

Although the Marcellus Shale formation is close to the surface in parts of the state of New York, in the other states the gas is found from 4,000 to 8,000 feet beneath the surface of the land.<sup>46</sup> In Pennsylvania, for example the hydraulic fracturing process requires using large amounts of pressurized water,<sup>47</sup> along with sand, an undisclosed mixture of an estimated 400 chemicals,<sup>48</sup> and other materials to keep the fissures of the well open to enable the gas to be extracted. According to a recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study, the approximately 35,000 fractured gas wells across the U.S require an estimated 70 to 140 billion gallons of water each year.<sup>49</sup> The problem is not only the amount of water being used in hydraulic fracturing, but also the geographical locations of the wells and whether they threaten the water quality not only for human use but also for farming, livestock and non-domesticated animals in the area from native fish to deer.

Storing wastewater in lined, open-air pits is commonly practiced in Pennsylvania. As the sun induces evaporation, the harmful chemicals left behind become concentrated in the wastewater. Reusing that concentrated mix in subsequent fracking increases its toxicity due to the successive increases in the concentrations of total dissolved solids. The fact that there are numerous pathways for that concentrated toxicity to enter Pennsylvania's drinking water presents a real risk to the public and a monumental challenge to state regulators.<sup>50</sup>

Scientists have conducted studies on the impact of fracking to extract natural gas in the Marcellus Shale region, including land use, water consumption and the release of potentially harmful gases. One study conducted in 2008 found that significant benzene emissions exist within close proximity to fracking wells (c. 0.8 km), causing note-

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, "Potential Development of the Natural Gas Resources in the Marcellus Shale: New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio," [www.nps.gov/frhi/learn/management/upload/GRD-M-Shale\\_12-11-2008\\_high\\_res.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/frhi/learn/management/upload/GRD-M-Shale_12-11-2008_high_res.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> An average active hydraulic fracturing well may require as much as 4 million gallons of water to be pumped into the ground each day, see Scott Detrow, "Burning Questions: What's What, When It Comes to Water?" [stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2011/09/21/burning-questions-whats-what-when-it-comes-to-water/](http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2011/09/21/burning-questions-whats-what-when-it-comes-to-water/).

<sup>48</sup> The exact mixture of chemicals is unknown because it is considered "proprietary information."

<sup>49</sup> This information is cited in the "Pennsylvania Guide to Hydraulic Fracturing, or 'Fracking,'" [stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/tag/fracking/](http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/tag/fracking/).

<sup>50</sup> Michelle Bamberger and Robert E. Oswald, "Impacts of Gas Drilling on Human and Animal Health," *New Solutions* 22, no. 1 (2012): 72, cited by Richard Rinaldi, "Fracturing the Keystone: Why Fracking in Pennsylvania Should Be Considered an Abnormally Dangerous Activity," *Widener Law Journal* 24 (2015): 397.

worthy concern about public health because benzene is a clear, volatile, and flammable liquid that can cause headaches, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, and nosebleeds.<sup>51</sup>

A study in 2011 indicates that methane, an odorless, colorless, flammable gas that makes up most of the fuel known as “natural gas” has been found in high concentrations in drinking water wells within one kilometer of fracking sites. This makes well sites vulnerable to explosion and also poses health risks to humans and animals.<sup>52</sup> According to climate scientists Brian Dawson and Matt Spannagle, methane is a sixty times more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, molecule for molecule.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to benzene and methane related concerns, there are additional issues worthy of note. One is the total greenhouse gas (GHG) effect on the environment caused by the entire hydraulic fracturing process. Another is the transport of the large amounts of water, toxic chemicals, sand, and drilling machinery. These items, some of which are very heavy, must be hauled from their sources to the drilling sites by fleets of large trucks, which emit greenhouse gases in their travels and escalate the deterioration of roads and bridges. Put simply, both water and air pollution effects and infrastructure costs, including those related to transporting materials and machinery, must be taken into account in fracking process evaluations.

In 2015, Richard Rinaldi, editor-in-chief of the *Widener Law Journal*, provided a detailed summary of responses regarding the efficacy of hydraulic fracturing to release natural gas by experts in the field. His findings were mixed. The one obvious repeated positive is that natural gas obtained from fracking burns cleaner than other fossil fuels, especially coal.<sup>54</sup> Other findings were negative, such as concerns related to the methane gas released during the extraction and production of natural gas that more than offsets the environmental benefit of natural gas's cleaner burning attributes.<sup>55</sup> Yet for still other experts,

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<sup>51</sup> Teresa Coons and Russell Walker, “Community health risk analysis of oil and gas industry impacts in Garfield County,” [www.garfield-county.com/public-health/documents/I\\_COMMUNITY\\_HEALTH\\_RISK\\_ANALYSIS-\(Complete\\_Report\\_16MB\).pdf](http://www.garfield-county.com/public-health/documents/I_COMMUNITY_HEALTH_RISK_ANALYSIS-(Complete_Report_16MB).pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Stephen G. Osborn, Avner Vengosh, Nathaniel R. Warner, and Robert B. Jackson, “Methane Contamination of Drinking Water Accompanying Gas-well Drilling and Hydraulic Fracturing,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (2013), [www.pnas.org/content/108/20/8172](http://www.pnas.org/content/108/20/8172).

<sup>53</sup> Brian Dawson and Matt Spannagle, *The Complete Guide to Climate Change* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2009), 95.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, “Modern Shale Gas Development in the United States: A Primer 21,” *supra* note 16, p. 6, cited by Richard Rinaldi, “Fracturing the Keystone,” 390.

<sup>55</sup> According to Rinaldi, one Cornell University study concluded that the greenhouse effect of shale gas development is at least 20% greater than burning coal because “fugitive methane,” a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, is continually

Marcellus Shale's high radioactivity was a more problematic environmental concern than the health issues associated with methane.<sup>56</sup>

Rinaldi also draws attention to some of the complex legal issues associated with hydraulic fracturing wells, including the fact that they are currently regulated by individual states, resulting in exemptions from Environmental Protection Agency regulations that could have applied.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the complex morass of federal regulations is problematic. Containment of waste water, for example, is not regulated because it falls under the jurisdiction of the U.S. "Resource Conservation and Recovery Act," which stipulates that all "wastes associated with the exploration, development, or production of crude oil or natural gas" are exempt from the Act.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, while the "Safe Drinking Water Act" (SDWA) regulates "the subsurface emplacement of fluids by well injection,"<sup>59</sup> it exempts "the underground injection of fluids...pursuant to hydraulic fracturing operations related to oil, [and] gas."<sup>60</sup> The SDWA instead leaves it to individual state governments to prescribe and police minimum standards for protecting drinking water.<sup>61</sup>

Mindful that there are gaps in Pennsylvania's current regulations to adequately provide needed protection, Rinaldi cites a two-year study by Duke University released in 2012, which concluded that fracking wastewater that was handled poorly had led to the radioactive contamination of waters serving the Pittsburgh metropolitan area and beyond.<sup>62</sup> He also notes additional problems relating to fracking and calls for hydraulic fracturing companies "to be held strictly liable" not

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released over the lifetime of a fracked well, Robert W. Howarth, Renee Santoro, and Anthony Ingraffea, "Methane and the Greenhouse-Gas Footprint of Natural Gas from Shale Formations: A Letter," *Climatic Change* (2011), 679, 687, cited by Rinaldi, "Fracturing the Keystone," 391.

<sup>56</sup> Rinaldi cites Lisa Sumi, expressing concern about Marcellus's radioactivity in "Shale Gas: Focus on the Marcellus Shale," for the *Oil & Gas Accountability Project/Earthworks* (May 2008), 15, "Fracturing the Keystone," 391.

<sup>57</sup> Rinaldi recommends Thomas W. Merrill, *Four Questions About Fracking*, 63 Case W. Res. L. Rev. 971 (2013), 983-84, "Fracturing the Keystone," 399.

<sup>58</sup> Rinaldi points out that federal law defines "solid waste" as any "discarded material, including solid, liquid, semisolid...resulting from industrial material, including solid, liquid, semisolid...resulting from industrial, commercial, mining, and agricultural operations"; he cites 42 U.S.C. § 6903-27 (2012), 399, [www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/6903](http://www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/6903).

<sup>59</sup> Rinaldi cites 42 U.S.C. § 6921(b) (2) (A), 397, [www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/6921](http://www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/6921).

<sup>60</sup> Rinaldi cites 42 U.S.C. § 300h (d) (I) (A), 399, [www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/300](http://www.law.cornell.edu/us-code/text/42/300).

<sup>61</sup> Rinaldi directs his reader to see 42 U.S.C § 300h-l. U. S. federal government gives primary enforcement responsibility of Hydraulic Fracturing violations to the states.

<sup>62</sup> Rinaldi cites Harrison Jacobs, "Duke Study: Fracking Is Leaving Radioactive Pollution in Pennsylvania Rivers," *Business Insider* (October 9, 2013), [www.businessinsider.com/fracking-leaving-radioactive-pollution-in-pa-2013-10](http://www.businessinsider.com/fracking-leaving-radioactive-pollution-in-pa-2013-10), 400.

only for the dangers to which they are exposing people where fracking is done, but also for the deleterious effects beyond a particular fracking site. He makes this argument because only if liability is determined will companies be incentivized to explore safer methods and offer innocent victims a practical means of recovery, both of which are lacking under the current negligence regime.

Rinaldi concludes by explaining “why unconventional fracking in Pennsylvania” is “abnormally dangerous and must be monitored.”<sup>63</sup> He argues that hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania is inappropriate because almost every drilled well will either penetrate freshwater or occur within a water basin, both of which are sources of drinking water for millions of Pennsylvanians. This is the case because groundwater is not stagnant but flows like a slow river connecting aquifers. As a result, a single-source contamination can affect large areas, not only impacting human populations but also livestock and crops in rural areas resulting not only in their failure to thrive, but also for those that do survive resulting in additional pathways for human harm due to fish, meat, and plant consumption.

The 2015 People's Pastoral, “The Telling Takes Us Home,” treats hydraulic fracturing, noting its perceived advantages, including the short-term economic benefits for land owners. The authors of the pastoral also draw attention to some of fracking's shortcomings, including some more extensively treated by Richard Rinaldi. What they add that Rinaldi neglects is attention to personal experiences related to fracking, such as the reflections of a Washington County, Pennsylvania, livestock farmer and environmental activist who notes that since hydraulic fracturing began near where he lives,

(W)ater has turned black and become flammable, [warranting] testing for high levels of contaminants. Livestock have been born, sick, blind and deformed, or have been stillborn, and fish have disappeared or mutated. Truck drivers who transport waste material have experienced rashes, dizziness, migraines and swelling of the face and limbs. Community members regularly report that their local protection agencies side with gas companies and do little to protect them.<sup>64</sup>

This man's statement not only draws attention to the negative impact of hydraulic fracturing as an industry, but also points to the reality that the people of Appalachia “have little say” over the impact this industry is having in their everyday lives.

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<sup>63</sup> Rinaldi, “Fracturing the Keystone,” 427.

<sup>64</sup> Catholic Committee of Appalachia, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 20-21. The interviewed man is identified as Ron Gula in endnote 53 on page 66.

### ENACTING INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

For Pope Francis, integral ecology is not merely to be studied as a subject for the curious but rather is a vital part of a holistic education that leads to action that not only is a remedy for environmental problems but also is transformative for those who are involved in their implementation as planners, actors, and recipients of its benefits. How can Pope Francis's proposed "integral ecology" become a reality in Northern Appalachia or in other regional ecosystems? Certainly among the purposeful steps to effect "earth healing" is mindfulness that creation is a gift from God entrusted to our care. This is the foundation for both the assessment of and planning for the responses needed to heal the damage done to creation by mountain-top removal and hydraulic fracturing. For earth-healing to be effective it is important that scientists, engineers, policymakers, affected citizens, and government representatives are involved. A multi-disciplinary communal response is needed because technological advancement in the service of economic growth is incapable of redressing fracking related problems on its own.

As Pope Francis stresses, "the technocratic paradigm" and the often accompanying emphasis on "economic power" cannot be equated with true "progress" (no. 105). If a society equates the two, "an unethical consumerism [driven solely by profit] bereft of social or ecological awareness" (no. 219) will likely silence the voice of an ecological conscience. If the technocratic paradigm leads people to be deaf to the moaning of the earth and to the cries of poor people, then indifference to damaging climate change is and will continue to be the result (no. 232).

Technocratic indifference, however, need not be given the "final word." As Pope Francis points out: "We have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, [put simply] more integral" (no. 112). Perhaps guided by the most memorable question posed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (no. 160), faculties of Catholic colleges and universities could choose to work together to develop an interdisciplinary response to this important question.

To do this will require faculties at Catholic institutions of higher learning to embrace an ecological conversion to responsible earth-care. This conversion needs to be joined to a love for our fellow human beings, especially the poor, and an unwavering commitment to resolving the climate change related problems of society that contribute to regional and global poverty. To enact such a commitment will require moving beyond the isolation of departments and disciplines, and also institutional boundaries as well, in order to discern and enact ways to respond to the ecosystem problems in one's geographic area, guided

by Pope Francis's wise words, "By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems" (no. 220).

An important component of such a conversion is the development of creation-centered theology and ecological ethics, which take into account science-based research on the causes and remedies for global warming and its effects, while also drawing on economic studies, which give substantive attention to the long-term financial effects of choosing not to make business choices to remedy climate change and its effects, especially on the poor.

Collaboration among these discipline areas and others as well, including political science and sociology, could result in a holistic understanding of the problems and mutual agreement about how to proceed. This will require undertaking interdisciplinary research by the faculties of Catholic colleges and universities and also the development of interdisciplinary capstone courses for graduating seniors and/or graduate students.

Enacting such a project may seem daunting, something akin to a "radical conversion" to a new form of institutional life, but Saint Vincent College (Latrobe, PA) has already initiated such an endeavor by hosting "Laudato Si' and Northern Appalachia," a regional interdisciplinary "Conference on the Environment and Catholic Social Teaching," at which Catholic faculties with expertise in a variety of disciplines from Northern Appalachian institutions responded to Pope Francis's call for dialogue about environmental challenges and social inequities that are thwarting the achievement of equitable societal life and diminishing ecological sustainability for our common home. May similar multi-disciplinary conferences on integral ecology be held around the country to build solidarity in service to "care for our common home"! **M**

## Sustainable Communities and Eucharistic Communities: *Laudato Si'*, Northern Appalachia, and Redemptive Recovery

Lucas Briola

**J**UST OVER NINE MONTHS AGO national headlines read, “Historic flooding in West Virginia.” On June 23, 2016, anywhere between eight to ten inches of rain hit West Virginia in a twelve-hour span. The flooding destroyed or severely damaged more than 1,200 homes, each with its own history and memories. By July 29, FEMA had approved \$72 million for damages; there was over \$36 million of damage done to West Virginian roads alone. Twenty-three died in what was ranked the deadliest flash flooding in the United States since May 2010 and the seventh deadliest of all-time in West Virginia’s history. Among the dead were grandmother Belinda Scott from White Sulphur Springs who died from severe burns after the natural gas that filled her water-uprooted house exploded, a four-year-old toddler swept away by swift-flowing floodwaters in Jackson County, and an eight-year-old boy who fell in swollen Big Wheeling Creek near Elm Grove.<sup>1</sup>

Considered in some counties as a one-in-a-thousand-year event, the flooding was the result of what meteorologists call “training,” referring to a number of thunderstorms lining up over one location, repeatedly bombarding it with rainwater. Some connected this abnormality to changing weather patterns caused by climate change; the region has seen a 71% increase in extreme precipitation since 1958.<sup>2</sup> Many pointed to the steep mountains and narrow valleys characteristic of Appalachian West Virginia that can serve as conduits and canals for flowing rainwater. Most neglected to mention, however, that the natural sponge provided by the Appalachian woodlands which would

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Visser and Martin Savidge, “West Virginia floods devastate 1,200 homes, many lives,” CNN, July 1, 2016, [www.cnn.com/2016/06/28/us/west-virginia-flooding-weather/](http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/28/us/west-virginia-flooding-weather/); Lindsey Bever, “23 Killed in West Virginia Floods that Swept Preschooler Away from Grandfather’s Reach,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 2016, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/06/24/he-couldnt-get-him-out-a-grandfathers-desperate-attempt-to-save-a-preschooler-from-w-v-floods/?utm\\_term=.a0bbfe5134a4](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/06/24/he-couldnt-get-him-out-a-grandfathers-desperate-attempt-to-save-a-preschooler-from-w-v-floods/?utm_term=.a0bbfe5134a4).

<sup>2</sup> Doyle Rice, “Why the W.Va. floods were so deadly and destructive,” *USA Today*, June 27, 2016, [www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2016/06/27/west-virginia-floods-storm-train/86429020/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2016/06/27/west-virginia-floods-storm-train/86429020/). The numbers come from the National Climate Assessment.

typically absorb this gathered water had been gradually eroded by various forms of industrial development, especially coal mining. As the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia wrote in *This Land Is Home to Me*, “Somehow, no matter how confusing it seems, it’s all tied together by the mountain chain and by the coal in its Center, producing energy within it.”<sup>3</sup>

Besides disrupting the natural processes of Appalachia that can contain water, new mining techniques like strip mining and mountain-top removal clog and pollute reservoirs and streams with dirt and chemicals. A few air images disclose just how much these techniques rape and pillage the natural beauty of the West Virginian landscape and leave it irreparably barren. People justify these new ways of mining by claiming they are safer than underground mining. Nevertheless, as recently as 2010, twenty-nine miners died in Naoma, WV, in a mine explosion<sup>4</sup> and cases of black lung have risen—almost inexplicably—to their highest rate since the 70s.<sup>5</sup> The “owners” of Appalachia’s natural resources can easily remain indifferent to these conditions; the extreme absenteeism enabled by globalization allows corporations like Massey Energy, Arch Coal, and Consol Energy to callously value efficiency and profit above worker safety, long-term local economic health, and the land’s dignity in their “Appalachian colony.”<sup>6</sup> This indifference has facilitated those new mining technologies to permanently take away thousands of jobs previously held by underground miners, trapping them in poverty. Given the desperate conditions, few can call into question the viability of the industry’s practices; “King Coal” has taken on an almost messianic role in the life of Appalachia. Many have nowhere else to turn for work as the Appalachian region is still one of the poorest in the country. 19.4% of Greenbrier County, WV, the hardest hit in the most recent flooding, remains under the poverty level (compared to the U.S. average of 15.6%). It goes without saying that this higher level of poverty played yet another role in the level of flood damage. The complexity of the Appalachian problematic—all in the name of “economic development”—can be overwhelming. As Pope Francis himself tells us on four different occasions

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land Is Home to Me* (1975), [www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/151377/498644/753163/Appal\\_Pastorals.pdf](http://www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/151377/498644/753163/Appal_Pastorals.pdf), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Oren Dorell, “W.Va. mine blast disaster kills at least 25,” *USA Today*, April 6, 2010, [usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-04-05-West-Virginia\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-04-05-West-Virginia_N.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Dave Jamieson, “Black Lung Disease Rates Skyrocket To Highest Levels Since 1970s,” *Huffington Post*, September 15, 2014, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/15/black-lung-disease-levels-letter\\_n\\_5824470.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/15/black-lung-disease-levels-letter_n_5824470.html).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, eds., *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (North Carolina: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978). A global economy has only exacerbated this “colonization.”

in *Laudato Si'*, “It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected” (nos. 70, 92, 138, 240).

This situation provokes the soteriological question: what difference does Jesus make? What difference does the community called and sent by him—the church—make?<sup>7</sup> These are the questions Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015) and the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia in their pastoral letters *This Land Is Home to Me* (1975) and *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995) attempt to answer.<sup>8</sup> All underscore the need for a sustainable notion of development, one that is, this paper proposes, grounded in a robustly Eucharistic vision equipped to foster an authentic integral ecology aimed to reverse the cycle of ecological decline. Leaning heavily on the thought of Bernard Lonergan, this paper hopes to explore the missiological underpinnings of this often-neglected vision and in so doing achieve two ends: first, theologically, to recapture the Eucharistic heart of these ecclesial documents and second, pastorally, to consider the concrete instantiations of this vision in Northern Appalachia and the unfinished task to which these point.<sup>9</sup>

#### WHAT KIND OF DEVELOPMENT? WHAT KIND OF PROGRESS?

Ronald Eller, currently professor of history and formerly director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky, offers an especially informative account of Appalachia’s history since 1945 in his book *Uneven Ground*.<sup>10</sup> He pays particular attention to various attempts towards socio-political development in the region over the past half-century in light of a rapid industrial decline after the Second World War, the unintended consequences of the 1950 National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement, and the unprecedented mass exodus of the region’s populace (over three million people left Appalachia between 1940 and 1970).

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<sup>7</sup> See William Loewe, “Toward a Responsible Contemporary Soteriology,” in *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Matthew Lamb (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1981), 213-228.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, [w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html); Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land Is Home to Me* (1975) & *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995), [www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/151377/498644/753163/Appal\\_Pastorals.pdf](http://www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/151377/498644/753163/Appal_Pastorals.pdf). This is a PDF scan of a 2007 version that combined both pastoral letters. For citations, this paper uses the page numbers from that version.

<sup>9</sup> Studying an incarnational church, ecclesiology enjoys a unique provenance as being normative, dialectical, and practical. See Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church: An Experiment in Systematic-Historical Theology* (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2014), 1-12. See also Pascal D. Bazzell, *Urban Ecclesiology: Gospel of Mark, Familia Dei, and a Filipino Community Facing Homelessness* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2013). Eller’s work has been especially helpful for this paper.

These solutions came in a variety of forms. In the late 1950s, the Berea-based Council of the Southern Mountains (CSM) attempted to raise awareness of Appalachia's plight and offered educational and job training programs for Appalachians. The 1961 Area Redevelopment Act during the Kennedy Administration authorized \$394 million over a four-year period—most of which went to West Virginia—to provide low-interest industrial loans, grants to attract new businesses, and coverage for worker training programs. The 1964 Economic Opportunity Act and the 1965 Appalachian Regional Development Act served as two arms of Lyndon B. Johnson's famous "War on Poverty" to incorporate Appalachia into his quasi-utopian vision for a "Great Society." The former, influenced heavily by the Chicago school of sociology, would eventually blossom into a variety of community action agencies with a particular focus on education, like Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), the Job Corps, Head Start, the Alice Lloyd College Outreach Reserves (ALCOR), and the Appalachian Volunteers (AV), among many other smaller groups run by locals. Besides establishing the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the latter, convinced that the region's inaccessibility hindered its economic growth, built the Appalachian Highway Development System, providing over 3,500 miles of new highways in the region.

The list could go on, and though appreciating the considerable contributions programs like these have made for the region, Eller ends his work somewhat wistfully:

Growth had indeed come to the mountains, with its uneven benefits and hidden inequalities. But whether or not that growth had fulfilled the promise of the Great Society was a matter of debate. In that respect, the uneven ground of Appalachia was no longer the other America. It was America, and the region's uncertain destiny stood as a warning to the rest of the nation.<sup>11</sup>

Such is a recurring lament and frustration throughout Eller's work. Political corruption foiled early local efforts to serve the region as business owners all too often moonlighted as local politicians. Bureaucracy, big personalities, and competing socio-economic philosophies all sank federal aid programs into quagmires of various fits and starts. Though Eller appraises grassroots groups of resistance more positively, these sometimes devolved to groups of mere protest and even outright violence through overly narrow focuses on who should have what power.<sup>12</sup> Though all sought commendable aims, all fell short of

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<sup>11</sup> Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 260.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 136-137 and 148, for the treatment of the appropriation of the work of Harry Caudill (author of *Night Comes to the Cumberland*) by Appalachian Volunteers in the 60s and various attempts at sabotage in the spring of 1967 in Knott and Perry Counties (KY).

their lofty goals—to ensure the survival and thriving of all in Appalachia.

More fundamentally, Eller questions how Americans have come to understand and imagine this thriving. As he writes in the book’s introduction, “Appalachia endures as a paradox in American society in part because it plays a critical role in the discourse of national identity but also because the region’s struggle with modernity reflects a deeper failure to define progress in the first place.”<sup>13</sup> Eller holds that any attempts to “modernize” Appalachia in the name of progress are doomed; “progress” has meant only increasing gaps between rich and poor, environmental destruction, and the devaluing (as well as a strange commodification) of Appalachian values. Financial and even educational assistance to the region will forever remain quick fixes incapable of sustainable development unless the system itself and the assumptions that undergird it are questioned. As Eller ends the afterword to the paperback edition to his book:

Those who care about the mountains and about mountain people must have the courage to challenge the cultural assumptions both within and without the region that have brought us to this point. We must have the fortitude to offer a new vision of the possibilities for a truly new Appalachia, one that provides an adequate and meaningful life for all Appalachians in a balanced and sustainable relationship to the land itself. We must change federal and state policies, transform local and regional economies, improve civic life, reform public institutions, and change our own behavior. Above all, using old and new communication tools, we should facilitate a regional conversation about values and how we collectively define the good life.<sup>14</sup>

Hopefully, a conference like the one hosted at Saint Vincent College and this volume of the *Journal of Moral Theology* it produced serve precisely as one of those regional discussions meant to arrive at a deeper notion of progress and Appalachian development. One fruitful contribution to this discussion comes from Bernard Lonergan’s extraordinary effort to integrate his transcendental anthropology with a theology of history.<sup>15</sup> Lonergan offers a heuristic description of a

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<sup>13</sup> Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 272.

<sup>15</sup> See Mark Miller, *The Quest for God and the Good Life: Lonergan's Theological Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013). In a conversation with Patrick Byrne, Lonergan once remarkably commented that the purpose of his work was so that “the widows and the orphans won’t starve.” See Patrick H. Byrne, “*Ressentiment* and the Preferential Option for the Poor,” *Theological Studies* 54 (1993): 213-241, at 241.

world in which authenticity—an unwavering commitment to intelligence, truth, and value—guides all human knowing and acting.<sup>16</sup> In this world, faithfulness to attentive experience, intelligent understanding, reasonable judgment, and responsible action would yield cumulative progress throughout history. To ensure the circulation of vital values like food, shelter, and safety, populations would develop economies, politics, and technologies. Eventually, to make living something other than *mere* living as well as to support and inform those social values, a deeper realm of meaning and value—culture—would arise in fields like art, ethics, and even religion. Lonergan labels this ascending process the “creative vector of history.”<sup>17</sup>

And yet, as he writes, “This wheel of progress becomes a wheel of decline when the process is distorted by bias.”<sup>18</sup> After all, in reality, “missing the mark” (*hamartia*)—bias, egoism, and sin—mars human history and has skewed this upward vector of progress. Social and cultural notions of progress become distorted as they serve various group interests (social bias) and short-term benefits (general bias) instead of the common good and long-term health they should serve.<sup>19</sup> Eller is thus correct to question the very meaning of modern progress itself in his work—the biases Lonergan names help explain the ultimate impotence of socio-economic aid in Appalachia over the past fifty years. So too is Eller correct to suggest that any redemptive change must come at a deeper level of meaning and value—culture.<sup>20</sup> Still, though most helpful, this suggestion remains incomplete.

Besides progress and decline, Lonergan spoke of a vector from above—that of love, healing, and grace.<sup>21</sup> Religious conversion—“being in love in an unrestricted fashion” through the gift of “God’s love poured out onto our hearts” (Rom 5:5)—dissolves and refashions

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 232-239. See also William Loewe, *Lex Crucis: Soteriology and the Stages of Meaning* (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2016), 283-369.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Healing and Creating in History,” in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 100-109.

<sup>18</sup> Lonergan, “Healing and Creating in Human History,” 105.

<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 244-257.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 263.

<sup>21</sup> Lonergan, “Healing and Creating in Human History,” 106: “But there also is development from above downwards. There is the transformation of falling in love: the domestic love of the family; the human love of one’s tribe, one’s city, one’s country, mankind; the divine love that orientates man in his cosmos and expresses itself in his worship. Where hatred only sees evil, love reveals values.... Where hatred reinforces bias, love dissolves it, whether it be the bias of unconscious motivation, the bias of individual or group egoism, or the bias of omniscient, short-sighted common sense.” See also Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 31-33, and Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church*, 78.

those biases that distort the upward vector of human creativity.<sup>22</sup> Thus, civilizations achieve an authentic progress that attends to truth and the common good insofar as they cooperate with and allow this downward healing vector to correct and “straighten” the upward creative vector.<sup>23</sup> And yet, because humans are embodied creatures, the “inner word” of healing and religious value is mediated through an “outer word” in history.<sup>24</sup> One particular privileged mediation of religious conversion comes through the Eucharistic liturgy, “source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 11), equipping Christians with a Eucharistic vision able to identify, resist, and heal personal, social, and cultural biases as they participate in the mutual interplay of healing and creating in history.<sup>25</sup>

### LITURGY AND ECOLOGY IN NORTHERN APPALACHIA

Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia have grasped as much—this Eucharistic vision is essential for working towards truly sustainable communities, including, of course, in Northern Appalachia. *Laudato Si’* offers a particularly beautiful reflection on the Eucharist’s significance as “a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation,” a section that arguably serves as the hermeneutic for the whole encyclical (no. 236).<sup>26</sup> While the Catholic bishops of Appalachia do not ex-

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 240-241. See also Giovanni Sala, “Aspetti teologici del ‘Metodo in teologia’ di B. Lonergan,” *La civiltà cattolica* (March 17, 1973): 553-567 [“Theological Aspects of Bernard Lonergan’s ‘Method in Theology’,” translated by Donald E. Buzzelli, available at the Lonergan Institute’s webpage: [lonergan.org/dialogue\\_partners/Sala/theological\\_aspects\\_of\\_bernard\\_l.htm](http://lonergan.org/dialogue_partners/Sala/theological_aspects_of_bernard_l.htm)].

<sup>23</sup> Lonergan, “Healing and Creating,” 107: “For just as the creative process, when unaccompanied by healing, is distorted and corrupted by bias, so too the healing process, when unaccompanied by creating, is a soul without a body.”

<sup>24</sup> See Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 328. Lonergan adds that this outer word plays not just an incidental but a constitutive role.

<sup>25</sup> See Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A.N. Woodrow (California: Ignatius Press, 2004), 134-143. For Lonerganian considerations of this notion, see Joseph Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014); and Christopher McMahon, “Cruciform Salvation and Emergent Probability: The Liturgical Significance of Lonergan’s Precept,” in *Approaching the Threshold of Mystery: Liturgical Worlds and Theological Spaces*, eds. Joris Geldhof, Daniel Minch, and Trevor Maine (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2015), 198-212.

<sup>26</sup> I have expanded on this point in a paper delivered at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the College Theology Society, entitled, “The Centrality of Sacraments and Liturgy in *Laudato Si’*: Reading Pope Francis with Lonergan’s Scale of Values.” The paper will

PLICITLY include a consideration of the Eucharist's ecological significance, their calls to action end up providing a concrete instantiation of *Laudato Si'*'s ecological vision.

Much like *Laudato Si'*, *This Land is Home to Me* begins with an examination of Appalachia's troubles and pertinent theological resources. It then proposes some lines of action: "First and most important..., we would like to commend where they exist and recommend where they do not, *Centers of Reflection and Prayer*, in the service of action throughout the region" (no. 33, emphasis original). These centers would aim to "integrate the analytical social science skills and the profound spirituality necessary for persevering creativity in the struggle for justice. They could also link fragmented struggles from different parts of the region, and even outside the region, thus supporting healthy localism with the richness of a wider national and international network" (no. 33). The letter goes on to propose that these centers should fashion the Appalachian church to be "a center of the Spirit, a place where poetry dares to speak, where the song reigns unchallenged, where art flourishes, where nature is welcome, where little people and little needs come first, where justice speaks loudly, where in a wilderness of idolatrous destruction the great voice of God still cries out for Life" (no. 37).

A few years later, shaped by this vision, one of the letter's signers, Bishop Joseph H. Hodges, established and dedicated four pastoral centers in his diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. I have visited two of them, the Paul VI Pastoral Center in Wheeling and Priest Field Pastoral Center in Kearneysville.<sup>27</sup> Both exhibit the radicality of the bishops' Eucharistic vision for authentic ecological healing in at least three ways.<sup>28</sup>

First, at the heart of the ecological crisis is a vision of the world that reduces it to a valueless object open to manipulation and utilitarian purposes, what Francis has called both a "throw away culture" and "the dominant technocratic paradigm."<sup>29</sup> The Appalachian bishops spoke of "an alien culture [that] battles to shape us into plastic forms empty of Spirit, into beasts of burden without mystery" (no. 22). The idolatry of profit maximization likewise drives a myopic economic growth that "pollute[s] the air, foul[s] the water, and rape[s] the land"

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be revisited on March 31, 2017, at Marquette University for the first meeting of The Lonergan Institute for Method in Theology (LIMIT).

<sup>27</sup> I'd like to thank Karen for the especially helpful tour she gave me at Priest Field.

<sup>28</sup> As the mission statement for the four pastoral centers states, "To call to mind and to praise the presence of the Holy, a loving and caring God, that makes person, place and time sacred, each Center is to have a special space reserved for worship and prayer. This designated, sacred space and its communal celebrations and prayerful moments are a sign and call, a sacrament, of what each Center is called to be" (emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 53-54; *Laudato Si'*, nos. 106-114.

(no. 16). Mountaintop removal, called by some the “rape of Appalachia,” provides the most disturbing example.<sup>30</sup> Yet the chapels that dotted Paul VI and Priest Field proposed an alternative epistemology, a Christian imagination that sees the world as creation and gift, carrying with it infinite dignity and calling us to diligent stewardship.<sup>31</sup> As John Habgood writes, in liturgy and sacraments, “material reality is shown to be capable of bearing the image of the divine.”<sup>32</sup> Both pastoral centers demonstrated this Christian claim most poignantly. In the chapel at Paul VI, long pine beams sloped upward to an expansive skylight, capturing the feel of the forested mountains of West Virginia. A giant black coal base supported the steel tabernacle while a carefully hewn section of an indigenous tree served as the altar, all natural resources of West Virginia.<sup>33</sup> In Priest Field, a local carved the house chapel’s altar and lectern out of pieces of an old cedar found on the center’s grounds. Those who celebrated Eucharist in these places were given stark reminders of the giftedness, gracedness, and dignity of Appalachia’s natural resources.

Second, as Eller’s critique of progress showed, a global capitalistic culture serves as something like an imperial oppressor, replacing local Appalachian values with destructive values of commercialism and consumerism, even if these do disguise themselves in seductively neutral harmlessness. So often, as the bishops point out, “massive economic forces, still accountable to no one, will even use vehicles of our cultural life, like communications media and advertising, and even the educational system, to justify their ways, and to pass their values as our national values” (no. 19). And in ways that could never be envisioned in 1975, the pace of globalization has driven an absentee ownership to be even more indifferent to the needs of Appalachia’s particularity and locality. In light of these challenges, the aforementioned stress on locality in the chapels of Paul VI and Priest Field take on an acute counter-cultural significance. It is *this* place and *this* community in which redemption takes place. As Vincent Miller and William Cavanaugh have shown in their respective works, the Eucharist, as a sacrament of catholicity, proposes an alternative way of imagining space in which one paradoxically participates in the universal only by

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Shnayerson, “The Rape of Appalachia,” *Vanity Fair*, May 2006, [www.vanityfair.com/news/2006/05/appalachia200605](http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2006/05/appalachia200605).

<sup>31</sup> See Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> John Habgood, “A Sacramental Approach to Environmental Issues,” in *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, eds. Charles Birch, William Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel (New York: Orbis, 1990), 46-53, at 46.

<sup>33</sup> As Bishop Hodges said at the dedication of the Center, “They are strong and rugged like our people and terrain. They represent the industries of our state. . . .” I am indebted to the archivist of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Jon-Erik Gilot, for a transcription of the blessing service.

participating more deeply in the local, only genuinely encountering the universal in the local.<sup>34</sup> This vision thus imagines the “healthy localism” the bishops sought to promote. At the same time, both centers’ stress on hospitality evidences the flip side of catholicity’s call: the local must remain open to the universal, ensuring that a healthy localism does not lapse into a narrow parochialism and remains ever aware of the global impact of local decisions.

Third, a profound cultural freneticism undergirds both economically and environmentally destructive tendencies in Appalachia. Consumerism, the bishops write, “makes life a rat race, where nobody feels they belong, where all are pushed around, where roots disappear.... We got lost in our busy-ness and grow to hate and abuse all our things” (no. 21). “When it has its way,” the bishops continue, “the poet is silent. Instead comes noisy blare and din, the chatter of a language empty of meaning, but filled with violence” (no. 21). No time or space is afforded to be attentive, reasonable, intelligent, or responsible within one’s surroundings. One is simply unable to consider the complexity of the long-term consequences of an economic action given the infinitely fast pace of techno-global capitalism. Or, as Pope Francis has remarked, one cannot *encounter* the sufferings, needs, and aspirations of particular individuals and communities. Nor can one be attentive to and encounter the world as one “charged with the grandeur of God.”<sup>35</sup> Against these tendencies then, the peacefulness, silence, and slowness of both centers underscored Christianity’s alternative Sabbath vision.<sup>36</sup> At Priest Field, a slow and silent walk through the outdoor Stations of the Cross contrasted with the cars and eighteen-wheelers speeding down the adjacent Route 51. At Paul VI, a rosary walk through the forest led to an overlook that saw the old mill town of Tiltonsville, Ohio, to the left and the giant smokestacks of Cardinal Power Plant to the right (incidentally ranked 24<sup>th</sup> on a 2009 list of most polluting U.S. power plants in terms of coal waste).<sup>37</sup> Both centers’ chapels serve as schools of contemplative prayer and attentiveness that

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<sup>34</sup> William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008); Vincent Miller, “Where is the Church? Globalization and Catholicity,” *Theological Studies* 69 (May 2008): 412-432.

<sup>35</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” in *Poems and Prose*, ed. W. H. Gardner (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 27.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (California: Ignatius, 2009); Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Kentucky: John Knox, 2014); and Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), 105-116.

<sup>37</sup> Sue Sturgis, “Coal’s Ticking Timebomb: Could Disaster Strike a Coal Ash Dump Near You?” January 5, 2009, [www.facingsouth.org/2009/01/coal-ticking-timebomb-could-disaster-strike-a-coal-ash-dump-near-you.html](http://www.facingsouth.org/2009/01/coal-ticking-timebomb-could-disaster-strike-a-coal-ash-dump-near-you.html).

teach the existence of values beyond endless material acquisition.<sup>38</sup> After all, against capitalism and consumerism's demands to always do and buy more to keep up with the Joneses, prayer, as Herbert McCabe reminds us, is "a sharing into the waste of time which is the interior life of the Godhead."<sup>39</sup>

By no means exhaustive, the sacramental, catholic, and sabbath practices incarnated in the pastoral centers provide three Eucharistic contours of healing to guide creating in Northern Appalachia. Perhaps the words of Bishop Hodges at the Paul VI Center's dedication capture it best, "May prayerful peace and Christian strength flow outward from here touching the people of West Virginia enriching this state in a way that enables all residents to say with dignity, 'This Land is Home to Me.'"

### CONCLUSION: REMAINING CHALLENGES

Informed by Lonergan's theology of history as well as *Laudato Si'*'s treatment of the Eucharist, this essay has suggested that the Catholic bishops of Appalachia rightly stressed the importance of centers for prayer and reflection—and the Eucharistic vision they promote—for healing the biases that distort creative progress and reversing the complexities of ecological decline. The call would be reaffirmed in their 1995 pastoral letter, *At Home in the Web of Life*. To create and defend sustainable communities in post-industrial Appalachia, the bishops urged Christian communities to "become small centers of a sustainable path, small islands of creativity, proclaimers of a culture of life" (no. 93). Despite their smallness, the pastoral centers, particularly Paul VI and Priest Field, offer concrete examples of how religious values can be incarnated liturgically in a place affected so acutely by environmental degradation.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, at least three challenges remain. My remarks on them are exceedingly brief, in part to encourage further conversation.

First, while I prepared this paper and arranged to revisit the Paul VI Pastoral Center, I was both saddened and shocked to see that it had closed. While the buildings and grounds were still being kept, the center has been closed to visitors and the chapel has been desecralized. Given the priority Pope Francis has given to the development of an integral ecology and the role these pastoral centers can play in this

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<sup>38</sup> As Bishop Hodges dedicated the Paul VI Pastoral Center, "Cleanse it of noise, dishonesty, and shallowness. Let people find here stillness, truth, and depth."

<sup>39</sup> Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters*, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Continuum, 2002), 75.

<sup>40</sup> For one theological consideration of how God's redemptive logic works precisely through smallness, see Christopher Ruddy, "'For the Many': The Vicarious-Representative Heart of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (September 2014): 564-84.

dimension of the church's mission, this decision must prove to be an exception rather than the norm.

Second, the pastoral centers pose a temptation common to the environmental movement for Catholics in the United States. The centers, as *retreat* centers, run the risk of making care for our common home an exotic add-on to Christian mission. Nevertheless, as Pope Francis challenges us, "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 217). Ecological conversion and virtue must inform daily parish life, not just the life of hidden away retreat centers.<sup>41</sup>

Third, ecological education will play a key role if the message and vision of *Laudato Si'* is to expand to daily ecclesial life. Though the connections between liturgy and ecology are many, they frequently remain at the level of theory, unconnected to actual Eucharistic praxis. One can wax poetic endlessly on the ecological power of worship, but these calls will remain inert if not better made in liturgies, faith sharing groups, and classes.<sup>42</sup> On this point, one cannot ignore so-far underappreciated Pope Francis's call for houses of formation and seminaries to provide an integrated ecological education (*Laudato Si'*, no. 214).

The healing vector of grace does indeed require the cooperation of human creativity in Appalachia. The bleak, though all-too-common, picture painted at the beginning of this essay cannot but evoke an ecclesial *parrhesia* for working towards redemptive solutions. After all, it is precisely the vector of God's love that makes possible our participation in the paschal transformation of bleakness, destruction, and complexity into healing, redemption, and hope.<sup>43</sup> 

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<sup>41</sup> I am appreciative to David Cloutier for this point. His own work offers a fine example of "bridging the gap."

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 322-327.

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that comments and feedback from Justin Petrovich, Julia Gilberto, David Cloutier, and the anonymous readers have substantially improved this text.

## An Integral Eucharist? Pope Francis, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Ecology's Relationship to Eucharist

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**T**ODAY'S GLOBAL MARKETPLACE, extensive supply chains, and the severe ecological degradation to which the aforementioned realities contribute are far removed from the world in which Jesus and his early followers lived. But what is at stake is more than just a conflict of different cultures and time periods. The globalized structure of Western society carries with it the potential to flatten all other cultures.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the church must navigate this difficult terrain if it is to be the symbolic witness of Christ on earth today. In the essay that follows, I think through a series of ecological issues that arise in the church's attempt at such witness. I begin with a brief account of Pope Francis's vision of integral ecology as presented in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, particularly in connection with the sacrament of Eucharist. This account of Francis's link between Eucharist and ethics will lead to some unanswered questions of ecology in relation to the church's sacraments. Portions of Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology are then explicated and evaluated as a potential resource for addressing these questions. Finally, an account of the arrival of Eucharistic bread into the capitalist marketplace points to an additional set of issues not raised by either Francis or Chauvet. It is my contention that Francis's discussion of Eucharist needs to be further developed in its connection to ethical action, and Chauvet's discussion of Eucharist needs to expand its understanding of ethical action to include all of creation. A synthesis of the two perspectives can lead to a vision for Eucharist that attempts to keep in view all such connections, a vision I will call an "integral Eucharist."

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<sup>1</sup> This comment is somewhat of a play on the title of Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Picador, 2007).

**LAUDATO SI'**

Toward the end of *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis devotes paragraph 236 in its entirety to the topic of Eucharist. He says that “it is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation” and that “the Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation” (no. 236). In a statement that clearly connects the sacrament to ethical action, Francis closes the paragraph by saying, “The Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation” (no. 236). These “concerns for the environment” are what led Francis to write *Laudato Si'* and what motivate the integral ecology at the heart of the encyclical. Opening the fourth chapter, he says, “Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions” (no. 137). To understand how Francis envisions Eucharist being connected to environmental concerns, one has to understand his broader vision of an integral ecology.

An integral ecology is a way of seeing the interconnectedness of the world. It has an eye toward the connections between the environmental, political, economic, and social sectors of life among others. When the connections between these sectors are revealed, one realizes the environmental and social impacts of an economic system focused on short-term gains at the expense of particular regions of the planet, regions like Northern Appalachia. Such an awareness calls for practical dialogue and action at every level from that of individual decisions to international policy. A substantial change will require education and training and, ultimately, an “ecological conversion.” When such changes happen *en masse*, consumers are able to “change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production” (no. 206).

So, what should be made of Francis’s vision of Eucharist in light of the papal call for an integral ecology? Can a sacramental understanding of Eucharist encourage the kind of ethical concern for the environment that leads to an awareness of such connections? In *Laudato Si'*, the connection is not as clear as it might be. Even if the Eucharist does encourage the vision of integral ecology, is that enough? What specific problems does an integral ecology help identify in Eucharistic practice today, and what actions can be taken as a result? As

a potential way of exploring such questions, the remainder of this essay engages the theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, Chauvet's understanding of the sacraments, while helpful in many ways, is not expansive enough on its own to provide a clear connection to the ecological issues already raised by Francis or additional issues such as the commodification of Eucharistic bread, which is not addressed by Francis and is discussed in the final part of the essay.

### THE THEOLOGY OF LOUIS-MARIE CHAUVET

The theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet is complex and does not lend itself to simple summarization. Thus, the pages that follow do not pretend to be a comprehensive overview but instead seek the twofold aim of providing enough information to create a partner with which to dialogue and hinting at the most relevant aspects of that partnership with regard to the questions raised in response to *Laudato Si'*. In accomplishing this task, there are three aspects of Chauvet's theology that I will cover: his understanding and use of *symbol*, the *symbolic order* of Christian identity, and the connection between sacraments and ethics within *symbolic exchange*.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Symbol*

Symbol is an important starting place for discussion since much of Chauvet's sacramental theology, and thus, much of what is contained in the subsequent sections, is based on this concept, both in terms of what it is *not* as well as what it *is*. So, a proper genesis for this discussion is to state what symbol is *not* for Chauvet.

Chauvet makes clear early on in both of his books that his theology provides a critique and response to the problems arising from the onto-

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<sup>2</sup> Though the following works will not be referenced directly in the following section, my understanding of Chauvet surely reflects their influence: Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), and Benjamin Durheim, *Christ's Gift, Our Response: Martin Luther and Louis-Marie Chauvet on the Connection between Sacraments and Ethics* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> In the presentation of Chauvet's theology that follows, I will rely exclusively on his two books *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995), and *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001). Although I more closely follow the structure of *Symbol and Sacrament* by beginning with symbol rather than symbolic order, most of the content cited and engaged will come from *The Sacraments* due to its more concise style and argumentation. However, in using both works, it should be noted that I will be assuming a high degree of continuity, even though their original publication dates in French (1987 and 1997, respectively) are separated by a decade and interesting work could undoubtedly be done to attempt to locate any places of discontinuity.

theology of metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> In providing this critique and response, he differentiates his concept of symbol from that of sign, particularly in connection to causality, which he claims is the result of a particular metaphysics. Chauvet, speaking about this metaphysics, says,

For whatever is without limits is, for it [metaphysics], beyond thought, defies all logic. The only logic possible is that of a first cause and of an absolute foundation for the totality of existents; that of a center playing the role of a fixed point; that of a presence, faultless, constant, stable.<sup>5</sup>

One can see from this statement how Chauvet conceives of metaphysics as a way of viewing reality in which causality is unavoidable. The state of “always-becoming,” for which Chauvet later argues, is impossible under the logic of causality with its emphasis on “a fixed point.” Another problem with the insistence on causality is its connection to the idea of production, which becomes especially problematic when viewed in relation to grace and the sacraments. Chauvet says,

On the one hand, *grace* can in no way be considered as an object or a value. It is the paradigmatic case of something that is a *non-object*, a *non-value*; otherwise, it runs the risk of being negated in the very graciousness and gratuitousness which in fact constitute it. On the other hand, in Scholastic discourse, the category of *causality* is always tied to the idea of production or augmentation; thus, it always presupposes an explanatory model implying production, sometimes of a technical, sometimes of a biological variety (the germ cell in development), a model in which the idea of “instrumentality” plays a pivotal role. Clearly there is an (apparently fundamental) heterogeneity between the language of grace and the instrumental and productionist language of causality.<sup>6</sup>

So, insofar as the scholastics incorporated causality into their definitions of sacrament, they viewed the sacraments as instruments of grace, and thus, grace could not be gratuitous. Even in his earliest works, Aquinas spoke of the sacrament as “in the genus of cause and sign” (*IV Sentences* d. 1, q. 1, a.1).<sup>7</sup> However, by the time he wrote on the sacraments in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, he spoke of sacrament as only “in the genus of sign” (*ST* III q. 60, a. 1).<sup>8</sup> According to Chauvet, the switch to sign only was significant because Aquinas was attempting to understand the sacraments primarily in

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<sup>4</sup> The language of critique is much sharper in *Symbol and Sacrament* than in *The Sacraments*. See chapter 1 and chapter 4, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 14-15.

terms of representation rather than instrumentality. However, when Thomas moved past what the sacraments *are* to consider what it is that they *do*, he ended up falling back onto the explanatory ground of instrumentality (even if only by analogy). But, even with this nuance, Chauvet still finds in Thomas “an ever-present scheme of representation” that is “technical or productionist.”<sup>9</sup>

So then, what should the response be to this seemingly inescapable way of conceiving the sacraments that Chauvet claims is “still dominant in our own day”?<sup>10</sup> His proposed solution is a reinterpretation of the sacraments as symbol rather than sign, with an emphasis on mediation rather than instrumentality. Anthropologically speaking, Chauvet claims that the sacraments are “expressions in word and rite,” and that as such, “they belong to what is called language.”<sup>11</sup> And language, for Chauvet, is not an instrument but mediation. The problem with the instrumental view of language is that it “presupposes an ideal subject who would stand outside language, therefore outside mediation, that is to say finally, outside body and outside history.”<sup>12</sup> However, Chauvet wants to say that reality is always mediated. Language is more than an instrument in that it actually participates in and is a part of the very “world” that it creates.<sup>13</sup> He quotes linguist Emile Benveniste,

To speak of instrument is to oppose humankind and nature... We never see human beings separate from language and we never see them inventing it... What we find in the world are speaking human beings speaking to other human beings, and *language teaches us the very definition of human being*.<sup>14</sup>

Summarizing this understanding of language, Chauvet says, “Language is thus a construction game in a twofold sense: objective, of construction of reality as world and, subjective, of construction of the subject.”<sup>15</sup> Language is not an obstacle to understanding the world or the self; it is the womb out of which such understanding comes. So, “to say that ‘there is speaking’ constantly in human beings is to say that every perception of reality is mediated by their culture and the

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<sup>9</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 95.

<sup>11</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Chauvet’s anthropological understanding of “world” in this sense is “a signifying whole in which every element, whether material (tree, wind, house) or social (relatives, clothing cooking, work, leisure) is integrated into a system of *knowledge* (of the world and of society), *gratitude* (code of good manners, mythical and ritual code ruling relationships with deities and ancestors), and *ethical behavior* (values serving as norms of conduct).” See *The Sacraments*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 8.

history of their desire.”<sup>16</sup> Every human being deals with the “world” not as something in its crude physical state, but as something “always-already constructed.”<sup>17</sup>

Recall that Chauvet considers the sacraments as belonging within this category of language. Thus, the sacraments too are not an instrument but a mediation. After having set up an alternative to the instrumental view of the sacraments and language in general, Chauvet moves into a discussion of *symbol*. Although the sacraments are expressions by means of language, “their language is of a peculiar type since it is primarily symbolic.”<sup>18</sup> For his construction of symbol, Chauvet recalls an understanding from antiquity in which a symbol is “a piece of an object given to contracting parties in order to allow them or their descendants to recognize themselves as parties in this contract.”<sup>19</sup> From this understanding, there are many differences that can be drawn out in comparison to the earlier notion of sign, with its connection to causality and production.<sup>20</sup> Thus, “what characterizes the symbol is not its material value in quantity or quality but its *relation* with the whole to which it belongs.”<sup>21</sup> Since the symbol represents the whole to which it belongs, it actually does more than just represent; it carries the whole within itself and consequently *is* what it represents. Additionally, “In the symbol, as used in antiquity, the joining of the elements causes the recognition or the identification of the persons as partners in the same contract... it allows all persons to *situate themselves as subjects* in their relation with other subjects.”<sup>22</sup> While the sign functions as an instrument, the symbol is an action between subjects.

The sacraments then, as symbolic *actions*, aim both to join Christ and the church and to join the members of the church as sisters and brothers in Christ.<sup>23</sup> They also aim to communicate the gratuitous grace of God and achieve this aim as symbols since the symbolic operates outside the logic of value. Additionally, the sacraments, through this process of symbolization, are able to function as both “revealer”

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<sup>16</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 70.

<sup>20</sup> This should not, however, be read to mean that symbol supersedes sign or that sign is not necessary. Rather, it is that the two offer different logics and function on different levels: sign belonging to the order of knowledge or information or value and symbol belonging to the order of recognition or communication between subjects. Chauvet considers them to be the “two poles of all human expression” and even goes so far as to say that “Like our body, our mind needs two legs to walk straight: sign and symbol” (*The Sacraments*, 83).

<sup>21</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 71 (emphasis original).

<sup>22</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 73 (emphasis original).

<sup>23</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 85.

and “agent.”<sup>24</sup> Participation in the sacraments reveals Christian identity because those who participate are those who recognize themselves as in Christ. However, the sacraments are also agents of this identity, which is to say that they effect it. Among the reasons for this, Chauvet, thinking specifically of Eucharist, says, “By making these gestures again and again, Christians ‘realize’ little by little what to be Jesus’s disciples really means.”<sup>25</sup> This revelation of identity brings about a relation to God and others that is other than it was before the revelation. Thus, Chauvet concludes that the sacraments as symbolic

Give us an understanding of the faith that enables us to see that the sacramental mystery is simultaneously a revealer and an agent of Christian identity.... Furthermore, the symbol, like grace, is outside the value system. For these two reasons, the symbolic route seems to us to supply an approach much more akin to the sacraments than that of instrumentality employed by the Scholastics of the twelfth century, and still dominant in our own day.<sup>26</sup>

When moving Chauvet’s theology of the sacraments into our discussion of ecology, his concern to overcome various aspects of the Scholastic metaphysical tradition is a worthwhile one, especially as regards the various dualisms common in that tradition. For example, Chauvet’s conception of symbol, with its attention to historical context and action, helps to avoid an emphasis on the spiritual over the physical. Such dualisms are among the most common charges against Christianity for its part in the history of ecological destruction.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the emphasis on the sacraments as symbols through which reality is both mediated and created shows their importance for Christians in understanding the world in which they live. However, this also means that if the sacraments are not revealing to Christians the type of care and attention that the earth requires then their importance as mediation also points to a problem within that mediation.

Yet, this possible problem must be tabled for the time being because it is important first to state that the sacraments are by no means the sole arbiter of Christian identity for Chauvet. Even when thinking back to the contractual understanding of symbol in antiquity, such an understanding operated within the context of a particular culture and legal system. Symbols only function as parts of a larger system or order which is understood by its participants. Without any context, a symbol is empty. In a statement similar to one made earlier, Chauvet says that a (non-empty) symbol evokes “the entire symbolic order to

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<sup>24</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 89-91.

<sup>25</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 95.

<sup>27</sup> For the most influential example of this see Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203-1207.

which it belongs.”<sup>28</sup> So, we now turn to that symbolic order to which the sacraments belong, the symbolic order of Christian identity.

### *Symbolic Order*

Symbol only makes sense within a specific embodied symbolic order, and by symbolic order Chauvet means “the meaningful organization of the many elements that compose a properly human existence.”<sup>29</sup> This order “precedes every single person since it is within it that one becomes a ‘subject.’”<sup>30</sup> So, while Christian identity does require a personal commitment, it is also true that this identity can only be bestowed within the symbolic order of the church, which Chauvet calls “an *ecclesial pattern* common to all Christians.”<sup>31</sup>

One story from Scripture paradigmatic of this ecclesial pattern is the story of the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).<sup>32</sup> In this story, two disciples of Jesus are leaving Jerusalem and heading toward Emmaus on the Sunday of Jesus’s resurrection. To Chauvet, this piece of the story reveals two important points. First, the disciples’ leaving of Jerusalem places the context of the story in the time of the church, which is to say that it is time to go out to “all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Second, the disciples’ leaving of Jerusalem also reveals that they had renounced their expectation for immediate divine deliverance from Jesus. Such renunciation of immediacy is the beginning of faith and marks their consent to the church’s teaching of scripture (or, in this instance, Jesus’s teaching of scripture).

As the story continues, the disciples travel, and Jesus joins them on the way, but they do not recognize him as the risen Christ. In the conversation during the trip, Jesus explicates the scriptures to them concerning the events that had just happened. So, here, one sees the teaching of scripture in order to provide the knowledge of the content of faith made possible by the earlier renunciation of immediacy. Then, when they arrive at Emmaus, the disciples invite Jesus to stay with them, and, as they sit down for dinner, Jesus gives thanks and breaks the bread. For Chauvet, this piece of the story shows an initiative on the part of God. Thus,

What Luke tells us is that each time the church takes the bread, pronounces the blessing, breaks it, and gives it in memory of the Lord Jesus, it is he who does it through the church. The gestures the church

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<sup>28</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 115.

<sup>29</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 20 (emphasis original).

<sup>32</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 20-28. The other scriptural examples are the Ethiopian’s baptism (Acts 8:26-40) and the first account of Saul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-20).

makes, the words it pronounces are his gestures and his words. In the fullest sense of the word it is the “sacrament.”<sup>33</sup>

Once Jesus gives thanks and breaks the bread the disciples recognize him, but he vanishes once this recognition occurs. In response, they immediately head back to Jerusalem to share the good news that Jesus is alive. To Chauvet, the realization and disappearance of Christ and the reaction of the disciples are important for two reasons. First, the realization *after* the giving of thanks and breaking of bread reveals that faith remains incomplete until it is informed by a sacramental gesture. Second, rather than leaving the disciples hopeless, the disappearance of Christ compels them to action.

So, from this story in scripture, Chauvet has uncovered a call to convert the desire for immediacy into assent to the mediation of the church. It is assent to the mediation of the church precisely because Christ no longer occupies an immediate space on earth and has instead left the church as his symbolic witness. Chauvet speaks of Christ’s lack of immediacy as “the presence of an absence,” which is what is realized in the sacraments just as it was realized by the disciples when Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. Chauvet says, “To consent to the presence of the absence is to consent to *never being able to leave mediation behind* - mediation of the symbolic order that always-already precedes human beings.”<sup>34</sup> So, for Christians today,

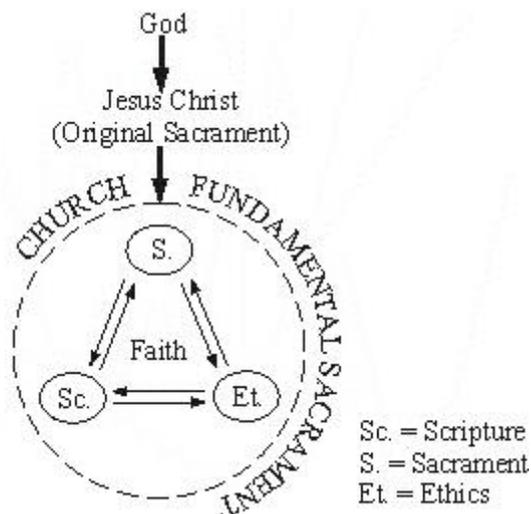
It is in the church that faith finds its structure because the church is in charge of keeping alive, in the midst of the world and for its good, the memory of what [Jesus Christ] lived for and why God raised him from the dead: memory through the *Scriptures*, read and interpreted as speaking about him or being his own living word; memory through the *sacraments*, (here the breaking of bread) recognized as being his own salvific gestures; memory through the *ethical* testimony of mutual sharing, lived as an expression of his own service to humankind. We can visualize this structure of Christian identity in the following diagram:<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 98.

<sup>35</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 28. The diagram, however, is actually the one from *Symbol and Sacrament* (172). I chose this diagram over the one in *The Sacraments* because it is both more complete and easier to understand. Image accessible at <http://www.alastairadversaria.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/chauvet01.jpg>.



In this diagram, we can see the three “poles” of Christian identity: scripture, sacrament, and ethics. The three poles are a “converted” form of the fundamental anthropological structure of knowledge, gratitude, and action.<sup>36</sup> Scripture, for Chauvet, is “everything that pertains to the *knowledge* of God’s mystery revealed in Jesus Christ.”<sup>37</sup> Sacrament is “everything that pertains to the *thankfulness* which the church expresses to God.”<sup>38</sup> And ethics is “all that pertains to *action* in the name of the gospel.”<sup>39</sup> Faith lives in the space between the poles and mediates the distance between God and humanity.<sup>40</sup>

The diagram is also read to convey a point covered under a different context earlier, namely that the church precedes the individual. The church is primary for Chauvet because the gospel, by its very nature, is communitarian. Thus, in the diagram, the three poles of Christian identity are only possible within the circle of the church. Being careful here, Chauvet notes that the circle is a dotted line so as not to present it as being completely separated from the outside world. In a similar way, he does not say that salvation is only possible within the church. Rather, he says that, although one can be saved outside the church, one cannot be a Christian outside the church. Highlighting the primacy of the church for Christian identity, Chauvet says “it is not a question of

<sup>36</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 6-7.

<sup>37</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 29. Interestingly, this category is not limited to the Bible but also includes tradition and even theological discourse of both the past and the present.

<sup>38</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 30 (emphasis original). This category is also not limited to the traditional examples. Chauvet includes all the church’s forms of celebration.

<sup>39</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 40-41.

Christians uniting to form the church, but of the church forming Christians.”<sup>41</sup>

Such an understanding of the church and its role in forming Christians includes, Francis would argue, the importance of its role in forming the ecological conscience of its members. The placement of the sacraments in relation to scripture and ethics within the symbolic order of Christian identity is also helpful because it provides a structure that allows for the sacraments to factor into other ecological discussions occurring within Christianity. For example, while those biblical scholars concerned with providing an interpretation of scripture that undermines the pattern of human domination over nature address only one pole of Christian identity, in Chauvet’s understanding such readings of scripture necessarily affect the work of the sacraments and vice versa.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Chauvet’s symbolic order provides a structure that expands and makes clearer the connection between Eucharist and ethics that Francis references in paragraph 236 of *Laudato Si’*. Now it is time to explore further this connection between sacrament and ethics, in particular through the concept of symbolic exchange.

### *Symbolic Exchange*

After his discussion of symbolic order, Chauvet proposes symbolic exchange as “a model of how this structure works.”<sup>43</sup> To start, like the discussion of language and symbol, reality (even the “self”) is not experienced by humans immediately; it is mediated bodily.<sup>44</sup> In a similar manner to the way in which Chauvet presented symbol as a means for overcoming the dualities of metaphysics, his understanding of humanity seeks to overcome the “inner” and “outer” distinction. He does so by endorsing the Nietzschean claim, “Body am I, entirely and completely, nothing besides.”<sup>45</sup> Chauvet even points to the importance of the grammatical construction of this statement to emphasize further that there is no “I” grammatically *or logically* prior to the body. “The human,” says Chauvet, “does not have a body, but is body.”<sup>46</sup> Using these ideas, Chauvet anthropologically constructs human identity as an “I-body” in which the human “I” receives itself and all other reality as mediated through the body.

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<sup>41</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 31.

<sup>42</sup> One example of the biblical work being done in this regard is Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 190.

<sup>44</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 146-147. It is also interesting to note that Chauvet even speaks of body as “arch-symbol” (151).

<sup>45</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149.

Also like symbol, there is attention given to the I-body's context within an already-existent order. Referring to the human body, Chauvet says, "This unique body is 'speaking' only because it is already spoken by a culture, because it is the recipient of a tradition, and is tightly bonded with a world."<sup>47</sup> Thus, the human "I-body" is given both its content and context by the "triple body" of culture, tradition, and nature in a manner similar to the way in which the church provides a Christian with a context that gives meaning to the three poles of Christian identity: scripture, sacrament, and ethics. And, given the primacy of the body for humans, the materiality of the sacraments is significant.

Picking up on the earlier discussion of sign and symbol, Chauvet adopts the work of Marcel Mauss on gift by distinguishing *market exchange* (sign) from *symbolic exchange* (symbol).<sup>48</sup> Recall that the logic of sign pertains to value, while symbol operates outside the value system. So then, "market exchange and symbolic exchange depend upon two different principles."<sup>49</sup> In the market exchange an object is given from one person to another, and then the initial recipient responds with a counter gift.

In the logic of symbolic exchange, "the important thing is less what one gives or receives than the very fact of exchanging, and thus, through the objects exchanged, to be recognized as a subject, as a full member of the group."<sup>50</sup> However, just as with sign and symbol, Chauvet is not saying that one model of exchange replaces the other. The two types of exchange make up the "two poles" of all exchanges. Within our society, the dominant rule of the market is value, so symbolic exchange only appears on the margins. Yet, there do exist "traditional societies" in which the primary system of exchange is symbolic.<sup>51</sup> In such societies, symbolic exchange is used at every level of the social hierarchy, applies to all domains, including consumer goods, and concerns the dealings of individuals and groups, both within the community and outside it.<sup>52</sup> Chauvet says,

By simplifying a little, one can describe the logic that rules symbolic exchange as follows: subject A having gathered coconuts, donates the harvest to subject B who, having made some pottery containers, gives them to subject C who at the end of a day spent fishing gives the fish to subject D, and so on. Neither A nor B nor C nor D... calculate "for

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<sup>47</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149-150.

<sup>48</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 100 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 119.

<sup>50</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 117. Chauvet is careful to note that "traditional" is not meant in any pejorative sense. Rather, it is simply in contrast to the technical and scientific nature of Western society.

<sup>52</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 117-118.

how much” they have harvested or fabricated goods and “how much” they have a right to in exchange.<sup>53</sup>

It is in such giving without counting that the notion of “gift” most clearly becomes visible. Symbolic exchange operates under a logic of gratuitousness. But, Chauvet says, “We must immediately add that it is a “necessary gratuitousness” or an “obligatory gift.”<sup>54</sup> The economic system would be short-circuited by a refusal to either give or receive.

The theological pertinence of such a model of exchange is manifold. Chauvet finds in this model an approach that is “relatively *akin to grace* since in both cases we are beyond value.”<sup>55</sup> Working with this connection, Chauvet is able to show that just as the gift owes nothing to the return gift, so too God’s grace is not something due to humans. “Grace comes from God’s pure initiative” and “in the sacraments, the position of gift is occupied by God’s gratuitous action.”<sup>56</sup> If one receives God’s grace *as grace*, then the return-gift is the obligatory response. If one receives grace but does not respond with a return-gift, that person has removed herself from the exchange by making grace an object or value to be acquired.

The symbolic exchange model is particularly helpful for showing how the relation between sacrament and ethics function within the symbolic order of Christian identity. Chauvet says,

Every gift obligates; there is no reception of anything *as gift* which does not require some return-gift.... Therefore, theologically, grace requires not only this initial gratuitousness on which everything else is depends but also the *graciousness of the whole circuit*, and especially of the return-gift. This graciousness qualifies the return-gift as beyond-price, without calculation – in short, as a response of love. *Even the return-gift of our human response thus belongs to the theologically Christian concept of “grace.”*<sup>57</sup>

Chauvet here again emphasizes the obligatory response to the reception of grace, and, further, graciousness is to characterize the obligatory response. It is for this reason that the response is thought of in terms of love, which like grace, is outside the system of value. Grace is not an object to be received; it is a task to be enacted. Again, if the gift does not obligate the recipient to respond in kind then the issue is not the graciousness of the initial gift but the perversion of the gift by the recipient such that its grace is not received *as grace* but as a task. The reception of the sacrament and its connection to ethics depends

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<sup>53</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 118

<sup>54</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 118.

<sup>55</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 123 (emphasis original).

<sup>56</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 123.

<sup>57</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 108-109 (emphasis original).

not only on the “validity” of the sacrament, which is guaranteed by God, but also the “fecundity” of the believing subject.<sup>58</sup> So, ethics for Chauvet functions as a means by which “Christians are called to ‘veri-fy,’ that is, ‘make true’ what they have celebrated and received in the sacraments.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, Chauvet can say that “without ethics, sacramental practice is bound to become ossified and to verge on magic,” and “without the liturgy, ethics can be most generous but is in danger of losing its Christian identity of response to the prior commitment of God.”<sup>60</sup>

This call to “veri-fy” what is celebrated and received in the sacraments provides a clear connection between the ecological issues raised at the start of this essay and the practice of Eucharist. Chauvet’s theological anthropology and understanding of symbolic exchange between God and humanity again emphasize the importance of the concrete by refusing the separation of self from the bodily and symbol from the symbolic order. Thinking ecologically, such an emphasis could be used to give prominence to the care for the physical world as the place where such bodies must live. The notion of symbolic exchange is also potentially useful for issues of ecology, since a hallmark of this kind of exchange is a move away from the market logic of value. Humans should think of nature as a gift from God in which they respond with love rather than thinking of nature simply as a resource to be acquired and used.

#### QUESTIONS OF ECOLOGY – EVALUATING FRANCIS AND CHAUVET

So, the most relevant aspects of the theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet having been covered and some of the helpful connections briefly noted, it is now time to evaluate where Chauvet’s theology falls short in response to the questions raised in the first part of the essay. I begin by specifically considering the questions raised by *Laudato Si’* and then move on to a story about of the commodification of Eucharistic bread, a story that reveals a set of questions that neither *Laudato Si’* nor Chauvet’s theology raises on its own. A synthesis of Francis and Chauvet, however, can lead to a vision for Eucharist that attempts to keep in view all such questions, a vision I call an “integral Eucharist.”

#### *Laudato Si’*

Considering Chauvet’s theology alongside the vision of *Laudato Si’* helps further to illumine both the usefulness and the limitation of his theology for addressing ecological concerns. On the one hand, Chauvet provides an understanding of the sacraments that bolsters

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<sup>58</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 124.

<sup>59</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 65.

some of the underdeveloped claims Francis makes regarding the Eucharist, such as its ethical import. On the other hand, some of the questions that *Laudato Si'* raises with regard to ecology point to weaknesses within Chauvet's theology of the sacraments, such as the limited social focus of ethics.

The primary reason that Chauvet's theology would bolster Francis's claims about Eucharist is because of the clear connection between the sacrament and ethics in both the symbolic order and symbolic exchange. In paragraph 236, Francis says, "Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures." As has just been shown, Chauvet would certainly agree that grace tends to manifest itself tangibly, and would also add that such tangibility does not end with the reception of the sacrament but extends to the return-gift of love in response. In a similar manner, Francis's description of Eucharist as an "overflowing core of love" can be explicated in Chauvet's theology to further connect the gift of the sacrament and the ethical response of the recipient as a consequence of the overflow of the initial act of grace on God's part. The clear connection between Eucharist and ethical response exhibited by these aspects of Chauvet's theology help to give much more weight to the concluding statement of paragraph 236: "Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation."

While Chauvet's theology helps to bolster the connection that Francis makes between Eucharist and ecological concerns, there is no such concern for issues of ecology in Chauvet's own conception of the sacraments *or in his conception of ethics*. For Chauvet, ethics is socially focused and appears to be limited to human relationships. Although he is careful to avoid an individualistic conception of ethics by emphasizing communal action and sharing, and although he explicitly states, "ethics does not extend just to interpersonal relationships," his understanding of ethics is limited to acts in relation to humanity.<sup>61</sup> Recall that in his explanation of the symbolic order, Chauvet described the "ethical" as "an expression of [Jesus's] own service to *human-kind*."<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere, he also describes the ethical dimension of Christian identity as "living-in-grace between brothers and sisters."<sup>63</sup> Additionally, Chauvet recognizes Eucharist, like all sacraments, as a symbol. Rather than being an instrument, a symbol is an action between

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<sup>61</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 28 (emphasis added).

<sup>63</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 278. It should be said that there is no indication here that Chauvet has in mind a broader understanding of "brothers and sisters" to include the rest of creation like that found in St. Francis of Assisi.

subjects, so this understanding could be read to imply that the symbolic itself is limited to the sociality of human relationships. While helpful in bolstering the connection between Eucharist and ethics at the end of paragraph 236 in *Laudato Si'*, Chauvet's understanding of the ethical task is not expansive enough to provide a clear response to the ethical issues raised as a result of the integral ecology that is at the heart of the encyclical letter.

Still, there are further challenges that neither Francis nor Chauvet seem entirely competent to address. These problems include "shading" and "distancing," which often go hand-in-hand with the expansion of markets and their commodities. Shading is the obscuring of costs, and distancing is the separation of the decisions of production and consumption, "both of which impede ecological and social feedback and create cognitive, institutional, and ethical lags between initial benefits and eventual full costs."<sup>64</sup> Similarly hidden from view are a number of value judgments built into the technological systems which are part of everyday life in much of contemporary Western society.<sup>65</sup> One such example that directly impacts Northern Appalachia would be the use of electric lighting. Though very few people would agree that my ability to read and write for this essay late in the evening is more important than the tops of mountains in Appalachia, that decision is already built into my decision to turn the lights on and plug my computer into the outlet anytime I choose.<sup>66</sup> Another example, one directly related to our discussion of the connection between Eucharist and ethical action, is the story of the long journey that Cavanaugh Company Eucharistic breads make to tens of thousands of churches across in the world.

### "Buying the Body of Christ"

In 2012, the online magazine *Killing the Buddha* posted a feature story by Rowan Moore Gerety about the arrival of the "Communion wafer" into the capitalist marketplace.<sup>67</sup> This arrival is situated within the story of the Cavanaugh Company, which was founded in 1943 and "now makes 80 percent of the 'altar breads' consumed in the US."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas Princen, "The Shading and Distancing of Commerce: When Internalization is not Enough," *Ecological Economics* 20 (1999): 235.

<sup>65</sup> As Francis says in *Laudato Si'*, "We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build" (no. 107).

<sup>66</sup> I must thank Dr. Vincent Miller for helping me to see the value judgments built into such systems.

<sup>67</sup> Rowan Moore Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ," *Killing the Buddha*, <http://www.killingthebuddha.com/mag/dogma/buying-the-body-of-christ/>.

<sup>68</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ."

According to the company's website, the Cavanaugh Company was formed at the request of local priests in Greenville, Rhode Island.<sup>69</sup> The priests showed John Cavanaugh, an inventor, the antiquated machines that the parish nuns were using to make the bread. To meet the needs of these nuns, Cavanaugh converted "waffle irons, humidifiers, mixers and cutters into tools for the baking and cutting of the unleavened Communion offering."<sup>70</sup> So, the company initially started as an equipment supplier for convents devoted to the making of Eucharistic bread.

However, a convergence of historical events led to a shift in the focus of the company. According to Gerety, the first historical event was the baby boom following the Second World War, which resulted in growing congregations.<sup>71</sup> The second was an aging and declining membership at many of the convents making the bread for these growing congregations.<sup>72</sup> The combined result of growing congregations and shrinking convents was that a number of convents "no longer wanted machinery; they wanted to buy the bread itself."<sup>73</sup> Thus, the Cavanaugh Company began to produce the bread, and the convents became distribution centers. In the 1960s, another historical event "really changed everything" for the company: the Second Vatican Council.<sup>74</sup> One of the changes to come out of the Council was a desire in many Catholic churches for a thicker, more bread-like Eucharistic wafer.<sup>75</sup> This change resulted in technological advances to production

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<sup>69</sup> Cavanaugh Company, "About Us," <http://www.cavanaghco.com/about.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Cavanaugh Company, "About Us."

<sup>71</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ." It is important to note that this factor is not meant to imply that the Catholic Church grew in great disproportion to the rest of the population. While it may be true that in the years and decades immediately following WWII the church grew numerically, it is more difficult, given demographic complexities as well as the intricacies of sociological findings, to claim that the percentage of the population self-reporting as Catholic and those regularly attending Catholic churches reached a sustained or unprecedented number. See Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), chapter 8, especially 193-6, 204-5, and 344 n.55-56; for more recent data placing the Catholic Church within general trends in American religion from 1972- 2008 see Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> For documentation of this decline and differing explanations for it, see Helen Rose Ebaugh, "The Growth and Decline of Catholic Religious Orders of Women Worldwide: The Impact of Women's Opportunity Structures," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32, no. 1 (March 1993): 68-75, and Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, "Catholic Religious Vocations: Decline and Revival," *Review of Religious Research* 42, no. 2 (December 2000): 125-145.

<sup>73</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ."

<sup>74</sup> Cavanaugh Company, "About Us."

<sup>75</sup> See Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ," and General Instruction of the Roman Missal, chapter VI, part I, para. 321. Also of significance in this regard was the change from the priest administering the bread directly to the recipient to handing it to him or her.

that allowed Cavanaugh to meet the new desires of its clients. Gerety reports that another change following the Council was a decrease in the Protestant aversion to weekly Communion, which led to the new establishment of Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Southern Baptist customers.<sup>76</sup> The new production capabilities that made it possible to meet the new desires of Catholic congregations also allowed for the Cavanaugh Company to tailor production to meet the design specifications of these Protestant denominations.

The result of this convergence of historical factors was rapid company growth and expansion to the extent that today the company can “produce rolls of 100 breads per second.”<sup>77</sup> The wheat used to make the bread has long outgrown what could be supplied locally, so shipments between 42,000 and 45,000 pounds are brought in every three weeks from Archer Daniels Midland, which, as “one of the biggest corporations in agribusiness,” has multiple operations throughout Northern Appalachia but also numerous accusations of environmental and human rights violations.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to these changes made to the sourcing of the wheat in order to meet the growing needs of its clients after the liturgical changes of Vatican II, the Cavanaugh Company has also continued to grow its design technology and now has a patent-protected process which creates a sealed edge on their wafers in order to prevent crumbling.<sup>79</sup> As already mentioned, the company also has a website and 1-800 phone number to meet the continued needs of its ever-expanding customer base, which now includes international clients. In the words of Gerety, the Cavanaugh Company has helped to transform Eucharistic wafers from “a good, or a useful object, into a product.” Or, put another way, “what had simply been ‘shoes’ became Nikes and Reeboks.”<sup>80</sup>

If Cavanaugh Company wafers are the Nikes of this account, the Reeboks are wafers made by a convent of the Order of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri. The convent is one of the few remaining to produce Eucharistic wafers. Although sub-

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<sup>76</sup> Gerety, “Buying the Body of Christ.”

<sup>77</sup> Cavanaugh Company, “About Us.”

<sup>78</sup> Gerety, “Buying the Body of Christ.” The most famous scandal associated with the company is still the lysine price-fixing conspiracy which became the basis of the non-fiction book *The Informant*, by Kurt Eichenwald (New York: Broadway Books, 2000), which was then adapted into a film of the same name in 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Gerety, “Buying the Body of Christ.”

<sup>80</sup> Gerety, “Buying the Body of Christ.” However, this analogy should not be taken too far since the companies do not actually brand their wafers with the same type of visibility as shoe companies. In fact, as we will see, the lack of conspicuous branding is crucial to the companies’ success in the altar bread marketplace since such branding could draw attention to the sourcing of the elements rather than allowing these questions to go unasked amid their religious context.

stantially smaller than the Cavanaugh Company, the Sisters still produce over 2 million breads each week.<sup>81</sup> Yet, the sisters consider themselves part of the long Catholic tradition of altar breads being produced by women religious. Where the Cavanaugh factory does not have any religious ornamentation, the Sisters' factory floor is adorned with crosses and religious art. And where the Cavanaugh Company boasts breads "untouched by human hands,"<sup>82</sup> the Sisters consider their touch an "added value."<sup>83</sup> The Sisters also think of the breads as providing a connection with the churches, and they accompany production and packing with prayer.<sup>84</sup>

However, lest the picture appear to be a simplistic case of "bad" versus "good," it is worth pointing out that in sticking with the analogy given above I have decided to cast the Sisters' wafers as "Reeboks," rather than simply as "shoes." The Sisters, even if not the creators of the Eucharistic wafer marketplace, still operate within that marketplace with their particular "brand" of wafers. Like the Cavanaugh Company, they too have technologically advanced wafer production, offer many different product options, provide a website and 1-800 phone number, and serve an international client base. And in the time since Gerety's story, they have also started carrying certain Cavanaugh products that they are unable to produce with their own machines.<sup>85</sup>

The conclusion by Gerety, critical of the altar bread marketplace as a whole, claims that, even though the suppliers have increasingly turned the wafers into "products" or "commodities," churchgoers do not think of the bread in this way. Then, taking his analysis one step further, Gerety seems to lay part of the blame for this lack of awareness at the feet of the Church's sacramental language and liturgical context around the Eucharist. He says,

During church services, wafers are engulfed in enough religious imagery and liturgical context to discourage the realization among congregants that what is now the body of Christ was produced in a factory, bought and sold in a contentious, secular marketplace, and traded hands repeatedly among truck operators and postal workers who had no idea what they were handling.... Maybe the not-yet-realized body of Christ is not so different from that box of "Jesus Is My Homeboy" T-shirts riding next to it.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Altar Breads BSPA, "About Us," [http://www.altarbreadsbspa.com/altarbread/index.php?main\\_page=page&id=1](http://www.altarbreadsbspa.com/altarbread/index.php?main_page=page&id=1).

<sup>82</sup> Cavanaugh Company, "Products," <http://www.cavanaghco.com/products.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ."

<sup>84</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ."

<sup>85</sup> Altar Breads BSPA, "Products," [http://www.altarbreadsbspa.com/altarbread/index.php?main\\_page=products\\_all](http://www.altarbreadsbspa.com/altarbread/index.php?main_page=products_all).

<sup>86</sup> Gerety, "Buying the Body of Christ."

What answers does the church have as resources to address these issues of supply-chain and commodification? Gerety certainly doesn't seem to think that the sacraments themselves will be of much help.

While Chauvet's theology makes an effort to situate symbols within symbolic orders and also highlights the importance of context and culture, such issues do point to the possibility of another critique of his theology: its ability to evaluate the symbols themselves. Speaking of the bread in Eucharist, Chauvet says,

Bread is a *socially* instituted food – even if it no longer has the fundamental place and significance in our societies of abundance it once had when the phrases “to earn one's bread” and “to eat one's bread” were enough to evoke the whole of the production-consumption cycle.<sup>87</sup>

Here we again see an emphasis on the social understanding of the element. But what about when the bread moves from no longer having a fundamental place in society to having a fundamentally different place in society? What happens when the “whole” that the symbol represents is closer to the marketplace than it is to the eschatological vision of the symbolic exchange? As far as I can see, Chauvet has no way to evaluate such possibilities. And such possibilities will not always be easily detectable when we as humans lack the ability to see the invisible symbolic order that is a result of problems like shading and distancing. If the symbols are socially instituted and humans do not have access to the necessary information to assess the impact of those symbols, there seems to be no way to evaluate the symbol until after it has already become obviously corrupted.

### *Toward an “Integral Eucharist”*

One possible step that can be taken toward addressing these questions is the practice of an “integral Eucharist,” by which I mean a conception and practice of Eucharist that provides a clear import for ethics, as we see in Chauvet, while also recognizing the “social” as more than simply human interconnectedness, as we see in *Laudato Si'*. Such a practice of Eucharist would have an attentive eye not only toward the productionist spiritual dimension of Eucharist, which Chauvet earlier lamented, but also toward every material part of Eucharistic practice and highlight the many ways in which each of these parts are connected to *everything*.<sup>88</sup> The materials used to construct the altar, as

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<sup>87</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 397 (emphasis original).

<sup>88</sup> Here I am thinking of the different versions of the mantra “Everything is connected” that Francis says throughout *Laudato Si'* (see nos. 16, 70, 91-92, 117, 120, 137-138, 142, 240).

well as the shape of the construction itself, can call attention toward and encourage an appreciation of the local ecologies of Northern Appalachia.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, the sourcing and production of the Eucharistic elements, both the bread and the wine, can also highlight the value of the fecundity of the region and the importance of the human hands that are called to protect it. In order for these parts of an “integral Eucharist” to be seen for the interconnectedness that they highlight, however, another important part of this vision is the education of the participants, leading toward the type of “ecological conversion” that Francis speaks of in *Laudato Si’* (nos. 216-221).

While the shape and source of the materials for Eucharist can highlight the connection to the land from which such materials come, I do not think the participants can be expected to arrive at an ecological consciousness and conversion simply as a result of partaking in the sacrament. Just as participants must be taught the significance of the sacrament, so too they must be taught to ask questions of ecology in relation to Eucharistic practice itself. They must be encouraged to judge whether or not the symbols they are using accurately represent the whole of which those symbols are a part. They must be asked to think about the degree to which the sacramental act accurately corresponds to the liturgical words that are a part of it. Then perhaps the “fruit of the earth and work of human hands” will be seen, even by Gerety, as more than just “religious imagery and liturgical context” that discourage critical questions.<sup>90</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I began with a brief account of Pope Francis’s vision of integral ecology as presented in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, particularly in connection with the sacrament of Eucharist. This account of Francis’s link between Eucharist and ethics led to some unanswered questions of ecology in relation to the church’s sacraments. Portions of Louis-Marie Chauvet’s theology were then explicated and evaluated as a potential resource for addressing these questions. It is my contention that Francis’s discussion of Eucharist needs to be further developed in its connection to ethical action and that Chauvet’s discussion of Eucharist is helpful in further developing this connection, but Chauvet needs to expand his understanding of ethical action to include all of creation. Additionally, an account of the arrival of Eucharistic bread into the capitalist marketplace pointed to another set of issues not raised by either Francis or Chauvet. Since it is not enough merely to perform an

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<sup>89</sup> See, for example, the Priest Field Pastoral Center in Kearneysville, WV, discussed by Lucas Briola, “Sustainable Communities and Eucharistic Communities,” *Journal of Moral Theology*, Vol. 6, Special Issue 1 (2017): 22-33.

<sup>90</sup> Gerety, “Buying the Body of Christ.”

exercise in evaluation without then seeking to salvage the positive elements and exploring ways to fortify the weak aspects, I proposed a synthesis of *Laudato Si'* and Chauvet, a vision I called an “integral Eucharist.” In light of this vision and the important role of education within it, the story of Eucharistic bread production can be transformed from a secondary critique within an academic paper into an important, educative story that fosters the kinds of questions among church members that are necessary for an “integral Eucharist.” It is then up to each particular church to find ways to address those ecological questions for its own locale in a manner that highlights rather than obscures the sacramental connection to the land on which the church lives. It is my hope that rather than having church members who think it is important to work, grow, and buy responsibly and locally but fail to ask questions about such issues in relation to the sacraments, we will have members who think it is important to work, grow, and buy responsibly and locally because that is what they have been shown at the table of the Lord. **M**

## Pope Francis, Theology of the Body, Ecology, and Encounter

Robert Ryan

**I**N *LAUDATO SI'*, Pope Francis affirms, “There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (no. 118). And, indeed, throughout the encyclical, he roots his ecological vision in his understanding of the human person. His account pays particular attention to the person’s bodily dimension. This connection between the theology of the human person and ecology stands out as crucial, especially because it is frequently overlooked or even intentionally ignored, perhaps out of fear that an emphasis on the person leads to a destructive mentality that legitimatizes dominating nature. These fears certainly have merit: the focus on the central role of the human person in Christianity has often led to the neglect and abuse of the natural world.<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis’s vision of the human person’s relationship to the environment, however, differs radically from this perversion of the Christian account. It accentuates care for the earth without degrading the centrality of the person. Building from this foundation, this essay links Francis’s ecological vision with John Paul II’s anthropology (particularly as it appears in his “theology of the body”), uses the connection to highlight the importance of encounter in ecology, and proposes a few roles that the local church should play in ecological renewal.

### **FRANCIS AND JOHN PAUL II ON THE ‘THEOLOGY OF THE BODY’**

For John Paul II’s “theology of the body,” the body reveals the truth of the person. We must “allow the body itself, as it were, to speak.... It speaks with its masculinity or femininity, it speaks with the mysterious language of the personal gift, it speaks in the language of faithfulness, that is, of love, and in the language of conjugal unfaithfulness, that is, of ‘adultery.’”<sup>2</sup> This logic of gift lies at the heart

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<sup>1</sup> This criticism appears perhaps most famously in Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Massachusetts: Pauline Book & Media, 2006), 536.

of what it means to be an embodied person.<sup>3</sup> The body has a spousal or nuptial meaning, that is, it has the “power to express love.”<sup>4</sup> This nuptial meaning of the body particularly manifests itself in sexual intercourse, which by its nature communicates the total gift of one person to another. In this way, the body serves as the physical expression of the complete self-giving of marriage. On this account, the mutual and total self-gift brings about a real communion of persons.<sup>5</sup>

John Paul II proposes the fundamental nature of self-gift and its role in forming interpersonal communion in order to replace the categories of use and consumption.<sup>6</sup> Michael Waldstein’s introduction to *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* explains John Paul II’s underlying concerns. Waldstein utilizes the work of Kenneth Schmitz and argues that John Paul II’s main objective consists in overcoming a certain modernist account of subjectivity paired with a mechanistic account of nature.<sup>7</sup> According to Waldstein, “In Wojtyła’s sexual ethics, one can see the importance of the concern for nature.... The restricted mechanist image of nature produced by natural science, and particularly biology, obscures our vision for the order of living nature in all its richness and therefore prevents us from understanding and living sex in its full meaning.”<sup>8</sup> On this account, the appreciation of the body has been distorted such that it is regarded not as a divine gift, but rather as an object of exploitation and scientific mastery. The defense of the body proves crucial in overcoming a dualistic account that sees all material things as nothing more than objects of power.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to this power-driven view of matter, John

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Waldstein summarizes, “Gift expresses the essential truth of the human body,” and asserts that this point constitutes the basic line of argument found throughout the theology of the body. See Waldstein, “Introduction,” in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 124.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 185-86. For a positive assessment of some aspects of this approach, see David Cloutier and William Mattison, III, “Bodies Poured Out in Christ: Marriage Beyond the Theology of the Body,” in *Leaving and Coming Home: New Wineskins for Catholic Sexual Ethics*, ed. David Cloutier (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), 208-214.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Bader explains how self-gift leads to communion. See Jennifer Bader, “Engaging the Struggle: John Paul II on Personhood and Sexuality,” in *Human Sexuality in the Catholic Tradition*, eds. Kieran Scott and Harold Daly Horell (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 93-94.

<sup>6</sup> See Waldstein, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>7</sup> See Kenneth Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 131-37, and Waldstein, “Introduction,” 34-63, esp. 34-44.

<sup>8</sup> Waldstein, “Introduction,” 97.

<sup>9</sup> “John Paul II’s main concern in TOB is to help overcome the body-spirit dualism that emerged from placing nature in the position of an ‘object’ for human power” (Waldstein, “Introduction,” 44). Earlier Waldstein commented, “The full greatness of John Paul II’s vision only emerges when one sees his concern for spousal love in

Paul II asserts that the hermeneutics of gift “stands at the very heart of the mystery of creation”; creation signifies a “gift; a fundamental and ‘radical’ gift, that is, an act of giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.”<sup>10</sup>

Waldstein’s explanation, in bringing out the underlying concerns of John Paul II’s work, elucidates a common framework for Francis’s ecology and John Paul II’s anthropology. Francis also starts with the meaning of the body and similarly wants to replace the categories of use and exploitation with that of gift. He primarily expounds the meaning of the body, however, to explain the human person’s responsibility toward the environment. “It is enough,” he writes, “to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 155).<sup>11</sup> Francis thus also draws on the logic of gift, which is revealed by the language of the body and shows the human person and the whole created world as a gift given. In this sense, the environment highlights the “logic of receptivity” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 159). This logic of receptivity expands beyond the marital communion of persons to the entire created world and illustrates that we are not the creators of our own meaning.<sup>12</sup>

Reading Francis together with John Paul II, however, seems problematic on one level. For John Paul II, a real communion is only possible between human persons. He highlights that in original solitude, the person is distinguished from all other living beings and opens toward the other with whom is shared a human nature.<sup>13</sup> “None of these [other] beings, in fact, offers man the basic conditions that *make it*

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the larger context of his concern about our age, above all for the question of scientific knowledge and power over nature, that is the characteristically modern question of ‘progress.’” Waldstein, “Introduction,” 3. See also p. 95-107.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 179-180.

<sup>11</sup> The connection between sexuality and ecology is also evident in the thought of Wendell Berry. See *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (California: Counterpoint, 1997), especially “Chapter 7: The Body and the Earth,” 101-146. In the words of Berry, “It is hardly surprising, then, that there should be some profound resemblances between our treatment of our bodies and our treatment of the earth” (101). Later, he comments similarly, “Between our relation to our sexuality and our relation to the reproductivity of the earth, for instance, the resemblance is plain and strong and apparently inescapable” (128).

<sup>12</sup> See Rowan Williams, “Embracing Our Limits: The Lessons of *Laudato si’*,” *Commonweal*, September 23, 2015, [www.commonwealmagazine.org/embracing-our-limits](http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/embracing-our-limits). For the importance of receptivity in the marital communion of persons, see Robert Ryan, “More than Self Gift and Sex: The Role of Receptivity in Catholic Marital Ethics,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 4, no. 1 (June 2015): 141-66.

<sup>13</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 162-163.

possible to exist in a relation of reciprocal gift.”<sup>14</sup> Only a human person can receive the self-gift of the other and respond with his or her own self-gift. In John Paul II’s words, “These two functions of the mutual exchange are deeply connected in the whole process of the ‘gift of self’: giving and accepting the gift interpenetrate in such a way that the very act of giving becomes acceptance, and acceptance transforms the giving.”<sup>15</sup> Here, the connection between Francis and John Paul II seems to break down; the sense of communion between persons that John Paul II has in mind is seemingly impossible with natural things because humanity differs radically from the rest of creation.

And yet Pope Francis does not hesitate to use the language of communion even with creation. While not a communion of persons, this relationship does constitute a real communion for Francis. According to *Laudato Si’*, the gift of creation is “a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion” (no. 76).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the encyclical is clear that human life “is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself” (no. 66).<sup>17</sup> Like a communion of persons, the communion with the earth requires a generous gift of self. On this point, Francis cites Patriarch Bartholomew who challenges us to replace consumption with sacrifice and demands that we embrace an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, a moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs” (no. 9). Later in the text, Pope Francis speaks about the service of caring for public spaces, such as cleaning a landscape or an abandoned monument, and says, “These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences” (no. 232).<sup>18</sup> These texts point to the fact that proper care for the environment requires the expression of love through an embodied gift of self in a way similar to the manner in which John Paul II asserts that an embodied self-gift is required for a communion of persons.

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<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 181. Emphasis in original.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 196.

<sup>16</sup> See also *Laudato Si’*, nos. 89-92.

<sup>17</sup> Francis also uses the language of covenant with the environment, which implies relationship. See *Laudato Si’*, nos. 209-215. This language of relationship and covenant can also be found in the work of Pope Benedict XVI, who speaks about a relationship with nature and about a “covenant” between the land and human beings. See, for example, Pope Benedict XVI, “Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace: If You Want To Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation,” 1 January 2010, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliiii-world-day-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliiii-world-day-peace.html).

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted here that the self-giving love that Pope Francis speaks about is directed both toward the community and toward the earth, and so communion is established with both.

Moreover, this gift of self, although not received and given back in mutual self-giving as in a communion of persons, still involves real reciprocity. Such reciprocity is implied in the language of relationship between the human person and creation. The person, through self-giving love, cares for and cultivates the earth, which in turn provides for humanity. Francis speaks about this reciprocal relationship as a “relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 67). Thus, even though this communion is not interpersonal, it does entail the reciprocal care and support of the other. In other words, the gift of the earth to the human person calls for a response, and the human gift of care for the earth in turn brings forth a response.

Mary Ashley makes clear the importance of the relationship between creation and the person. She argues for a personalist environmentalism that “attends to our relationships, and especially our direct encounters, with the life around us.”<sup>19</sup> She proposes this personalist environmentalism in light of Pope Benedict XVI’s environmental ethic, and she argues that it is more satisfying given the human person’s fundamentally relational nature.<sup>20</sup> To this end, she points out that the Magisterium has spoken about the importance of cross-species kinship, and says, “The image of kinship is entirely consistent, however, with the personalist approach, given its emphasis on loving relationship, encounter, interaction, and care.”<sup>21</sup> She even proposes to use family love as the model for environmental action on the basis that Benedict XVI calls for the family to be the prototype of every social order.<sup>22</sup> Her personalist approach is particularly useful for this essay because it accents the reciprocal relationship between the person and creation.

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Ashley, “If You Want Responsibility, Build Relationship: A Personalist Approach to Benedict XVI’s Environmental Vision,” in *Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Assessing Pope Benedict XVI’s Ecological Vision for the Catholic Church in the United States*, ed. Jame Schaefer and Tobias Winright (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), 19. This essay finds broad agreement with her work. At the same time, her work focuses largely on the environmental thought of Benedict XVI, whereas this essay puts Francis’s thought at the fore. Moreover, this essay is more focused on the role of the body, particularly as expressed in John Paul II’s *Man and Woman He Created Them*. Finally, this essay treats the category of encounter at significantly greater length.

<sup>20</sup> See Ashley, “A Personalist Approach,” 20-21.

<sup>21</sup> Ashley, “A Personalist Approach,” 27.

<sup>22</sup> Ashley, “A Personalist Approach,” 33.

### THE ROLE OF ENCOUNTER

According to John Paul II, this language of the body reveals that the body has a fundamentally procreative and unitive meaning.<sup>23</sup> John Paul II develops the significance of this meaning for sexuality, but these two aspects have importance for the entirety of the human person's corporeal existence. In fact, the procreative and unitive meanings can serve as moral norms for appropriate interaction with the environment. First, the procreative aspect of care for the environment means that ecology should promote the abundance of life in all of its forms. This openness to life stresses the importance of protecting biodiversity. On this point, Pope Francis spends a section in the first chapter of *Laudato Si'* asserting that the gradual disappearance of biodiversity represents an important environmental problem (nos. 32-42). At the same time, this dimension means that authentic ecology must also promote the centrality of the human person. Any environmental action that protects nature at the expense of denigrating human life should be understood as a false environmentalism.<sup>24</sup>

Second, the body carries a unitive meaning, which, while often not as controversial as the procreative meaning of the body in sexual ethics, plays a crucial and often overlooked role in environmental ethics. In sexual ethics, the bodily union of sexual intercourse should lead to a deepened personal communion that results from the giving of self in this act. Every sexual act must be open to this unitive aspect, which entails recognizing the other as gift. In environmental ethics, the human person's interaction with creation must be unitive in that it must lead to and deepen the relationship between creation and the person that was highlighted earlier. Technological or scientific "advances" that promise progress but distance the human person from the earth must be rejected on this account.

This unitive meaning of the body elucidates the parallel between John Paul II's anthropology and Francis's ecology most clearly: the logic of the body highlights the importance of encounter, which plays a central role in Francis's thought. According to John Paul II, the freedom of gift serves as the starting point from which "the communion of persons begins in which both encounter each other and give themselves reciprocally in the fullness of their subjectivity."<sup>25</sup> In other words, the communion of persons rests on the capacity of two persons to encounter one another and, in so doing, to give themselves to one another. Pope Francis also picks up on the idea of encounter and places it at the heart of his vision. He asserts, "I never tire of repeating those

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<sup>23</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 617-620 and 644-647, especially 646. Paul VI, of course, asserts the same in *Humanae Vitae*, no. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Francis makes this point in a number of places. For example, see *Laudato Si'*, no. 90. It also appears in his emphasis on "integral ecology"; see nos. 137-162.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 201.

words of Benedict XVI which take us to the very heart of the Gospel: ‘Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction’” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 7). Encounter might even be described as a “dominant theme” of Francis’s pontificate.<sup>26</sup>

Francis is clear that encounter stands as a key category for interpersonal relationships. According to *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction” (no. 88). This text not only underscores the importance of encountering others, but it also points out several key features of Francis’s understanding: authentic encounter requires sustained, face-to-face, bodily interaction that requires genuine listening and openness to the other.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, although Francis does not provide the argumentation in that text, in light of the first part of this essay, we can infer that the centrality of encounter results from the logic of the human body because it is the other’s “physical presence” that confronts us “face-to-face.”

Although the groundwork that has been laid so far opens the space to assert the place of encountering nature, Francis’s ecology nevertheless keeps the human person at its center. As a result, encounter must first take place with those people who suffer the most from the ecological devastation. The bishops of Appalachia, in their pastoral letter *This Land Is Home to Me*, underscore this theme, “But before we turn to this message from God, we must hear first the cry of Appalachia’s poor.”<sup>28</sup> They go on to assert the importance of nearness to the people that requires listening, especially to the poor and marginalized.<sup>29</sup> Pope

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<sup>26</sup> See Michael Sean Winters, “Pope Francis and Encounter,” *National Catholic Reporter*, Aug. 19, 2013, [www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/pope-francis-encounter](http://www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/pope-francis-encounter).

<sup>27</sup> Space does not permit a full development of what Francis means by “encounter,” but broadly it seems to indicate the four key elements in the sentence above (sustained, bodily, face-to-face, genuine listening). For comments on the centrality of encounter, see Diego Fares, *The Heart of Pope Francis: How a New Culture of Encounter is Changing the Church and the World*, trans. Robert Hopcke (New York: Herder & Herder, 2015), 22, where he asserts that for Francis, “From an anthropological point of view, encounter is primary because it is our most human characteristic. ‘We are beings of encounter.’” In other words, the category of encounter is fundamental to his anthropology.

<sup>28</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land Is Home to Me*, [www.ccappal.org/CCA-book040307.pdf](http://www.ccappal.org/CCA-book040307.pdf), 10. Pagination follows the 2007 online version that combines *This Land Is Home to Me* and *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995). Cited hereafter as *This Land*. See also Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995), [www.ccappal.org/CCAbook040307.pdf](http://www.ccappal.org/CCAbook040307.pdf). Cited hereafter as *Web of Life*.

<sup>29</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land*, 32.

Francis similarly asserts that closeness to those who are suffering reveals the full truth of the environmental crisis. He gives three reasons: first, many of the poor live in the areas most impacted by global warming; second, their means of subsistence are often directly dependent on natural resources in activities like farming and fishing; third, they do not have the resources to adapt to climate change and environmental destruction (*Laudato Si'*, no. 25). Thus, there is “an intimate relationship” between the poor and the fragility of the planet (*Laudato Si'*, no. 16).<sup>30</sup>

The role of closeness to the poor as the key to ecological renewal limits the usefulness of science and technology. Studies can reveal the science of climate change or deforestation and new technologies can limit environmental damage, but only encounter with those who suffer from these effects can reveal the full reality of the situation. Jon Sobrino points out that the suffering can be most honest about reality because they cannot take life for granted. Consequently, they also reveal the deepest truths of environmental destruction because they experience it as a lived reality and not simply as scientific observations.<sup>31</sup> Along these lines, Francis observes that various forms of media and even scientific studies can “shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experience” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 47). A few paragraphs later, he returns to the point, “Lack of physical contact and encounter...can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality. At times this attitude even exists side by side with a ‘green’ rhetoric” (no. 49). These words provide a powerful reminder that authentic ecological work must be grounded in personal encounter. Even one’s attendance at an academic conference on environmental protection, which obviously has great usefulness, must always be paired with a direct and bodily experience of the poor suffering from the effects of the environmental crisis. Without this experience of the marginalized, it runs the risk of becoming mere rhetoric that does not take root in hearts and does not lead to conversion.

This emphasis on encounter fits in well with Francis’s call for a new understanding of solidarity (*Laudato Si'*, no. 16). In his comments on *Laudato Si'*, Rowan Williams notes that, for Pope Francis, solidarity serves as the criterion by which a particular policy can be understood as morally defensible or not.<sup>32</sup> But Francis wants to make sure

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<sup>30</sup> Twenty years before *Laudato Si'*, the Appalachian bishops articulated a similar point. See Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *Web of Life*, 47: “We too do not see the crisis of nature as separate from the crisis of the poor.”

<sup>31</sup> See Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 85. Also see Roberto Goizueta, “To the Poor, the Sick, and the Suffering,” in *Vatican II: A Universal Call to Holiness*, eds. Anthony Ciorra and Michael Higgins (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>32</sup> Williams, “Embracing Our Limits.”

that this keystone of Catholic Social Teaching avoids becoming overly abstract. This fear already arises in the work of John Paul II, who, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, argues that solidarity cannot be understood as “a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far” (no. 38). Francis’s language of encounter now provides the framework to ensure that solidarity does not slip into these vague, distant feelings that accomplish little; rather, it must be rooted in physical contact with the marginalized.

For example, one cannot be in solidarity with those who suffered from the contamination of West Virginia’s Elk River in 2014 simply by advocating for better regulations for chemical storage and stricter penalties for damages caused, although certainly these actions are important. Spending time with those who were most affected, particularly those who were hospitalized and those who were without access to clean drinking water as a result of the spill, also emerges as crucial through the lens of encounter. Within this task, priority must be assigned to developing an intimacy with the poor for whom hospitalization and access to other water sources proved to be most burdensome.<sup>33</sup>

Understanding solidarity as rooted in encounter also highlights the seriousness of the problem of absentee ownership, which has plagued and continues to plague Appalachia. The Appalachian bishops go so far as to compare absentee ownership to a cancer that drains the local community of its life.<sup>34</sup> One in-depth land study of Appalachia has shown that almost three quarters of land rights and more than four-fifths of mineral rights belong to absentee owners.<sup>35</sup> The centrality of

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<sup>33</sup> For more on this story, see “CSB Releases Final Report into 2014 Freedom Industries Mass Contamination of Charleston, West Virginia Drinking Water,” *Huntington News*, September 29, 2016, [www.huntingtonnews.net/142393](http://www.huntingtonnews.net/142393).

<sup>34</sup> See Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *Web of Life*, 76

<sup>35</sup> Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force, “Land Ownership Patterns and Their Impacts on Appalachian Communities” (1981), [www.crmw.net/files/1981\\_Land\\_Ownership\\_Study.pdf](http://www.crmw.net/files/1981_Land_Ownership_Study.pdf). While this study is now dated, it remains an important point of reference. Zachary Swick asserts that even today, “it remains unchallenged.” Zachary Swick, “Adaptive Policy and Governance: Natural Resources, Ownership, and Community Development in Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 42 (2014): 39. An update of this study was undertaken in West Virginia in 2013, which suggested that absentee ownership in the state had declined somewhat, but “large out-of-state corporations still hold title to a great deal of the state’s privately owned land.” West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, “Who Owns West Virginia?” (December 2013), [www.wvpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/land-study-paper-final3.pdf](http://www.wvpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/land-study-paper-final3.pdf). Also see Elizabeth Payne, “Owning the Mountains: Appalachia’s History of Corporate Control,” *The Appalachian Voice*, February 19, 2016, [www.apvices.org/2016/02/18/corporate-land-ownership-appalachia/](http://www.apvices.org/2016/02/18/corporate-land-ownership-appalachia/). For more on this original study, see Shaunna Scott, “The Appalachian Land Ownership Study Revisited,” *Appalachian Journal* 35 (2008): 236-252 and Shaunna Scott, “What Difference Did It Make? The Appalachian Land Ownership Study after Twenty-Five Years,” in *Confronting Ecological Crisis in Appalachia and the South: University and Community*

encounter provides a powerful argument against absentee ownership; any situation that prevents owners from a sustained and face-to-face experience with the people living on the land and impacted by their decisions now emerges as morally problematic. The problem consists not just in economic profits being drawn out of the region (which companies might promise to reinvest locally) but more fundamentally in the lack of real relationship.

This framework thus provides a new way of assessing various projects and developments. For example, the “Coalfields Expressway” project through southwest Virginia and stretching into West Virginia, which promises economic development, will involve the seizure of private property through eminent domain, thereby decreasing local ownership, and will re-route traffic away from already established towns and communities.<sup>36</sup> Both of these outcomes threaten the possibility of authentic encounter and reveal the project’s pitfalls (to say nothing about the devastating ecological effects of the mountaintop removal mining that will clear the path for the highway in the first place).

The encounter with the poor, moreover, takes on deeper meaning in a Christian context. If we assert with the Appalachian bishops that, before we hear the message from God, we must hear the cry of the poor, it is precisely because we hear the voice of God *in and through* the cry of the poor. The full beauty and power of the Gospel only shines most clearly in the lives of those who are suffering. In order to explain this point, Roberto Goizueta argues that God’s preferential love for the poor is a necessary consequence of His universal love:

To say that God’s love is universal is not to say that it is *neutral*. In fact, it is to say the very opposite: precisely *because* God’s love is universal, it cannot be neutral. If a mother finds that a fight has broken out between her strapping teenage son and his much smaller sister, the mother will not hesitate to try to ‘liberate’ the smaller girl from the brother’s clutches—precisely because the mother loves her two children equally.<sup>37</sup>

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*Partnerships*, eds. Stephanie McSpirit, Lynne Faltraco, Conner Bailey (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 39-59.

<sup>36</sup> Among other places, see Swick, “Adaptive Policy and Governance,” 40.

<sup>37</sup> Roberto Goizueta, “To the Poor, the Sick, and the Suffering,” 66. Emphases in original. Also see p. 63-67 and 78. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198, Pope Francis points out that the poor participate in the *sensus fidei* and know the suffering Christ. Also see Stephen Bevans, “The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World: Implications and Prospects,” *International Review of Mission* 103 (2014): 303, and Richard Gaillardetz, “The ‘Francis Moment’: A New Kairos for Catholic Ecclesiology,” *CTSA Proceedings* 69 (2014): 68.

In application to the environmental crisis, the principle that Goizueta articulates suggests that God's universal love is uniquely at work in the lives of those suffering from it.

In more personal terms, the encounter with those suffering from the environmental crisis reveals the face of the Lord Jesus. The concluding document from the fifth general conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (CELAM) held in Aparecida, Brazil, for which Cardinal Bergoglio was a key redactor, asserts, "The encounter with Jesus Christ in the poor is a constitutive dimension of our faith in Jesus Christ. Our option for them emerges from contemplation of his suffering face in them and from the encounter with Him in the afflicted and outcast..."<sup>38</sup> One might even call the awareness of the presence of the Lord Jesus in the encounter with the poor a mystical experience.<sup>39</sup>

Witnessing the suffering of those who daily experience the effects of ecological devastation thus opens the way for an authentic Christian conversion because it is an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. This understanding provides a concrete way to understand what Pope Francis means in his claim that people need to undergo "an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 217). While prayer and devotional experiences may compel a Christian to greater environmental action, more often and more concretely, this ecological conversion takes place through the encounter with Christ who manifests himself in those suffering from environmental devastation. This experience thus reshapes the Christian's relationship to the environment as a result. In this way, Christian conversion is not a move away from the world but, on the contrary, entails a new awareness of the realities of the world.

After the centrality of encounter with the poor, the second important aspect of Francis's understanding of encounter is the encounter with the environment itself. This encounter with creation constitutes a tangible way that one lives out the relationship with the environment. To return to the logic of the body, the body reveals a fundamental dependence on the earth, whether one wants it or not. "Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger [eco]systems for our

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<sup>38</sup> Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, *Concluding Document*, (2007), [www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf](http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf), no. 257. See also Christopher Ruddy, "The Local and Universal Church," in *Go Into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, eds. Thomas Rausch and Richard Gaillardetz (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 112, for his comments on the connection between Pope Francis and the Aparecida document.

<sup>39</sup> Maria Clara Bingemer, "A Church of the Poor," in *Go Into the Streets! The Welcoming Church of Pope Francis*, eds. Thomas Rausch and Richard Gaillardetz (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 32. This mystical encounter resonates with the judgment account in Matthew 25 and also finds close echoes in the work of Mother Teresa.

own existence” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 140). The category of encounter provides the means of realizing this dependence.

Wendell Berry helpfully draws out this foundational connection to the land and the perils of living as though this dependence did not exist. According to Berry, no matter how urban one’s life is, one’s body still lives by agriculture and so is fundamentally joined to the soil and to all other beings that live in and on it.<sup>40</sup> Too often, this basic and underlying connection is ignored and minimized, especially in a society in which only a very small percent of the population are involved with food production.<sup>41</sup> Berry particularly decries the modern household, which divorces us from the sources of bodily life and becomes a place of consumption without being a place of production. In his words, “we no longer know the earth we came from, have no respect for it, keep no responsibilities to it.”<sup>42</sup> In reality, however, “The world that environs us, that is around us, is also within us. We are made of it; we eat, drink, and breathe it; it is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It is also a Creation, a holy mystery... we also belong to it, and it makes certain rightful claims on us.”<sup>43</sup>

On his account, living disconnected from the earth and not fulfilling one’s responsibilities toward it constitutes living a lie. A loss of values and ultimately the destruction both of creation and of humanity results from this disconnect between the body and the earth.<sup>44</sup> In Berry’s view, the solution consists in reestablishing the awareness of this inescapable and fundamental connection. Put simply, “Only by restoring the broken connections can we be healed. Connection is health.”<sup>45</sup> Good farmers, whom he describes as “responsive partners in an intimate and mutual relationship” with the land, exemplify the connection between the earth and the human person.<sup>46</sup> Even for those who live in cities, they must live in balance with the surrounding countryside and assume some agricultural responsibility because it represents a more honest way of living.<sup>47</sup>

Berry’s work shows the importance of realizing the bond with the earth that results from the human person’s embodied nature. It also supports Francis’s emphasis on encounter, as the theme of encounter

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<sup>40</sup> See Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 101.

<sup>41</sup> Berry makes this point a number of times. See, for example, *Unsettling of America*, 144.

<sup>42</sup> Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 34.

<sup>44</sup> Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 163-64. “The unsettling at once of population and of values is virtually required by the only generally acceptable forms of aspiration.”

<sup>45</sup> Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 144.

<sup>46</sup> Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 91.

<sup>47</sup> See Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, & Community*, 21-25.

provides the means of restoring the broken connections that Berry perceives as so problematic. In other words, if the relationship between the earth and the human person is to be restored, it will come by way of genuine encounter with creation. This encounter with creation takes place on several levels. On one level, such an encounter involves spending time in pristine nature. Pope Francis cites John Paul II, who speaks of “contemplat[ing] with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 238).<sup>48</sup> In northern Appalachia, this sort of encounter requires spending time among the forests and rivers, hiking along the mountain ridges and valleys, sitting beside the streams, and being surrounded by the plants, animals, and trees.

While this type of encounter with the environment cannot stand by itself, it often serves as a starting place for deeper conversion.<sup>49</sup> The experience of overwhelming natural beauty can break through one’s preconceived notions, instill humility, and inspire further conversion. Moreover, it often challenges one with an overwhelming sense of God as Creator.<sup>50</sup> In their 1995 pastoral letter, *At Home in the Web of Life*, the Catholic bishops of Appalachia use the image of the forests as a cathedral. “To dwell in these mountains and forests, and with their trees and plants and animals, is truly to dwell in Earth’s community of life, as one of God’s awesome cathedrals. In this magnificent work of God’s creation, misty mountain haze is holy incense, tall tree trunks are temple pillars, sun-splashed leaves are stained glass, and songbirds are angelic choirs.”<sup>51</sup> The cathedrals of creation thus open the space for a genuine experience of the divine. At the same time, like encountering the poor, the encounter with nature must be rooted in one’s bodily presence. God is present *in* nature, not just manifested *through* nature. In the words of Pope Francis, nature “not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 88).

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<sup>48</sup> Also see John Paul II, *Catechesis* (2 August 2000), 4: *Insegnamenti* 23/2 (2000), 112.

<sup>49</sup> See Anselma Dolcich-Ashley, “American Nature Writing As a Critically-Appropriated Resource for Catholic Ecological Ethics,” in *Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Assessing Pope Benedict XVI’s Ecological Vision for the Catholic Church in the United States*, eds. Jame Schaefer and Tobias Winright (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 251, where she notes that the works of authors like Muir and Thoreau can be useful because they can serve as an invitation to spiritual conversion. Even Wendell Berry, who is critical of an overly-romantic sense of “wilderness” and particularly rejects the sense of the “scenic,” still recognizes the importance of an encounter with the margins. For him, the wilderness, that is, that which human activity has not disrupted, serves to instill humility in us, because it is the place where we submit rather than conquer. Wilderness impacts us, rather than us impacting it. Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> See Dolcich-Ashley, “American Nature Writing,” 243, and *Laudato Si'*, no. 126, where Francis points out that the monks sought the wilderness as a place for encountering God.

<sup>51</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *Web of Life*, 56.

Therefore, nature must not be seen as an instrument that can be discarded once one has encountered God through it. Francis later speaks about the mystical meaning found “in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face” (no. 233). In this sense, the physical nature of the encounter with creation is irreducible.

Pope Francis also envisions the encounter with nature to include the experience of nature in daily life. Observing this facet ensures that one does not idealize the meaning of encounter to include only extraordinary and emotionally-charged experiences. In accord with the key elements of encounter described earlier, encountering nature in everyday experience does not take place on its own but requires genuine openness that begins with the awareness of the other. Along these lines, David Cloutier warns of the danger of “neglect[ing] nature’s beautiful form that is all around us.”<sup>52</sup> The failure to attend to this everyday beauty often leads to the protection of only limited, ‘scenic’ places and to the destruction of the rest of creation. Thus, witnessing the goodness of creation can and should happen in one’s backyard, in the park at the end of the block, and in the glimpse of the river running through the city.

Pope Francis points to this sense of encounter with nature in the everyday when he observes that Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 97). Francis also points to this type of everyday encounter when he speaks about the need to design urban spaces which increase a sense of belonging and rootedness with the land. Additionally, he asserts the importance of designating protected spaces in both urban and rural settings (nos. 150-51). Wendell Berry argues for the importance of this everyday encounter more simply: “If you want to see where you are, you will have to get out of your spaceship, out of your car, off your horse, and walk over the ground.”<sup>53</sup> Additionally, genuine encounter with the creation of everyday life must include experiencing crop and livestock production because the results of these processes serve as daily sustenance. Failure to be attentive to these basic aspects of bodily life constitutes living a lie by neglecting to acknowledge one’s dependence.

Additionally, this sense of encounter with nature must be pressed even further. If God is particularly to be encountered in those who are suffering and to be encountered in nature then the continuation of this logic suggests that the face of God is particularly revealed in places

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<sup>52</sup> David Cloutier, *Walking God’s Earth: The Environment and Catholic Faith* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), 8.

<sup>53</sup> Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, & Community*, 20.

where the created world is suffering the effects of environmental devastation. God reveals God's self on the mountaintops stripped bare from mining, in the forests that have been clear-cut for logging, in the flood waters that threaten communities, in the abandoned mines filled with other people's garbage, and in the waters that "run orange with acid."<sup>54</sup> This approach finds support in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where Francis repeatedly speaks of encountering Christ in the marginalized and then highlights the fate of "weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests and indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole.... Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement" (no. 215). In other words, the body links the person to the physical world, and one experiences the destruction of the environment as a physical pain when he or she encounters that suffering face to face. In turn, this suffering can become a place of privileged experience with the Cross and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Thus, Francis's theology of encounter plays a fundamental role in his ecological vision. Further, this theology, in all of its various dimensions, is rooted in the language of the body, although clearly in ways that go far beyond the sexual. Caring for the environment involves the bodily experiences of both self-giving love and receptivity to the other. This emphasis in turn points to the importance of the human's connection to the earth and provides the foundation for the significance of encounter. Encounter thus provides the means by which this approach overcomes what Francis calls the "throwaway culture." In this way, Francis's aim appears strikingly similar to John Paul II's goal to overcome use and consumption in his theology of the body. Both approaches reject technological mastery in favor of self-gift. In this way, Francis has provided a rich vision for ecological reform that stands in deep continuity with John Paul II's anthropology and that does not degrade the principal place of the human person.

### LOCAL CHURCH AS THE PLACE OF ENCOUNTER

As was pointed out, encounter requires the "real and sincere closeness" between people that blossoms into friendship (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 199).<sup>55</sup> This bodily dimension requires an emphasis on

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<sup>54</sup> Rev. John Rausch, "Introduction" to the 2000 combined Version of *This Land and Web of Life*.

<sup>55</sup> There can be a certain temptation when we speak of encounter with the poor to picture trips to other parts of the country, continent, and world that bring us face to face with a kind of suffering that is literally foreign to us. The model here is the "mission trip." These trips have value. But, for Pope Francis, this temporary interaction does not typify encounter. Encounter means a sustained bodily interaction that takes place over a long period of time and thus can blossom into enduring friendship.

locality because it involves people repeatedly spending time with one another. As a result, I suggest four interconnected ways that local churches can facilitate encounter. First, the Appalachian bishops' letter *This Land Is Home To Me* calls for the creation of "Centers of Reflection and Prayer."<sup>56</sup> In "Sustainable Communities and Eucharistic Communities," Lucas Briola notes that Bishop Joseph Hodges established four of these pastoral centers in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.<sup>57</sup> These centers can and do serve as places of encounter with the created world and so can allow creation to confront people in their smallness. This confrontation moves people to wonder and awe, opens them to the presence of God, and begins the process of conversion. Moreover, the centrality of these centers must continue to be expanded. Encounter with the beauty of the created world is not something that can be limited to those privileged few that have both the time and the resources to "get away" for a weekend on retreat. Rather, encounter with creation stands as fundamental to the life of the Christian in Francis's vision. Thus, the use of these centers must be expanded so that ordinary people have the opportunity to reap their benefits on a regular basis. This expansion will certainly include greater funding, a larger number of programs available to the public, and a greater emphasis on the importance of encounter with creation.

Secondly, places are also needed where Christians can serve those suffering the impact of eco-devastation and where they can witness the harm humans have done to the environment. The Appalachian bishops seem to recognize something along these lines when, immediately after calling for the establishment of pastoral centers for reflection and prayer, they pick up Paul VI's call for the creation of "Centers for Popular Culture," which they understand "as a sign of the Church's concern, linked to the broader action centers, places where the poor feel welcome."<sup>58</sup> These centers, in the various forms they may take, must be places of encounter with the poor and with creation. The work of the Sisters of Mercy in Pocahontas, VA, stands out as a model in this regard.<sup>59</sup> After the local mine had closed, they helped establish the Center for Christian Action to help revitalize the town, including turning the abandoned exhibition mine into a tourist center and creating various social outreach programs. This center facilitated an experience of the environment, even where it had been damaged, and an encounter with the poor.

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<sup>56</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land*, 33.

<sup>57</sup> Lucas Briola, "Sustainable Communities and Eucharistic Communities: *Laudato Si'*, Northern Appalachia, and Redemptive Recovery," *Journal of Moral Theology* Vol. 6, Special Issue 1 (2017): 22-33. Briola also argues for the importance of these centers.

<sup>58</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land*, 34.

<sup>59</sup> See Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *Web of Life*, 42, where Carolyn Brink, RSM, highlights this story.

Third, the local church must advocate for the everyday experience of the environment. As was pointed out, Pope Francis speaks about the design of neighborhoods, public spaces, and communities. In the same section, he comments, “It is not enough to seek the beauty of design. More precious still is the service we offer to another kind of beauty: people’s quality of life, their adaptation to the environment, encounter and mutual assistance” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 150). The local church is uniquely situated to advocate for urban spaces that are conducive to encounter between persons because local churches are rooted in particular places and are invested in those communities. This advocacy involves not only an activism as communities are created and revitalized, but it also requires repeated encouragement of Christians about the importance of encounter. This exhortation will largely take the form of preaching, which must have diocesan support and encouragement for its greatest effectiveness. This preaching must start with the bishops, among whose duties, *Lumen Gentium* asserts, “the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 25).

Fourth, the local church must facilitate ongoing projects that bring together people from parishes in various socioeconomic settings. Often parishes represent particular ethnic or socioeconomic portions of the population, so inter-parochial work is essential. These projects can take on many different forms, including service projects for environmental restoration, advocacy and awareness campaigns, prayer events, and corporal works of mercy. Whatever specific form they take, they must open the space for encounter between rich and poor and between people and the environment. In this sense, they must be ongoing in order to allow genuine friendships to develop, they must be rooted in real contact with the created world (especially where it has been polluted), and they must bring people from various backgrounds together with those who are suffering.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has argued for the value of bringing together Francis’s ecological vision and John Paul II’s “theology of the body” because it highlights the foundational role of bodily encounter. Before concluding, two other reasons that situating Francis’s ecology and John Paul II’s anthropology together are worth mentioning, even though they are less directly connected to environmental issues. First, although not fleshed out in any detail here, understanding *Laudato Si’* ultimately as an expansion of the theology of the body can provide a much needed social context for a personalist view of marriage that too often ends up sounding almost entirely closed in on itself. Many authors have criticized the theology of the body along these lines. The personalist account of marriage and sexuality tends to, in the words of David

McCarthy, “lack social complexity.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, we may add, it lacks environmental complexity. Thus, Francis’s work expands this theology of the body not only to a social understanding but also to an ecological one.

Second, linking the understanding of the body in the work of Francis and John Paul II provides a connection to cut across some ideological divides in the Catholic Church. The importance of this claim rests first on my own concern regarding the increasing polarization present not only in American culture and politics but also, even more disturbingly, among American Catholics. The observation also relies on my experience with many Catholic young people that “theology of the body Catholics” tend not to be “*Laudato Si*’ Catholics.” Certainly there are exceptions, but it seems that faithful Catholics generally tend either toward listening to Christopher West talks or toward advocating for environmental policy change but not both. As a result, this theological connection might serve as a meeting point in the attempt to overcome ideology. This overcoming of ideologies provides a fitting way to end an essay on encounter precisely because encounter entails experiencing each person in his or her own fullness. **M**

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<sup>60</sup> David Matzko McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 111.

## The Catholic Worker Farm in Lincoln County, West Virginia, 1970-1990: An Experiment in Sustainable Community

William J. Collinge

**I**N 1975, DOROTHY DAY WROTE, “It will be Chuck Smith, in West Virginia, who will be writing about agronomic universities or farming communes—that aspect of Peter [Maurin]’s program that we New Yorkers have never been able to get off the ground.”<sup>1</sup> This paper discusses Chuck Smith, on whom Day pinned her hopes, and the Catholic Worker farm in West Virginia that he cofounded.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic Worker movement had just come into being in 1933 through the encounter of Day, a journalist and activist who had become Catholic in 1927 and was searching for a way to combine her faith with her social commitments, and Peter Maurin, a French-born wandering self-styled “agitator,” who was steeped in French and English Catholic social thought as well as European secular radicalism.<sup>3</sup> “Peter Maurin came to me,” Day wrote, “with Kropotkin in one pocket and St. Francis in the other.”<sup>4</sup> In Day, he saw someone who could help him put his program to build “a new society within the shell of the old”<sup>5</sup> (an anarchist slogan) into practice. He expressed his ideals in little treatises written in sense lines, which he would declaim or distribute; these were later dubbed “Easy Essays.” Maurin’s program had three components: (1) round-table discussions for the clarification of thought; (2) houses of hospitality, to give food and shelter to the poor

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, January 1975, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the research for this paper was done in the Dorothy Day – Catholic Worker Archives, Rayner Memorial Libraries, Marquette University. I wish to thank Phil Runkel, Archivist, for much help over the years. I wish also to thank Xandy Adams for his detailed reply to my inquiries. My attempts to contact Chuck Smith were unsuccessful.

<sup>3</sup> See Jim Forest, *All Is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 96-110.

<sup>4</sup> Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, February 1974, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Maurin, *Radical Christian Thought: Easy Essays*, ed. Chuck Smith (West Virginia: Catholic Worker Farm, 1973), 23.

and unemployed; and (3) farming communes or “agronomic universities.” In Day, he saw the person who could put his ideas into practice. They became the core of the Catholic Worker movement.

The idea of round-table discussions gave rise to the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, first published in New York in May 1933 and continuing to appear every month or two, as well as to discussions and lecture series at the Catholic Worker houses in New York and elsewhere. Houses of hospitality began later in 1933, when homeless people from the surrounding Lower East Side neighborhood came to Day’s apartment above the Worker office, and continue to this day in Catholic Worker soup kitchens and lodging for the homeless across the country.<sup>6</sup>

It is relatively easy to found a discussion group and to provide shelter for the homeless, and in 1933 even founding a newspaper was within reach for those determined to do it. But Maurin’s farming communes or “agronomic universities” were an aim of a different order, far more grandiose, a vision meant to replace modern industrial society and solve its problems. Maurin sometimes called his ideal the “Green Revolution,” in contrast to the Red Revolution of Communism. His image of farming communes drew on the peasant village where he was born,<sup>7</sup> combined with an idealized version of medieval monasticism.<sup>8</sup> The communes would be educational centers and worship centers; there people would find meaningful work and there would be no unemployment. One such group would be college graduates who could not find work. According to one of Maurin’s Easy Essays:

On Farming Communes:  
unemployed college graduates  
will be taught  
how to build their house,  
how to gather their fuel,  
how to raise their food,  
how to make their furniture;  
that is to say,

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<sup>6</sup> Day, *House of Hospitality* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939).

<sup>7</sup> Maurin (1877-1949) was born in the village of Ouletet, department of Lozère, then in the region of Languedoc (now Occitanie). The best biography of him is Dorothy Day, with Francis J. Sicius, *Peter Maurin: Apostle to the World* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004). Sicius edited and supplemented a manuscript by Day.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Collinge, “Peter Maurin’s Ideal of Farming Communes,” *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, ed. William Thorn, Phillip Runkel, and Susan Mountin (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2001), 393-95. See also Day and Sicius, *Peter Maurin*, 123-36.

how to employ themselves.

...  
 On Farming Communes:  
 unemployed college graduates  
 will learn to use  
 both their hands  
 and their heads.<sup>9</sup>

Prayer, study, and work—or, as Maurin put it, “cult, culture, and cultivation”—would be joined harmoniously. Maurin had relatively little to say about farming as such, but he favored an organic, labor-intensive approach, much at odds with the mechanized, chemical-intensive approach already taking hold among American farmers.<sup>10</sup> The farms should be self-sufficient; “Eat what you raise and raise what you eat,” he said.<sup>11</sup>

The New York Catholic Worker community tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to create an “agronomic university.” The first serious attempt was a farm at Easton, Pennsylvania, founded in 1936. Beset throughout its existence by a shortage of people able and willing to do the actual work of farming, it collapsed in dissension in 1947.<sup>12</sup> A farm at Newburgh, New York, from 1947 to 1955 functioned mainly as a retreat house. In 1964 the Worker bought a large, decrepit estate in Tivoli, New York, capable of housing about seventy people. Some farming was done there, and retreats and conferences held there, but, like Easton, this community soon became a “house of hospitality on the land,” in Day’s words. Moreover, it ran afoul of the social dislocations of the 1960s, including drug use and sexual experimentation of various kinds. Discouraged, Day wrote in 1967, “It has been a particularly bad summer, with so many young people using the place as a ‘pad’ who do not even know the CW, but are just referred to us as though we were diggers or hippies.”<sup>13</sup> Agronomic universities were coming to seem to her an impossible ideal.

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Maurin, *Radical Christian Thought: Easy Essays*, ed. Chuck Smith (West Virginia: Catholic Worker Farm, 1973), 47-48.

<sup>10</sup> Collinge, “Peter Maurin’s Ideal,” 395-96.

<sup>11</sup> Day, *The Long Loneliness* (California: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981 [1952]), 176.

<sup>12</sup> For a succinct account of the Easton farm, see Forest, *All Is Grace*, 144-149.

<sup>13</sup> Day, letter to Charles Butterworth, August 11, 1967, in Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2010), 337. Other Catholic Worker communities had little to no more success with farming than had the New York community. The Worker community eventually sold the Tivoli property in 1978. In 1979, the community purchased a small farm near Marlboro, New York, which they named “Peter Maurin Farm.” It has been maintained by Tom Cornell and his family since 1993. It takes in a few short- and long-term guests and provides vegetables for the New York houses, but it is not the site of any sort of educational program. I am grateful to one of the blind reviewers of this paper for correcting my account of the Marlboro farm.

### CHUCK SMITH

Letters from Chuck Smith in West Virginia began to reach Day late in 1969,<sup>14</sup> rekindling her hopes that Maurin's plan might be realized after all. Born in Kansas in 1941, Charles Edward "Chuck" Smith had been a Capuchin lay brother at Cumberland, MD, for five years before coming as a VISTA volunteer<sup>15</sup> to Ridgeview, Boone County, West Virginia: "I came to West Virginia in 1967 to work with several other young organizers under the direction of Jim Somerville, a Presbyterian minister, whose prophetic vision of justice for the Appalachian poor reminds one of Jeremiah."<sup>16</sup> Smith came to reject capitalism, "seeing how the coal and chemical interests had made West Virginia a domestic colony for exploitation," and his work for VISTA had soured him on governmental solutions to poverty and hence on socialism.<sup>17</sup> He was dissatisfied, he later told William Miller, because community organizers had "purely economic aims."<sup>18</sup> While at Ridgeview, he took out a subscription to the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and ordered a copy of Peter Maurin's Easy Essays. As he said to Miller:

When I read it Peter synthesized all my ideas for me in that book, and what I really felt made sense was given perspective and so I guess right then I knew that probably the best way to deal with the major social and economic problems of Appalachee [sic] was to try and demonstrate alternatives such as he suggested, especially in his model of cult, culture, and cultivation.<sup>19</sup>

Smith saw a major problem of Appalachian people as disenfranchisement, the sense that they had no say in the conditions within which they lived and worked. And the Catholic Worker ideals of personalism and decentralism responded to that situation:

I think the idea of personalism and decentralism, which I think are the key underlying philosophy or theory of Catholic Worker thought, answer the most basic problem of human alienation that's pretty much basic to all times. ... Take personal responsibility, and see that people

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<sup>14</sup> The first is dated November 12 (Marquette University Archives, Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection, DD-CW, W-4, File 423, folder 20).

<sup>15</sup> VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) was founded in 1965 under President Lyndon Johnson as a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps. Volunteers contributed to anti-poverty projects, chiefly educational. It was later merged into AmeriCorps.

<sup>16</sup> Chuck Smith, "Buffalo Creek Flood," *The Green Revolution*, no. 14 (March 1972), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, "Starting a Farm Commune," *The Catholic Worker*, September 1970, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Transcript of Interview of Chuck Smith, Marge Hughes, and Sandy Adams by William E. Miller, DD-CW, Series W-9.4, Box 1, Folder 40, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Miller, DD-CW, Series W-9.4, Box 1, Folder 40, p. 19-20.

working together, and taking that responsibility, and developing voluntarily an interdependent community. That's the start for answering the problem I think people face. ... The decentralization too. If we work toward things in a decentralized mindset, and put people in a situation or seeing people in a situation where you think the people are going to live better lives or live in better situations then we're going to have to develop work [?] where people really have some control of how they're living, what they're doing, what they're saying.<sup>20</sup>

### ***THE GREEN REVOLUTION/THE MOUNTAIN WORKER***

Like the New York community, the West Virginia community began with a newspaper, called *The Green Revolution*. The first, undated issue<sup>21</sup> appeared from Ridgeview late in 1969, with Chuck Smith on the masthead as Publisher, Bill Schmitt as Editor, and Susie Greene as Art Editor.<sup>22</sup> Two thousand copies were printed.<sup>23</sup>

In the first issue, Smith writes a brief manifesto for "Peter Maurin's Green Revolution." The revolution is to be nonviolent and to proceed not by "controlling great masses of people," but by "changing the point of view of individuals." It is to be communitarian, in that "it seeks social and economic reform by building voluntary interdependency with one's neighbors, rather than selling labor to industrialists or depending on the state to employ all." He concludes, "This newspaper is to proclaim the green revolution. It says start now, don't wait another minute."<sup>24</sup>

The newspaper appeared bi-monthly through 1974. In 1975, with issue number 31, its name changed to *The Mountain Worker*. As Sandy Adams later explained, "We wished to avoid confusion with the high tech green revolution of the USA government and there was also a very good newspaper put out by the SCHOOL OF LIVING in Heathcote, Maryland at that time also called THE GREEN REVOLUTION."<sup>25</sup> (The School of Living was founded by followers of Ralph

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<sup>20</sup> Transcribed from audio recording of interview by Gene Palumbo of Dan Hoffman and Chuck Smith, July 10, 1983, MUA-DD-CW 00581.

<sup>21</sup> The Catholic Worker Archives at Marquette University contains a copy of *The Green Revolution Newspaper*, volume 1, number 1, published at Whitesville, Boone County, West Virginia, and printed by Chuck Smith of Ridgeview. Printed on 8½ x 11" paper, it consists entirely of "easy essays" by Peter Maurin, with a cover note by Chuck Smith. It bears no date, and I surmise it predates *The Green Revolution* newspaper that is under discussion here, which started afresh with issue no. 1. See DD-CW, W-4, File 423, Folder 20.

<sup>22</sup> Bill Schmitt later co-founded the farm with Smith. Susie Greene never lived at the farm but remained on the masthead until Issue no. 26, March-April 1974.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, letter to Dorothy Day, November 12, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, "Pete Maurin's Green Revolution," *The Green Revolution* 1, n.d. [1969], 2. As printed, it said "start not"; this was corrected to "start now" when the piece was reprinted in issue no. 30 (November-December 1974), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Sandy Adams and David Buer, "Mountain Worker Returns," *The Mountain Worker* no. 37 (August 1987), 1. The correspondence between Dorothy Day and Chuck Smith

Borsodi,<sup>26</sup> and their *Green Revolution* [without “The”] still exists.)<sup>27</sup> With the change of name, the frequency of the publication dropped to quarterly, but that lasted only a year. After Issue 34, November 1975, twelve years passed before Issue 35 appeared in August 1987. Sandy Adams brought out the last issue, number 42, in May 1989. Most issues were 4-page tabloids, but starting in 1975, issues became either a single broadsheet or a broadsheet wrapped around one or two tabloid pages.<sup>28</sup>

### STARTING A FARM

Issue number 3, still undated but evidently from March 1970, announces that the community has found a farm. Initially Smith looked near Ridgefield, so that he could remain near the people with whom he had been working, but he found a farm in Lincoln County that he could pay for completely with the money he had on hand.

We have bought a 70 acre farm near Hamlin, W. Va. The land is the woodland and mountains at the head of Zirkle’s Branch, on the Mud River. At present enough land is cleared for several acres of garden and fields for grain and hay to feed the goats, pigs and chickens. The main house burned down some time ago; the other house is an old log house which we are rebuilding. There is also an old barn. A clean stream runs down through the farm and two wells supply plenty of cold, clear water. A natural gas well on the property supplies fuel to heat the house.<sup>29</sup>

He was glad, in retrospect, to have left Boone County: “I’ve never been sorry, because it took us out of the coal-mining area which is a sort of violent area; the whole industry breeds . . . violence of all kinds. It took us to an area where we’ve always had good neighbors.”<sup>30</sup>

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shows that Mildred Loomis of the School of Living first raised the issue of the duplication of titles in September of 1972. Noting that Peter Maurin had first suggested the name to her in 1943, she did not insist that the Catholic Workers change the title of their paper. At the time Smith, having recently filed for a second-class mailing permit, did not want to face the complications that a change of name would cause.

<sup>26</sup> On Borsodi, see Collinge, “Peter Maurin’s Ideal,” 390-1.

<sup>27</sup> See [sol-stellaloufarm.com/wp/green-revolution](http://sol-stellaloufarm.com/wp/green-revolution).

<sup>28</sup> The Catholic Worker Collection at Marquette contains a complete run (with a few issues only in photocopy) of *The Green Revolution/The Mountain Worker*, DD-CW, Series W-4.6, Oversize Box 2.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, “West Virginia Farm Commune Follows Catholic Worker Ideals,” *The Green Revolution*, no. 3, n.d. [March 1970], 4.

<sup>30</sup> Transcribed from audio recording of interview by Gene Palumbo of Dan Hoffman and Chuck Smith, July 10, 1983, MUA-DD-CW 00581.

The farm is about forty-six miles from Charleston. If you were to go there from Charleston today, you would take I-64 west to Exit 28 at Milton, then go south on County Road 25, which becomes East Mud River Road. Follow East Mud River Road south to a left turn at Zirkle Branch Road. The distance from I-64 is about fifteen miles. Early on, the farm was sometimes called “Peter Maurin Farm,”<sup>31</sup> but that name did not catch on, perhaps because other Catholic Worker communities were using it as well.

## COMMUNITY

Chuck Smith and Bill Schmitt were the first two at the farm. The Green Revolution of May 1970 reports that three men from California, Tony Thurston, John Larrabee, and Chris Rocca, had joined the community, but the following issue, July 1970, reports that they had returned to California. Late in 1970, Sandy Adams, from Wheeling, came to the farm, where he remained a core member of the community until 1989. Adams had dropped out of West Virginia University in his first year, and like many at the time, he was dedicating himself to opposing the war in Vietnam and searching for community. He was very attracted to the life and work of Mohandas Gandhi, on whom he had written his senior thesis in high school. As Adams, now Xandy,<sup>32</sup> tells the story:

I’d had the idea of a self-sufficient community ever since high school. I continued to hitchhike to Morgantown (WVU) on weekends to continue the volunteer work at the drug counsel that I used to do in college. The drug counsel was then operating out of the office of one of the Maryknoll priests in the Newman Center. He had the first 4 issues of *The Green Revolution* on his desk. I devoured the papers. I said to myself that Peter Maurin is a Christian Gandhi. I began to write to Chuck and Bill. Chuck answered. 3 months later I was at the farm. I had found my ashram.<sup>33</sup>

Formerly a Presbyterian and later a “gnostic,” Adams became Catholic in 1975 “because of the influence of St. Francis of Assisi, James Joyce and Peter Maurin.”<sup>34</sup>

His name first appears in the January 1971 issue, as do those of Tom Bizot, a tree expert from Louisville who had been at the Tivoli farm, and Dave DeVries, a skillful baker. Writing the farm column in the July 1971 *Green Revolution*, DeVries reported that Bill Schmitt

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, in *The Catholic Worker*, March-April 1971, 4.

<sup>32</sup> After leaving the farm, Sandy Adams changed his first name to Xandy.

<sup>33</sup> Xandy Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016. The priests at the Newman Center were Paulist rather than Maryknoll. My thanks to Fathers John Finnell and Walter Jagela of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston for this correction.

<sup>34</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

had had an accident and cut his thumb severely and was going to go to Austria or Germany to work with Presbyterian Volunteer Missions.<sup>35</sup> Around the same time, Tom Bizot left to work as a naturalist in a state park. A letter from Smith to Dorothy Day, dated June 21, 1971, tells a somewhat different story:

We had a tragic occurrence here .... Bill Schmitt, who helped me start both the farm and the newspaper, got into an argument with one of the men who came to live with us as to whether or not we should give some of our books to the public library, and the man hit Bill with a knife, cut his head then his hand. Fortunately the injury was not too serious. Since the man had demonstrated an uncontrollable anger on several other occasions and it had now reached the degree of violence against other people, I asked him to leave.<sup>36</sup>

Others came and went over the years. Smith wrote in 1971 that they envisaged “not just a farm but a community with a synthesis of thought,” ideally structured as a village,<sup>37</sup> something like that of Peter Maurin’s childhood. A small village of sorts did arise around the original farm, but it was more like a community of homesteads than a peasant village. The February 1975 issue of *The Mountain Worker* reports that Dorothy Day’s granddaughter Maggie Hennessy and her boyfriend, Bill Ragette, moved in nearby and built a new cabin. Likewise, Marge Hughes, a long-time member of the New York Catholic Worker community, began to build a house nearby for herself and her son Johnny.

By late 1975, there were five homesteads in the community. The 78-year-old Dorothy Day visited in early winter, reporting, “I was anxious to have a glimpse of my granddaughter and her baby, and Marge and Johnny Hughes, and Ellie [Krudner] and her new little one, and

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<sup>35</sup> Schmitt was in flight from the draft, and his draft avoidance drew FBI attention to the farm. See Sandy Adams, “The Farm: The FBI Visit or Why They Took So Long to Catch Dan Berrigan or An FBI Agent in Every Mailbox,” *The Green Revolution*, no. 14 (March 1972), 2.

<sup>36</sup> Smith to Dorothy Day, June 21, 1971, DD-CW, W 4, File 423, Folder 20, spelling and punctuation corrected. Xandy Adams (see note 17 and accompanying text), in an email to me dated July 25, 2016, confirms that the “man” was Tom Bizot and adds the detail that the knife was sheathed. Bizot (whose father was my family physician in my childhood) died at 73 in February 2016. His obituary in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* (February 21, 2016), stated, “He marched always to his own drum, to a rhythm that others could not always hear or appreciate; he was steadfast in keeping his course” ([www.legacy.com/obituaries/louisville/obituary.aspx?pid=177754133#sthash.8goizDcO.dpuf](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/louisville/obituary.aspx?pid=177754133#sthash.8goizDcO.dpuf)).

<sup>37</sup> Smith, “Back to the Land: An Alternative for Whom?” *The Green Revolution* no. 12 (November 1971), 1, 2.

Mike Kreyche and little Jessica, and Chuck Smith and Sandy.” She observed that only Chuck’s place could be reached by car, and continues:

The rest of the adjoining land can only be traversed by agile people, of whom I am not one. It was a good visit which satisfied my curiosity. I did not say, however, how much I preferred prairies and deserts and the sea, the sight of horizons and sunrises and sunsets. (I am even glad for our long straight highways.)

But I certainly admire these bold pioneers who have built their own cabins, made their furniture, raised their food. It is good that the very difficulties of their terrain make it impossible for them to be swamped with all the young wanderers, who are searching for another way of life, but at the same time are learning much by their wanderings.<sup>38</sup>

On the original farm, where the main house had burned down, what remained was a small log house and an old barn. Neighbors gave the community a barn to tear down, and they used wood from it to repair the log house. By May of 1970 they were working on a larger house. By September 1972, they had built two new houses, one of which was named by Susie Becker, then a member of the community, “Pepper House,” after the St. Louis Catholic Worker’s “Salt House.” By August 1987 Pepper House was in disrepair.<sup>39</sup> The other house, where the community lived, was known as the Common House.

### CULT, CULTURE, AND CULTIVATION

In 1976, Dorothy Day wrote, “Peter [Maurin] is dead now. He died in May 1949. But his work bears fruit still. Here in the U.S., Chuck Smith in West Virginia amplifies his teachings on decentralism, land use, dedication to the poor—truly what Peter called a new synthesis of Cult, Culture, and Cultivation.”<sup>40</sup> A lot of detail on cultivation can be found in *The Green Revolution/The Mountain Worker*, so I will begin with it before proceeding to cult and culture.

#### *Cultivation*

Like many farms in West Virginia, most of the Catholic Worker farm was too steep for plowing. Of the farm’s seventy acres, fewer than ten could be cultivated. By late 1970, Smith reports the community was growing food for themselves and their livestock on about three acres. The garden produced beans, potatoes, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, radishes, and salad greens. An acre was used to grow

<sup>38</sup> Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, December 1975, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Sandy Adams, “Around the Gardens,” *The Mountain Worker* no. 35 (August 1987), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, May 1976, 2.

corn for the livestock. The remainder of the plot was wooded, primarily with oak, hickory, and pine. The farm came with a few fruit trees and berry bushes as well as pawpaws, which, according to Smith, tasted like “cantaloupe that has had 7-Up poured over it.”<sup>41</sup> An early effort to expand the orchard failed, with twelve of fourteen new trees dying.

Aside from the pawpaws, this information comes from Smith’s long, upbeat, *Mother Earth News*-style article in *The Catholic Worker* of September 1970, “Starting a Farm Commune.”<sup>42</sup> The following excerpt on goats gives the flavor of it:

Animals make many demands on the community. They keep somebody at the farm every day. If your community is small this can be very burdensome. We got three dairy goats about a month after we started our farm. They require that someone be here twice a day to milk and feed them.

If you decide to take on the responsibility of animals, goats are ideal. They cost less than cows and require less space, pasture and feed. Here in West Virginia you can buy four or five excellent dairy goats for the price of one grade dairy cow. These goats will require about the same amount of feed as one cow and just a little more housing space and pasture. While each goat gives less than a cow, you will be able to afford more of them and will get the same amount or more milk.

The community raised goats for most of the time the farm was in operation. Issue number 22 (July 1973) reports nine goats, while issue number 32 (May 1975) simply says “too many.” In 1987 there were still eight. From July 1971, at least, there were chickens too, beginning with ten but down to five in January of 1972.<sup>43</sup> An old Gravelly tractor was used for cultivation. The farm acquired donkeys, but plans to use them to replace the tractor never came to fruition.<sup>44</sup>

The initial hope had been for the farm to be able to feed its community. By 1972, it had become clear to Smith that self-sufficiency was not attainable:

As a farm we are completely capable of providing for the 3 of us who live here, but not for the many visitors we have. So I no longer see subsistence farming as our primary goal. The way we live and the witness we seek to give to the Gospel is itself an invitation for others to

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Adams, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution*, no. 15 (May 1972), 2.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, “Starting a Farm Commune,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1970, 4-6. See also Bill Schmitt, “Goats,” *The Green Revolution* no. 3, n.d. [March 1970], 3.

<sup>43</sup> Adams, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution*, no. 13 (January 1972), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Adams, “Around the Gardens,” *The Mountain Worker*, no. 35 (August 1987), 2.

visit us and expect help and support from us. This demands more food than we can possibly supply at some times of the year.

So it seems that hospitality may be the reason we never become completely self-sufficient. But the Gospel presents hospitality, not self-reliance, as a way for the follower of Jesus, so it is an easy choice to make.<sup>45</sup>

Adams recalls:

Once, when we were visiting the Farm in Tivoli, Dorothy Day said to us, something like, “You guys are so active in the community, it’s amazing that you have anytime to farm. Just do a good job farming, and God will send the martyrs.” So, we eventually did do a good job farming, often at times, we were able to grow everything we ate, used firewood to keep warm, and sold goat cheese for what we couldn’t produce from the land. I had even started making clothes from angora goat mohair.<sup>46</sup>

### *Cult*

Catholic faith and a gospel spirituality of discipleship were central to Smith’s understanding of the farm experiment, but when the farm was founded, the nearest Catholic church was thirty-five miles away, and regular attendance at liturgy was difficult. In 1976, partly at the instigation of the Catholic Workers, the diocese established Christ in the Hills Parish, initially staffed by Jesuits, in Griffithsville,<sup>47</sup> twelve miles away, to which community members could bicycle. In keeping with Peter Maurin’s vision, community members attempted a structured prayer life at the farm. In January 1972, Adams states that they are starting community prayer meetings in addition to the divine office.<sup>48</sup> As more people came during 1972, Smith describes changes to the prayer practice:

One of our first roundtable discussions this summer dealt with the form of our community prayer. Out of that discussion came a plan of prayer which replaced the Matins, Lauds and Vespers we were saying with a more versatile arrangement of psalms. We now say 3 psalms and morning prayers soon after we get up. We read from the Bible during part of the noon meal and we say 3 psalms and evening prayers before we retire. We also have Scripture services on special occasions. In this we are seeking a more spontaneous prayer life that reflects the life of our community.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, “West Virginia,” letter to *Catholic Worker*, September 1972, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> It was later moved to Hamlin and was closed in the 1990s (email to author from Rev. John H. Finnell, former pastor of Christ in the Hills, February 4, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Adams, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution* no. 13 (January 1972), 1.

<sup>49</sup> Letter to *Catholic Worker*, September 1972, 5.

As of January 1974, Smith writes that they “try to pray as a community every day.”<sup>50</sup> By 1988, David Buer reports that they “gather regularly for morning and evening prayers.”<sup>51</sup> Adams says that was a revival of earlier practice; I do not know for how long there was no scheduled communal prayer. He adds that he supported the resumption of the daily office but “was upset when the ‘religious’ guys begged metal chairs for a prayer circle when we could/should have built the furniture ourselves.”<sup>52</sup>

### *Culture*

To what extent was the farm an “agronomic university”? The paper, of course, could teach people about farming and other subjects. At the farm, personal study and group discussions occurred often, but only two attempts were made at formal programs. These, called Summer Seminars, took place June 14-18, 1971, and August 14-18, 1972. The 1971 seminar was judged “successful” in the July 1971 issue of *The Green Revolution*, but no detail is given except that ten people attended. The 1972 seminar, labeled “Catholic Worker Farming Seminar,” was more ambitious. The program was:

#### Round-Table Discussions

1. Peter Maurin’s Synthesis of Thought
2. Planning a Farm
3. Appalachian People’s History

#### Afternoon Workshops

1. Wild Foods
2. Tree Use and Log Cabin Building
3. Gardening Organically
4. Baking in a Fireplace and Cheesemaking
5. Simple Nutrition

#### Scripture Study

The Gospel According to Saint Mark.<sup>53</sup>

Reviews were mixed. In *The Green Revolution*, Margy Henderson wrote, “The seminar is hard for me to write about.” She couldn’t say

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution* no. 25 (January 1974), 1.

<sup>51</sup> David Buer, “The Commonhouse,” *The Mountain Worker* no. 37 (February 1988), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Email to author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> “Catholic Worker Farming Seminar,” *The Green Revolution* no. 16 (July 1972), 3.

whether it went well or not. She found the workshops “rather disorganized,” but observed that “people seemed to enjoy” the seminar.<sup>54</sup> In a letter to Dorothy Day dated August 21, 1972, Smith gives more detail:

Our summer seminar went very well this year and I feel that there was a lot of learning. But we did not reach the community spirit that developed between the people attending that we had last year. This year during the seminar we had some visitors who detracted from that spirit by always running into town and showing little interest in what we were trying to do together.

He added that the day after the seminar he discovered that all the money (\$90-100) for the next issue of *The Green Revolution* was missing. He concludes, “The money was probably taken by one of our visitors who needs it more than we do.”<sup>55</sup>

After 1972, the community did not attempt another seminar but kept its educational efforts small and personal. Dorothy Day described them thus in 1975:

Joined by Sandy soon after he started, Chuck has purposely kept small. Compelled by visitors, they were forced to build a guest house, which holds only two. No-one is encouraged to take over for their own that visitor’s room. The readers of **The Mountain Worker** (until now **The Green Revolution**) visit for discussion or clarification of their own thinking. They participate briefly in the work and go on their way, perhaps more committed to a new way of life.<sup>56</sup>

An educational effort of a different sort was the publication of a booklet of Peter Maurin’s “Easy Essays” in May 1973. The booklet, forty-eight pages long, was edited by Smith and featured a preface by Dorothy Day and a cover by Susie Greene.<sup>57</sup>

### STRIP MINING AND LAND TRUST

Movements were afoot in the early 1970s to introduce strip mining to Lincoln County, and Smith and Adams were active in opposition groups, as described in detail by Jinny Turman.<sup>58</sup> An important meeting gathered at the farm in September 1974. Participants drafted the

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<sup>54</sup> Margy Henderson, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution* no. 17 (September 1972), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to *Catholic Worker*, September 1972, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, February 1975, 2 (boldface in original).

<sup>57</sup> Peter Maurin, *Radical Christian Thought: Easy Essays*, ed. Chuck Smith (West Virginia: Catholic Worker Farm, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Jinny A. Turman, “The Catholic Workers and ‘Green’ Civic Republicanism in Lincoln County, WV: 1969-1979,” in this issue, pp. 99- 119.

charter of a land trust, “Trust in the Hills,” which comprised the Catholic Worker farm and five other tracts. A land trust holds land in perpetuity. As Adams wrote, “Once land is accepted into the land trust it cannot be rented, sold, mortgaged, sub-leased, or given away. It is the hope of those involved in the trust that taking land entirely out of speculation will encourage others to see land as a heritage, a common resource.”<sup>59</sup> The bylaws of the trust specified “that the land must be used ecologically, that the trust be used to provide access to land by the landless poor, and that the trust promote various forms of land reform.”<sup>60</sup> Paul Salstrom, one of the organizers of the trust, a back-to-the-lander with roots in Ralph Borsodi’s School for Living movement who had a property in Myra, twelve miles south of the Catholic Worker farm, noted, “Into the land trust charter was written a clause that any ecologic threat to the watershed above one of those tracts, especially strip-mining, would be considered grounds, on our part, for unified, nonviolent, direct action, including civil disobedience.”<sup>61</sup> The trust survived only until 1977.<sup>62</sup>

#### INVOLVEMENT IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WEST VIRGINIA AND APPALACHIA

At least for Smith, involvement in social issues off the farm increasingly took the place of bringing people to the farm. In November 1973, Adams wrote of Smith’s activity in the social apostolate of the diocese. The diocese in question was that of Wheeling, which encompassed the entire state of West Virginia as well as Wise County, Virginia. (The following year it was renamed Wheeling-Charleston, and Wise County was reassigned to the diocese of Richmond, Virginia.) “All this traveling,” Adams wrote, “makes it more difficult to maintain the farm, let alone progress toward self-sufficiency.”<sup>63</sup>

Between 1973 and 1975, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, centered in West Virginia, worked on a groundbreaking pastoral letter in the name of the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia. Called *This Land Is Home to Me*, it was issued in 1975. The letter drew on liberation theology and Catholic Worker decentralism in addressing the feeling, widespread in Appalachia, that the common people were powerless

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<sup>59</sup> Adams, “Land Trust: To Reap a Harvest of Peace,” *The Catholic Worker*, May 1975, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Adams, “Land Trust,” 7.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Salstrom, “Trust in the Hills,” *The Catholic Worker*, February 1975, 1.

<sup>62</sup> See Turman, “The Catholic Workers and ‘Green’ Civic Republicanism,” and also Turman, “‘To Strike a Fair Balance’: The Peacemakers and the Community Land Trust Movement in West Virginia, 1970-1982,” forthcoming in *West Virginia History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2017).

<sup>63</sup> Adams, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution* no. 24 (November 1973), 2.

against large, external influences such as the coal companies.<sup>64</sup> Although not part of the drafting team of the letter, whose chief writer was the lay theologian Joe Holland, Smith and Adams were involved in the evaluation of its successive drafts and in encouraging the bishops to publish it. Adams writes, “I typed up a lot of the letter using the same format that we had used to publish Peter’s Easy Essays and was involved in the discussions of the draft.”<sup>65</sup>

By 1975, Smith had become increasingly involved with Catholic Community Services in West Virginia. He noted in the August 1975 issue of the *Mountain Worker* that he was “on the road a lot with church activities.”<sup>66</sup> By 1976, he had become Chair of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia. Issue number 34 of *The Mountain Worker*, dated November 1975, took a broad focus on the churches of Appalachia, including an article by Smith, “Catholic Ministry and Witness in Rural Appalachia,” and devoted only about one of its five<sup>67</sup> pages to the activities of the farm. The next issue of *The Mountain Worker* did not appear until twelve years later. At some point, Smith began to study for the permanent diaconate, to which he was ordained in 1979. An article in *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 27, 1981, portrays him as a deacon and indicates that he was leaving Catholic Community Services to work in a parish.<sup>68</sup>

## HOMOSEXUALITY

The story of the farm is incomplete unless it is told as the story of a gay household. According to Adams, Smith and Adams’s sexual relationship began, at Smith’s instigation, on the first night that Adams spent at the farm. “Six months or so later, Chuck asked me to marry him.”<sup>69</sup> The relationship was known to friends, and Adams noted vaguely in the March 1972 issue of *The Green Revolution*, “I feel that we are more aware of controversy which will arise in the community

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<sup>64</sup> Alyssa R. Pasternak Post describes the development, content, and impact of this document in “‘Dare to Speak’: *This Land Is Home to Me* from Idea to Promulgation (May 1973 – February 1975) and Beyond,” (Master of Arts thesis, University of Dayton, 2011). On the content of the document, see also Chuck Smith, “The Church of the Poor,” in *Redemption Denied*, ed. Edward Guinan (Washington, DC: Appalachian Documentation, 1976), 87-90.

<sup>65</sup> Maurin’s *Easy Essays* may have been a model for the letter, but Pasternak Post identifies the immediate model as R. V. Bogan’s *This Is Progress*. That work, originally published in 1967, is available at [www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/This-is-Progress.pdf](http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/This-is-Progress.pdf) in a 2006 reprint that is not in sense lines, but earlier editions, e.g., Chicago: Claretian Publications, 1974, are in sense lines.

<sup>66</sup> Adams, “The Farm,” *The Mountain Worker* no. 33 (August 1975), 1.

<sup>67</sup> Page 1 is a wraparound broadsheet; pages 2 and 5 are on its reverse side, with pages 3 and 4 on a tabloid sheet.

<sup>68</sup> A clipping is contained in Catholic Worker Archives, DD-CW, W4, File 423, folder 20.

<sup>69</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

over sexual and/or political morals.”<sup>70</sup> It became more widely known only when Adams, writing in a directory of Catholic Worker houses and farms in the May 1988 *Catholic Worker*, stated that the ministry of the West Hamlin farm, then called “Catholic Worker Gardens,” was “storming heaven for more recognition of gay, lesbian and women’s rights in the Catholic Worker movement and the church.”<sup>71</sup> This was the first public endorsement of gay rights in the *Worker*, which had been torn since around 1985 over homosexuality, a conflict that triggered the departure of several long-term Workers, notably Peggy Scherer.<sup>72</sup> Adams comments on his statement and on the conflict in New York in the August 1988 issue of *The Mountain Worker*, arguing that workers must “acknowledge the gay roots of this community and the major gay and lesbian contribution to this community.”<sup>73</sup>

By then Smith had moved on, both from the farm and from Adams. The story, as Adams tells it, is the story of a divorce, and I have only one partner’s side of it. Adams wrote in *The Mountain Worker*:

In winter of 83/84 Chuck started spending even more time in Charleston pursuing ‘true love’ and also expanding the exterior academic life he’d returned to as a diaconate candidate. Chuck talked of leaving the farm. There were just the 2 of us there then, and it didn’t seem as if anyone was going to be coming anytime soon and I didn’t want to face the prospect of being left all alone with all the animals. ‘I’m not into platonic bestiality,’ I said, so I went to the CW farm in Sheepbranch, CA to sort out what I wanted to do, what I was capable of doing and to develop other avenues for living a life integrating cult, culture, and cultivation, if need be.<sup>74</sup>

Decades later he wrote to me that sometime during their last three years together, Chuck started bringing other partners home, and that in 1983-84, Smith “fell in love” with a man named Doug and moved to Charleston.<sup>75</sup> Adams spent about a year at Sheep Ranch (as it is now spelled), during which Smith visited him, “leading me to believe that

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<sup>70</sup> Adams, “The Farm,” *The Green Revolution* no. 14 (March 1972), 2.

<sup>71</sup> *The Catholic Worker*, May 1988, 7.

<sup>72</sup> The controversy over homosexuality at the New York Catholic Worker and more broadly within the Catholic Worker movement (including the West Hamlin farm) is the subject of a chapter, “The Conflict over Homosexuality,” in Rosalie Riegler Troester’s oral history *Voices from the Catholic Worker* (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1993), 525-544.

<sup>73</sup> Adams, “Refusing Us the Water (or Why I Did It),” *The Mountain Worker* no. 39 (August 1988), 1.

<sup>74</sup> Adams, “Bridge over Time,” *The Mountain Worker* no. 35 (August 1987), 4 (spelling corrected).

<sup>75</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

he was taking me back to West Virginia, but it was to say goodbye.”<sup>76</sup> Adams continued in *The Mountain Worker*:

The people at the farm in CA were able to support me to where I would allow God’s holy and bright Ghost to strengthen and heal me. I began to realize that Chuck would no longer develop the WV place as a CW community, and also ironically knew that the very people [who] loved me deeply were providing the ability and sense of obligation that would cause me to leave them. At that time, rejecting involvement at the WV farm meant to me rejecting Peter Maurin, so I returned.<sup>77</sup>

In 1985, “Ric Kola (Smith)”<sup>78</sup> came to the farm with a group of people from Ohio who were interested in moving there. The others soon left, but Ric Kola stayed and became Adams’s lover for a couple of years. The community was later joined by a couple, Beth and Gary, as well as by a lay Benedictine, Joe Gregory, and a Franciscan, David Buer.<sup>79</sup> Buer differed with Adams on the morality of homosexual activity. “We had the whole year [while I was in West Virginia] to discuss the issue,” he told Rosalie Riegle Troester, “and it was good. ... I think the healthy thing to do is to continue discussing it.” But Buer’s mind was not changed about homosexual activity or, for that matter, about heterosexual activity outside of marriage. He continued, “I might be called conservative or whatever, but I have a strong sense that God will not bless that.”<sup>80</sup> He went on, in a portion of the interview that is not included in the book, “If you have people who aren’t committed to monogamy, I would say it’s going to cause a lot of problems.” Riegle Troester asked him, “So what do you do? Do you ask these people to leave?” Buer responded,

No. I think the houses will just die. If the main person in the house ... and I think that’s something that happened at the Catholic Worker farm [in West Virginia.] The community never developed there. There was a homosexual couple there for how many years ... until 1984. And then the relationship broke up, and it almost stopped at that point, but Sandy had a definite commitment ... to give the Peter Maurin vision a go again on the land. But always with this hoping that a rela-

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<sup>76</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>77</sup> Adams, “Bridge over Time,” 4.

<sup>78</sup> This is how Adams gives his name in his email to me of July 7, 2016. Uncertain of his formal name, I will refer to him as Ric Kola in what follows.

<sup>79</sup> Brother David Buer, OFM, is now the Director of Poverello House, a ministry to the homeless in Tucson, Arizona.

<sup>80</sup> Riegle Troester, *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 536.

tionship would develop once again [for instance, I add, his relationship with Ric Kola]. And it didn't happen and it died. And that was one of the longest term farms.<sup>81</sup>

### THE END OF THE FARM COMMUNITY

Sexuality was not the only area of dissension among the last people at the farm. Other issues included religious practice and the use of marijuana. Adams quotes a friend, Gayle Catinella, "Jesus Christ could not make a community of these 6 people."<sup>82</sup> Adams decided to move to Sheep Ranch, hoping to leave the farm to Beth and Gary, but they announced they were leaving because they could not get along with Ric Kola. Adams had explored the possibility of finding a church that would hold the land in trust,<sup>83</sup> but, after the departure of Joe Gregory in 1990, Adams and Smith sold the farm to Ric Kola for the amount that Smith had paid for it back in 1969. "Last heard of Ric was living on the farm with a partner. For a while, Ric was calling the farm Universal Worker Gardens instead of Catholic Worker Gardens. Eventually it was Universal Gardens. It may still be Universal Gardens."<sup>84</sup> Bill Ragette and Maggie Hennessy remained on an adjoining farm at least until 1992 (Maggie was still there in 2011, Jinny Turman reports),<sup>85</sup> but they never considered themselves Catholic Workers.

### AFTERWARD

Smith's studies for the diaconate stimulated his interest in formal education. He completed a bachelor's degree at West Virginia State University and then went on for a master's in political science at the University of New Mexico and a doctorate at the University of Kentucky. He returned to West Virginia State and taught political science there until his retirement several years ago. He lives in Charleston. Adams moved to Sheep Ranch and "exchanged covenant vows"<sup>86</sup> with Kelvin Yee on November 5, 1994 (same-sex marriage was not then legal in California). He lives in Stockton, CA, where he teaches hearing-impaired students.

### *What to Make of It All?*

The Lincoln County farm never succeeded in realizing Peter Maurin's expansive ideal of an agronomic university, but then neither did

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<sup>81</sup> David Buer, transcript of interview by Rosalie Riegle Troester, 24 August 1989 (DD-CW, Series W-9.4, Box 3, Folder 5).

<sup>82</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>83</sup> Adams to David Buer, November 10, 1988 (DD-CW, W-57, Box 1, Folder 1).

<sup>84</sup> Adams, email to author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> In conversation, October 21, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Announcement in Sandy Adams correspondence in DD-CW, Series W-11, Box 1.

any other Catholic Worker community. Nor did Chuck Smith “write [the book] on agronomic universities or farming communes,” as Dorothy Day had hoped. The farm, although “one of the longest term farms,” as Buer put it, did not last as long as some other Catholic Worker farms, such as those at Sheep Ranch and at Marlboro, NY. It foundered, probably, due to having too little arable land and too small a community. According to Adams, “During its best moments, the farm could deal with about 8 people and seemed to function best when about half of them were women,” but such numbers were rarely attained. Judging from what Adams told me,<sup>87</sup> the line between community membership and sexual relationship with community leaders was not as well observed as in Catholic Worker houses centered on long-term married couples, and this sort of blurring of boundaries is inherently hazardous.<sup>88</sup>

And yet the farm survived for twenty years. Is its story anything more than the story of a few romantics failing at farming? In 1995, the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia issued a sequel to *This Land Is Home to Me*, titled *At Home in the Web of Life*.<sup>89</sup> Its theme was “sustainable communities.” Such communities, the document says, “are communities where people and the rest of nature can live together in harmony and not rob future generations.”<sup>90</sup> They will:

- conserve and not waste,
- be simpler but better,
- keep most resources circulating locally,
- create sustainable livelihoods,
- support family life,
- protect the richness of nature,
- develop people spiritually,
- and follow God’s values.<sup>91</sup>

Though it was more effective in achieving some of these aims than others, we might look on the West Hamlin farm as an experiment in sustainable community. Among the document’s subheads under “Sustainable Communities,” the farm certainly practiced “sustainable agriculture,” growing its own food without harming the land or its people.<sup>92</sup> It practiced “sustainable forestry,”<sup>93</sup> avoiding clear-cutting and

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<sup>87</sup> Email of July 7, 2016.

<sup>88</sup> See, for instance, Michael Downing, *Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at the San Francisco Zen Center* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2001).

<sup>89</sup> The two documents are published together in a booklet available from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, 885 Orchard Run, Spencer, WV 25276. Page references are to that booklet.

<sup>90</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 43

<sup>91</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 82.

<sup>92</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 85.

<sup>93</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 86.

preserving the forest's biodiversity. It made an attempt at "sustainable ownership"<sup>94</sup> through the land trust, an arrangement praised in *At Home in the Web of Life*, although Trust in the Hills was short-lived. It sought to use "sustainable technologies,"<sup>95</sup> which did not damage the local environment and were labor-intensive rather than energy-intensive. The community never had the resources to become an "agronomic university," in Peter Maurin's sense, to which others would come to study. Instead it extended its Catholic Worker vision to the larger community of region and church through its newspaper, through Smith and Adams's activism against strip mining and for land conservation, and through their work with the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and the Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

I say all of this as a historian and theologian. What did those who lived there say of it? I know only of Xandy Adams's retrospective judgment. Agreeing that the project was an experiment, he closed the narrative he sent me with the words of Tony Arata, sung by Garth Brooks:

And now I'm glad I didn't know  
The way it all would end the way it all would go  
Our lives are better left to chance  
I could have missed the pain  
But I'd have had to miss the dance.<sup>96</sup> **M**

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<sup>94</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 87.

<sup>95</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *At Home in the Web of Life*, 87.

<sup>96</sup> Email to author, July 7, 2016. Lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., EMI Music Publishing, Royalty Network, Universal Music Publishing Group.

## The Catholic Workers and “Green” Civic Republicanism in Lincoln County, WV: 1969-1979

Jinny A. Turman

IN AN ESSAY PUBLISHED IN THE NOVEMBER 2016 issue of the *Journal of Southern History*, I argued that during the 1970s and 1980s, a population of “back-to-the-landers” in Lincoln County, West Virginia, developed a “green” civic republican rhetorical strategy to build local support for blocking surface coal mining.<sup>1</sup> Civic republican language, which upheld land-based independence, civic virtue, deliberation, and concern for the common good as central tenets, helped the in-migrants bridge cultural gaps between themselves and native residents.<sup>2</sup> Back-to-the-landers were typically white, middle-class, formerly urban young adults who sought self-sufficiency on small farms. Many had previously been active in 1960s social and anti-war movements, and thus they came with experience in non-violent direct action and participatory democracy. While they often developed close relationships with their native neighbors, their unconventional lifestyles and progressive politics occasionally threatened the conservative county political structure. Over time, the back-to-the-landers adopted new strategies to cope with political resistance from county politicians. Drawing upon a variety of traditions that evoked the spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Jinny A. Turman, “Green Civic Republicanism and Environmental Action in Lincoln County, West Virginia: 1970-1990,” *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 4 (November 2016): 855-900.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent treatment of republican thought in the formation of the United States is Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the United States* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992). On the marginalization of republicanism and the difference between republicanism and liberalism, see Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4-7. This essay relies upon the definition of civic republicanism presented in Stuart White, “The Emerging Politics of Republican Democracy,” in *Building a Citizen Society: The Emerging Politics of Republican Democracy*, eds. Stuart White and Daniel Leighton (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 2008), 8-11. On civic republicanism’s adaptability, particularly for environmentalism, see Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130-138. Regarding the greening of society, see Andy Scerri, “Green Citizenship and the Political Critique of Injustice,” *Citizenship Studies* 17 (2013): 293-307, esp. 293-294 (quotation on 293).

of civic republicanism—including agrarianism, decentralism, and political personalism—by 1980 the back-to-the-landers had learned to plead their case against surface mining and other environmental threats not through marches and protests, but rather by using a rhetorical strategy more familiar to local residents. They spoke of maintaining local political autonomy in light of threats from coal companies, preserving the agricultural character of the community, and protecting open dialog and debate. They also highlighted their civic virtue when faced with charges that non-native “outsiders” had no place in public discourse.

Civic republican ideals shaped political action in the 1970s, particularly regarding environmental protection. In spite of popular perceptions about the decade as self-indulgent and relatively withdrawn from civic engagement, citizens remained actively engaged at both the grassroots and national levels. Scholars like Michael Stewart Foley, Chad Montrie, James Gray Pope, and Hope Babcock, among others, have chronicled a groundswell of political action in the 1960s and 70s that resulted in new protective policies. Pope and Babcock, in fact, characterize this era as a “republican moment,” one that saw “widespread participation in serious political discourse.” Babcock in particular considers how the environmental activism surrounding Earth Day and continuing well into the 1970s fit the republican framework. The demand for corporate and government transparency and the process of deliberation became defining features of many environmental campaigns, and popular involvement in grassroots actions swelled. People fought against what they saw as government overreach as well as corporate greed and control over their lives.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Stewart Foley’s analysis of localized, or “front porch,” politics in the 1970s and 1980s counters the notion that activism ended with the 1960s. Instead, it diffused and became more widespread, particularly at the local level. See Michael Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), 6-11. Montrie contends that a combination of land-based civic republican values and the persistence of a “Lockean doctrine of natural rights” informed native Appalachian resistance of surface coal mining in the 1960s and 1970s. See Chad Montrie, *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 5; James Gray Pope, “Republican Moments: The Role of Direct Popular Power in the American Constitutional Order,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 139, no. 2 (December 1990): 289-368; Hope M. Babcock, “Civic Republicanism Provides Theoretical Support for Making Individuals More Environmentally Responsible,” *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 23 (2009): 518-519. Babcock relies upon Pope’s definition of “republican moment” for which he highlights popular concern for civic virtue and moral decisionmaking for the benefit of the common good, mass participation in political debate, and the emergence of strong social

This latter sentiment was reflected in the Appalachian Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *This Land is Home to Me*. It began by highlighting coal's dominance over local politics and later suggested that dialog inclusive of all Appalachians should be central to forming a more independent and self-sustaining region.<sup>4</sup> While it is incorrect to assert that the region's environmental activists, Catholic Bishops, or any other group consciously identified as civic republican, the nature of political dialog—especially with heightened concern for environmental protection for the common good—and renewed popular concern for systemic problems placed regional activism at the time squarely within the republican tradition.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, many of the era's grassroots campaigns drew upon language familiar to Appalachian natives in order to lend force to arguments for social change. Civic republican ideals of liberty as non-domination, civic virtue, the need for informed decision making, and concern for the common good still resonated, even in the 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

A small group of Catholic Workers became among the first back-to-the-landers to settle in Lincoln County. They arrived in 1969, fresh from antipoverty and antiwar campaigns. As William Collinge notes in his essay "The Catholic Worker Farm in Lincoln County, West Virginia, 1970-1990," the young men who settled on Zirkle's Branch hoped to create an "agronomic university" to implement movement founder Peter Maurin's vision of a society based upon independent, small-scale producers who balanced their labor with study of the Gospel and service to the poor.<sup>7</sup> In my *Journal of Southern History* article I briefly cited Maurin's agrarianism as an influence in the development of green civic republican strategies in Lincoln County. I did not, however, expand upon this idea or question to what extent the Catholic Workers contributed to this new expression of environmental action.

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movements. See Pope, "Republican Moments," 310-311, 313. For an important corrective to the notion of 1970s as a passive and withdrawn decade, see the collection of essays titled, "Rethinking the Seventies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (Oct. 2008): 617-700.

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land is Home to Me: A Pastoral on the Poverty and Powerlessness in Appalachia*, [www.ccappal.org/CCABook040307.pdf](http://www.ccappal.org/CCABook040307.pdf), 16, 34, and 36.

<sup>5</sup> Pope contends that there never was a time in American history when civic republicanism existed in a pure form. Political pluralism and liberal self-interest has always shaped our political landscape, although there are several distinct periods when "autonomy over community, acquisitiveness over civic virtue, and instrumental rationality over moral choice were reversed, albeit only partially and temporarily." See Pope, "Republican Moments," 310-311.

<sup>6</sup> James T. Farrell notes that even "personalist anarchism" of leading reformers like Peter Maurin resonated with popular audiences because "personalists spoke the common languages of religion and civic republicanism." See James Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 259.

<sup>7</sup> William Collinge, "The Catholic Worker Farm in Lincoln County, West Virginia, 1970-1990," *Journal of Moral Theology* 6, Special Issue 1 (2017): 74-93.

While vehemently opposed to surface mining, the Catholic Workers, most notably Chuck Smith and Sandy Adams, refrained from utilizing the county's primary platform for political discourse: the local newspapers. Other back-to-the-landers, from roughly 1974 on, used those newspapers as a tool for building opposition to surface mining. Still, as Collinge's essay and the evidence suggest, Smith and Adams became heavily involved in the affairs of the community, sometimes to the point of compromising their farm work, and helped to found a local grassroots organization devoted to blocking surface mining. Working beyond the limelight of the county newspapers in the early 1970s, they largely focused on developing relationships with native neighbors, cultivating their farm, publishing their own newsletter, and orchestrating or supporting movements related to welfare rights, surface mining, and labor.<sup>8</sup> As the decade wore on, their newsletter increasingly emphasized the need for landownership to be restored to local people, and, similarly, for Appalachians to reclaim power over the decision-making process. This study fills a gap in my previous essay by arguing that Catholic Workers' emphasis on working for the common good and, by mid-decade, their mounting concern for dialog, civic participation, and land-based independence helped to shape the emergence of green civic republican rhetorical strategies in the county's debates about strip mining. The Catholic Worker movement operated within a personalist, rather than civic republican, tradition that stemmed from both French and American political and theological thought. Both are slippery concepts, and teasing out subtle differences warrants a study all its own. Peter Maurin's writings suggest that he would have shared certain ideals with civic republicans, particularly reverence for human dignity; the responsibility of people to protect not just their own self-interest but the interests of others and, by extension, uphold concern for the common good; self-government and limits to the power of a centralized state; egalitarianism; and active engagement in civic life. However, while civic republicans revere the process of informed deliberation in political decisionmaking and prefer self-government, in practice they have been more comfortable with state authority, provided lawmakers did not exercise that authority arbitrarily. Political personalists believe in active citizen involvement, yet they emphasize

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<sup>8</sup> Collinge, "The Catholic Worker Farm in Lincoln County," 86-87; Chuck Smith, "Losing on WIN," [Catholic Worker] *Green Revolution* 23 (September 1973), 2; Sandy Adams, "Ballad of Buffalo Creek," [Catholic Worker] *Green Revolution* 18 (November 1972), 2; Mark Dillon, "Anti-Strip Mine Movement," n.d., Ric MacDowell Personal Papers [copy in author's possession], hereinafter cited as MacDowell Personal Papers; Dorothy Day, "Chavez, Workers Step Up Boycotts," *The Catholic Worker*, March-April 1973, 3.

moral revolution—a “revolution of the heart”—and prefer decentralized governance. Personalists like Maurin and his movement cofounder Dorothy Day sought to carve out “parallel” institutions rather than working in concert with existing political systems. Maurin was an anarchist who rejected both capitalism and communism, fearing the control that both systems exacted upon their citizens. Smith’s and Adams’s writings reflected those sentiments through the mid-1970s.<sup>9</sup>

Then there is the question of land. American civic republicanism, according to historian Eric Foner, upheld property, and especially smallholdings, as the key to an independent and virtuous society. Civic republicanism celebrated relative equality and autonomy because, in theory, people who could produce their own sustenance were less likely to submit to the will of others. Although civic republicanism’s influence on political thought generally dissipated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have continued to trace remnants of the ideology in American politics well beyond that point. On a regional level, historian Chad Montrie contends that the persistence of that land-based, civic republican ideology, jointly with a “Lockean doctrine of natural rights,” informed Appalachians’ decision to embrace both non-violent and, if necessary, more aggressive approaches in order to block surface miners who threatened their property in the 1960s and ‘70s. Peter Maurin similarly understood the centrality of land to fostering independence although he believed that property should be secondary to a person’s sense of responsibility toward others. His “agronomic universities” were meant to teach people how to be self-sufficient but also how to build mutually supportive relationships. He supported any form of landholding arrangement that would encourage reciprocity, workers’ and farmers’ autonomy over their own labor, and self-government.<sup>10</sup>

Green civic republican strategies only emerged in Lincoln County in the late 1970s. It took time for the back-to-the-land migrants to become involved with local affairs, converse with each other and their native neighbors about politics, strategize to address regional problems, and formulate a collective vision of an agrarian society under threat from outside corporate control. The rhetoric emerged in the context of mounting threats to the local land base from coal companies,

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<sup>9</sup> On Peter Maurin’s background, see Jim Wishloff, “The Hard Truths of the Easy Essays: The Crisis of Modernity and the Social Vision of Peter Maurin,” *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 2, no. 2, (2011), via.library.depaul.edu/jrbe/vol2/iss2/2. For definitions of civic republicanism, see White, “The Emerging Politics of Republican Democracy,” 10; Pettit, *Republicanism*, 8. Regarding political personalism, see Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 6-8. For a sample of how Smith’s and Adams’s writing reflected Maurin’s personalist ideology, see Chuck Smith, “What is the Green Revolution?” *Green Revolution* 19 (January 1973), 1, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Foner, “Why is there No Socialism in the United States?” *History Workshop* 17 (Spring 1984): 8; Montrie, *To Save the Land and People*, 5; Wishloff, “The Hard Truths of the Easy Essays,” 20; Farrell, *Spirit of the Sixties*, 34-36.

heightened regional awareness of powerlessness—a concern captured in the Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter—and widespread efforts to document patterns of absentee land ownership.<sup>11</sup> As I explain in the other essay, it also came as a result of attacks from a few of the county's coal supporters, including the owner of the Lincoln County newspapers, on back-to-the-landers' legitimacy. The back-to-the-landers were, in the most general sense, hippies, and some, although certainly not all, engaged in certain behaviors and customs of that archetype. Some grew or consumed marijuana, and even those who rejected drugs often adopted the trappings of the counterculture: long hair, beards, no bras, "granny" dresses. The Catholic Workers, while eschewing drugs, had to overcome suspicion of Catholics in the staunchly Protestant county. Because Chuck Smith and Sandy Adams were in a relationship for several years while living in Lincoln County, it is possible that rumors about homosexuality circulated within their immediate community. Still, rhetorical attacks on the counterculture provided the back-to-the-landers with new opportunities to discuss the protection of political rights and to highlight common interest between themselves and native residents, particularly related to farming. In the end, the attacks ultimately backfired, strengthening anti-strip mine activists' arguments against that practice.<sup>12</sup>

From the beginning, articles in the *Green Revolution* (renamed the *Mountain Worker* in 1975) the newsletter from Lincoln County's Catholic Worker farm, demonstrated the Catholic Workers' commitment to personalism and to Maurin's vision of a communitarian society composed of interdependent laborers and scholars who worked together to foster a self-sufficient and non-exploitative, non-violent way of life. An article in the inaugural issue, published in 1969, highlights the way Lincoln County's Catholic Workers interpreted and understood Maurin's vision. Rather than seeking to control "great masses of people" like communism or capitalism, they contended that the revolution had to come from within. Individuals had to decide for themselves to reject the dominant economic system, government influence over their lives, and overt, or even tacit, support for war, particularly

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding the land study, see, Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force, *Who Owns Appalachia? Land Ownership and its Impact* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> On back-to-the-landers' rebuttals to charges that they espoused countercultural values, see Turman, "Green Civic Republicanism," 868, 875-876, 885-889. Regarding homosexuality, see Collinge, "Catholic Worker Farm," 95-97; "The Conflict over Homosexuality," in Rosalie Riegle Troester's oral history, *Voices from the Catholic Worker* (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1993), 525-544. Adams alludes to tension within his community over "sexual and/or political morals" in "The Farm," *Green Revolution* 14, March 1972, 2.

through the payment of taxes. The individual instead needed to embrace voluntary poverty in order to avoid cooperation with “war and militarism.” In a separate article in the same issue, Chuck Smith elaborated on how non-violence could help persuade others to join the “revolution of the Gospel”: “For in using non-violence one does not defeat his enemies but brings them to his point of view.” Even before they purchased land in Lincoln County, the Catholic Workers had demonstrated their commitment to political life, but now they placed “personal spiritual transformation ahead of politics as a means of social reconstruction.”<sup>13</sup>

What Green Revolution articles in 1969 failed to do was to articulate a clear definition of Maurin’s conception of the “common good,” a central tenet of civic republican ideology. By the late 1970s in Lincoln County, this concept underlay back-to-the-landers’ appeals to local residents to look beyond economic self-interest when deciding whether to support surface mining and to consider, instead, their neighbors’ physical well-being and the health and vitality of future generations.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in 1969, the Catholic Workers lacked the general awareness of community dynamics or sense of place that would inform their later work. Between 1969 and 1972, articles most closely attended to issues of a global or national scale, particularly the Vietnam War. To a lesser extent the newsletter included stories related to the regional welfare-rights movement and the democratic reform movement sweeping the United Mine Workers at the time. This is not surprising given Chuck Smith’s previous role as a community organizer in Boone County during President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. As a result, discussions about the necessity of widespread citizen involvement in all aspects of political life, and, similarly, the need for open dialog about difficult political and economic questions were virtually absent. Still, the early articles helped to lay the groundwork for future discourse. And upon announcing their purchase of the farm on Zirkle’s Branch, Smith and fellow Worker Bill Schmidt declared their intent to “establish a community ... where the major concern of each individual is for the common good of all.” Who, exactly, constituted

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<sup>13</sup> “Peter Maurin and the Green Revolution,” *Green Revolution* 1, n.d. [1969], 2. See also, Chuck Smith, “Saying NO to War,” *Green Revolution* 1, n.d. [1969], 1, 3; Mel Piehl, “The Politics of Free Obedience,” in *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1988), 182.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, John Salstrom, “Editor,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, September 6, 1978, 8.

the common good—fellow communards, Appalachians, or all Americans—remained unclear at the time, but the language of the common good was present from the farm’s beginning.<sup>15</sup>

Nineteen seventy-three marked a turning point in the nature of the *Green Revolution’s* articles, for they grew increasingly attuned to challenges specifically facing southwestern West Virginia. This shift reflected the deepening relationship between the Catholic Workers and their native neighbors as well as pressure from a string of external forces that shaped American society at the time, such as stagflation, de-escalation of war, and the energy crisis. Collectively, these developments put a damper on mass protests. Sixties social movements did not go away, but they transformed, becoming in some cases more legalistic while in others more focused on enacting change at the grassroots level. This became the era of “front porch politics,” to borrow Michael Stewart Foley’s phrase, a period when a burst of localized protest movements emerged to confront an array of issues affecting people on a community level.<sup>16</sup> In that spirit, Lincoln County’s Catholic Workers started attending more closely to issues in their own backyard. They began to speak more frequently about “modeling” an alternative lifestyle for Appalachia’s poor and finding localized, workable solutions for the problems of poverty and powerlessness apart from the federal government. The Catholic Workers became part of a larger group of radicals who, according to regional historian Ronald Eller, joined native Appalachians in developing a regional identity movement that collectively sought to protect “democratic traditions of fairness, self-determination, and justice” while opposing corporations that put “profits before the common wealth of the community.” The social and political networks Catholic Workers formed within their immediate community created conditions for civic republican strategies based on notions of fairness and concern for the commonwealth to later emerge.<sup>17</sup>

While this shift toward the grassroots came largely as a result of global and national forces that bore down on the lives of average Americans, there were important intellectual underpinnings to the counterculture’s new emphasis on small-scale, community-based action and development. The reissue of Helen and Scott Nearing’s *Living the Good Life*, and the publication of E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is*

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<sup>15</sup> Chuck Smith, “Saying NO to War,” *Green Revolution* 1, n.d. [1969], 1, 3; Chuck Smith, “New West Virginia Farm Commune Follows Catholic Worker Ideals,” *Green Revolution* 3, n.d. [March 1970], 4.

<sup>16</sup> See Foley, *Front Porch Politics*, 5-11.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald D Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 171-172.

*Beautiful*, among other works, lent an air of legitimacy to people like the young Catholic Workers who believed that voluntary self-sufficiency was the moral choice for navigating a corrupt and exploitative world. Further, mounting environmental concerns sparked a sense of urgency about the mission to embrace simplicity.<sup>18</sup> Back-to-the-land literature, and interaction between several different groups of back-to-the-landers in Lincoln County with roots in distinctive agrarian traditions, gave the Catholic Workers a clearer concept of economic “decentralization” and, thus, a more refined vision of how Maurin’s personalism, and that philosophy’s emphasis on moral revolution of the heart, might come to fruition.

Indeed, in 1973, Smith published an essay similar to his 1969 piece that sought to explain the concept of a green revolution and how self-sufficiency and voluntary poverty were the solution to society’s ills. This time, however, Smith offered a more sophisticated assessment of what, exactly, he and the others were trying to accomplish on the farm. Smith recognized that he had struggled in the beginning to declare for certain that “Maurin’s concept of the green revolution” could offer a “realistic alternative to today’s problems.” He had decided, though, that after three years of homesteading he felt “ready” to articulate “what we have been attempting.” As in the earlier essay, he contrasted Maurin’s vision of a green revolution with capitalism and communism. That message remained consistent. What had changed, however, was that Smith readily acknowledged that they had to “compromise with the system we seek to change, always hopefully to find the common good.” In 1969, he had articulated a position of complete non-cooperation with the U.S. government, even at the risk of alienating people in Boone County, where he had worked as an antipoverty organizer. With the war ending and several years of farming under his belt, Smith recognized that complete adherence to Maurin’s vision was a difficult goal to achieve. Smith’s statement is significant not because his goal for complete self-sufficiency had failed, but because he had begun to acknowledge the centrality of “compromise” for the common good in his work. Compromise is central to civic republicanism because in order to make decisions for the common good, one has to recognize the validity of others’ needs and values. Smith’s softened rhetoric suggests that the Catholic Workers had begun to open themselves up to dialog about economic conditions—and solutions—in Lincoln County.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In addition to concerns about war, political corruption, energy crises, and inflation, environmentalism lent a moral underpinning to the 1970s-era back-to-the-land movement. Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 212-217.

<sup>19</sup> Chuck Smith, “What is the Green Revolution?” *Green Revolution* 19, January 1973, 1, 3, 4.

In the same essay Smith also offered a lengthier explanation of the concept of the common good as it related to labor. Maurin intended his vision of an interdependent society of farmers and laborers to present an alternative to industrial workers who had lost autonomy over their work and labored for the profit of another person, or, as with the case of communism, a powerful centralized government, rather than for their own communities. Conversely, "In the decentralized, community economy," explained Smith, "the worker performs a service for his community. He is known by his neighbors and respected for the gift of work he provides." Through small-scale enterprises, a worker, then, can see that his or her labor "materializes as a useful, creative force" that benefits the entire community rather than a government, individual, or corporation. To erase any inequalities that might impede someone from fulfilling his or her potential, "Property must always be shared completely." The common good, then, was the end goal for a person's work. They may labor for themselves because it creates a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment, but their work should ultimately benefit the people who surround them.<sup>20</sup>

Coal companies' interest in tapping into Lincoln County's coal reserves through surface mining posed a clear threat to the Catholic Workers' vision of encouraging small-scale, land-based production for the common good. The energy crisis in 1973 sparked renewed national interest in domestic energy reserves, and coal companies ramped up efforts to undermine resistance movements through public relations campaigns, lobbying, and working with public officials to weaken proposed legislation. Immediate threats to Lincoln County, which had never been surface mined, prompted Smith to revive an anti-strip mine organization based in Charleston, called Citizens to Abolish Strip Mining. They reorganized to support the continuation of an existing moratorium on surface mining in Lincoln County and twenty-one other West Virginia counties. Lincoln's moratorium was particularly vulnerable because a mining company called Capital Fuels, a subsidiary of the massive Appalachian Power Company, challenged it on the grounds that there had once been open-pit clay mines in the county.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, "What is the Green Revolution?" 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> On coal industry lobbying, public relations campaigns, and opposition to national legislation to abolish surface mining, see Montrie, *To Save the Land and People*, 155-156; Appalachian Power Co., "We've been Environmentalists more than 30 years," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, February 7, 1973, 4; Appalachian Power Co., "We burn at those who block the burning of vast amounts of West Virginia coal," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, August 14, 1974, 11. Although Smith's name is absent from articles on creating a countywide organization to fight surface mining, Paul Salstrom suggests that

Facing the immediate threat from surface mining prompted Smith, Adams, and other back-to-the-landers to attend more closely to Appalachia's preindustrial past in their writing and, similarly, to highlight the centrality of county farms to the local economy. Farms eventually became a powerful symbol of what Lincoln Countians stood to lose should they allow surface mining. Amidst the local controversy over Capital Fuels in 1974, Smith offered an account of Lincoln County's past that celebrated self-sufficient farmers. He noted the community's "decentralized economy, based on the fierce desire for independence" that existed among its residents "as short a time ago as 1939." In the early twentieth century, he continued, Lincoln Countians "made their living the same way their forbearers did," by "growing their own food on the mountain ridges and bottom lands, cutting timber ... and milling, blacksmithing, and stone cutting for their neighbors." This same pastoral vision emerged in other back-to-the-landers' and natives' appeals for protection of "homes and farms" from reckless and greedy coal operators. Indeed, Smith reflected that since his arrival in 1969, "several hundred people have moved into Lincoln County" seeking that decentralized, agrarian economy. "The next few years," he cautioned, "will determine if [their] values, rooted in the freedom which comes from direct dependence on the land and one's neighbors, will continue to form the social and economic backbone of the county."<sup>22</sup>

The emergence of the vision of an agrarian commonwealth was a slow process, and in the mid-1970s nobody could have anticipated the success of such a vision in mobilizing action to block surface mining. In fact, mid-decade, the anti-strip mine movement in Lincoln County appeared anemic compared to earlier displays of resistance in places like eastern Kentucky. There, in the 1960s, angry landowners had

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he was a key organizer. He and Ric MacDowell, who is mentioned in the news articles, had different visions for the organization, which eventually expanded into the statewide group "Save Our Mountains." See Paul Salstrom, email to author, Wednesday, November 23, 2016; "Group in Lincoln County Fighting Against Strip Mining by Appalachian Power," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, August 7, 1974, 1. Regarding the presence of coal deposits and the moratorium in Lincoln County, see "100 Million Tons of Coal Discovered Here," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, November 10, 1971, 1; "Rich Coal Deposits are Discovered in Lincoln County," *Hamlin Weekly News Sentinel*, February 2, 1972, 2; "Strip Mining Ruling 2 Months Off; Local Group Choses [sic] Name," *Hamlin Weekly News Sentinel*, August 14, 1974, 1; "Strip Mining Permit Denied," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, November 27, 1974, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Chuck Smith, "What's Lincoln County's Future?" *Green Revolution* 28, July-August 1974, 1, 4. For an example of this agrarian vision in anti-strip mine activists' letters to the editor, see Julian Martin, "Dear Editor," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, March 23, 1977, 10. Note that Martin was a native West Virginian from Boone County, but, as a young college graduate, he had become an innovative local high school science teacher, embraced the back-to-the-land lifestyle, and socialized with members of that community.

fiercely resisted surface mining by blocking bulldozers with their bodies and forcing strip miners off their land at gunpoint. Powerful anti-strip mine organizations like the Appalachian Group to Save the Land and People formed to pressure the state, and later the federal, government for a complete ban on surface mining. But by the mid-70s, says Chad Montrie, "the opposition movement was crumbling." It weakened as the debate over whether to pass a complete ban or "compromise" legislation—which eventually happened in the form of the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act (1977)—shifted to the federal level.<sup>23</sup>

The resistance movement in Lincoln County appeared equally fragile. Part of the problem could be attributed to disagreements between anti-strip mine activists, including the Catholic Workers, about which environmental organization could best serve the movement's needs. According to Paul Salstrom, Smith's efforts to revive a Charleston-based group were eventually overshadowed by other Lincoln Countians who sought to create a new statewide organization, Save Our Mountains. "There certainly wasn't a vote to choose between the two groups," recalled Salstrom, and it resulted in at least one "somewhat abrasive strategy meeting" in which activists debated the best course of action.<sup>24</sup> So although Lincoln County Citizens to Abolish Surface Mining emerged as the first anti-strip mine organization in the county in 1974, by the end of 1975 it had merged into Save Our Mountains. A former Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) worker, Ric MacDowell, rather than Chuck Smith, became the key leader of that organization.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of the Capital Fuels debate, Sandy Adams also upheld a vision of Lincoln County as a place that would provide people with land for food production and opportunities for "recreation" for future generations. But he was especially worried about the lack of energy that he witnessed among anti-strip mine activists at a public hearing related to Capital Fuels. A 1974 article titled "Power Power!" reveals his concern that very few native county residents were present at the hearing and, further, his disappointment in activists' tame, even

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<sup>23</sup> Montrie, *To Save the Land and People*, 72-73, 86-92, and 155-163.

<sup>24</sup> On the back-to-the-land movement in Lincoln County, see Stratton, "Back to the Earth," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, October 24, 1973, 1, 9, 10. Regarding the formation of the county anti-strip mine group and the moratorium, see "Group in Lincoln County Fighting Against Strip Mining by Appalachian Power Co.," *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, August 7, 1974, 1; "Strip Mining Ruling 2 Months Off; Local Group Choses [sic] Name," *Hamlin Weekly News Sentinel*, August 14, 1974, 1; Paul Salstrom, email to author, Wednesday, November 23, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Dillon, "Anti-Strip Mine Movement," n.d. (handwritten notes), MacDowell Personal Papers.

cordial, behavior toward coal operators. Adams theorized that most native Lincoln Countians had stayed home, not because they supported surface mining—indeed, he claimed that the majority of people he had spoken to “are against strip mining”—but, perhaps, “because they ... understand the complicated matters of public hearings, politics, and economics” better than the activists (mostly non-native) themselves. County politicians and local elites guarded their power jealously and made it incredibly difficult for citizens to effect change, as in-migrant activists would discover later in the decade. What disappointed Adams even more, however, was activists’ lack of passion and emotion in the hearing, which he considered vital to the resistance movement. “There were but five occasions when an objective viewer of that crowd would be able to tell that we were human,” he wrote, including when future state attorney general and strip mine opponent Darrell McGraw called the testimony of Capital Fuels’ CEO “specious” and when in-migrant Lawrence Goldsmith applauded at McGraw’s comment. Goldsmith’s applause, recalled Adams, “was muted quickly by 8-10 dirty looks from the Lincoln County Citizens to Abolish Strip Mining.” Reflecting on this reaction, Adams concluded that “because of our dirty looks, because of our failure to applaud with Lawrence, because of our inability to stay at home in preference to becoming robots ... because of our failure to be ourselves, we lost that hearing.”<sup>26</sup>

Adams was clearly frustrated with what he viewed as a frail attempt to persuade people at the hearing that blocking surface mining would be an economically and culturally sound measure. Still, this subdued activism may have inadvertently served a purpose. If the Catholic Workers hoped to forge relationships with their native neighbors, to “instill pride” in an impoverished population still at least partially living off the land, they had to tread carefully. They had to cultivate not just their farm, but relationships with the people around them. Soon after his arrival in the county, Chuck Smith learned that dramatic displays of dissent could land him on the receiving end of a fist, as a

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<sup>26</sup> Regarding Smith’s involvement with Boone County’s VISTAs, see, for example, Susan Thurmond, “Boone Claim About Vista Documented,” *Charleston Gazette, Saturday*, July 20, 1968, 9; Marjorie Hughes, Chuck Smith, and Sandy Adams, interview by William D. Miller, Lincoln County, WV, Spring 1976, Folder 40, Box 1, Series W-9.4, Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Collection (Special Collections and University Archives, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.). For a more extensive consideration of political backlash to President Johnson’s War on Poverty in the Appalachian region, see Thomas Kiffmeyer, *Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008). The moratorium included twenty-two counties in 1971. Del. H. Leon Hager, “Strip Mining Ban Here to Continue,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, March 21, 1973, 1; “Group in Lincoln County Fighting Against Strip Mining by Appalachian Power Co.,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, August 7, 1974, 1; Sandy Adams, “Power Power!” *Green Revolution* 28, July-August 1974, 1, 3-4.

Vietnam veteran punched him in the face and threw him in Mud River for publicly protesting the war at a local park. Following that incident, Smith, Adams, and the other Catholic Workers likely understood that they needed to adopt strategies more culturally sensitive to Lincoln County residents and to avoid publishing or saying things that could garner severe political backlash. Such were the kinds of "compromises" to which Smith alluded in his 1973 essay explaining the "green revolution." Compromising with one's neighbor, and finding common language and common symbols about which people of different backgrounds could agree, became far more important than engaging in dramatic displays of opposition as Catholic Workers established roots in the community.<sup>27</sup>

By late 1974 Smith had begun writing more frequently about active citizen engagement in community-based issues in response to heightened awareness of regional absentee landownership, ongoing threats to the strip mine moratorium, and the growing Appalachian identity movement that upheld regional powerlessness as a central concern. The Catholic Workers remained personalists, but they increasingly turned attention toward regional conversations about land and its centrality in creating an independent citizenry. One early indication of this shift came in the November / December issue of the *Green Revolution*, when Chuck Smith articulated a vision of an active, engaged citizenry that did more than just "model" non-exploitative ways of living. He wrote a lengthy essay on "practical use decentralism" that touted Thomas Jefferson's vision of a "rural based economy" as the best way of ensuring "personal freedom in America." Smith still believed that personalism could help protect people from powerful, centralized forces, but he closed with a declaration that people needed to take "responsibility for [their] own wellbeing and for that of [their] community," suggesting that active engagement was integral to securing liberty.<sup>28</sup>

The Appalachian Bishops' pastoral letter, published the following year, cast into light the importance of dialog, deliberation, and civic

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<sup>27</sup> "Pacifists in Lincoln Nursing Wounds," *Charleston Gazette*, June 9, 1970, 13; Chuck Smith, "What is the Green Revolution?" *Green Revolution* 19, January 1973, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Chuck Smith, "Practical Use Decentralism," *Green Revolution* 30, November / December 1974, 1-2. On federal debates about surface mining, see Joseph Sanders, S.J., "Appalachian People Convene to Plan Strip-Mining Fight," *Mountain Worker* 32, May 1975, 1. On Catholic use of Jeffersonian agrarianism to address problems facing rural America in the twentieth century, see Jeffrey Marlett, "Harvesting an Overlooked Freedom: The Anti-Urban Vision of American Catholic Agrarianism, 1920-1950," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 98.

engagement in Appalachian communities. Although the letter refrained from articulating a set of strategies that regional residents should adopt to reclaim power, Smith's assessment of the work suggests that he and others took pride in the fact that the bishops had invited different groups to contribute to the discussion of regional powerlessness during the letter's developmental stage. It was "not just a from-the-top-down-message," Smith explained, but the result of a two-year effort from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia to explore the roots of powerlessness by sharing and listening. Regional bishops had grown increasingly concerned about America's energy consumption and the political establishment's general acceptance of profit over people. Toward the end of his summary, Smith quoted a section that emphasized again the bishops' concern for restoring political power to the region's residents: "The goal which underlies our concern is fundamental in the justice struggle, namely, citizen control, or community control. The people themselves must shape their own destiny."<sup>29</sup>

Smith expressed reservations about just how far the letter would go to call Catholics to action or whether it would result in a significantly new approach to ministry in the mountains. Getting the church to use "its influence, resources and money to work with the poor in overcoming their oppressors ... will not be easy," he said, noting that at least one wealthy Catholic, a coal company owner, complained about the bishops' insinuation that the "church" was the "church of the poor." In practice, Smith remarked, the church had identified with poor immigrant communities on "ethnic and cultural" grounds but "not theological." He believed that the Catholic Church had remained predominantly a "corporate structure with strong capitalist underpinnings." It was not accustomed to ceding control to its laity and had largely failed to fulfill its mission of service to the poor. Smith remained hopeful, however, that the pastoral letter signaled a shift. Again pointing to the process of dialog that went into the letter's creation, he claimed that the church was perhaps becoming "more capable of accepting and evaluating criticisms of its own institutions and structures." By calling for greater "citizen control," it was prepared to "grow further in these areas."<sup>30</sup>

Scholars are still weighing the effects of *This Land is Home to Me* on the region and the Catholic Church's response to heightened awareness about systemic poverty and powerlessness. At the time of its writing, people like John Klug, head of the Office for Justice and Peace

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<sup>29</sup> Chuck Smith, "Catholic Bishops Call for Justice for Appalachian Poor," *Mountain Worker* 31, February 1975, 1-2. On the relationship between the Catholic Workers, including Smith, and the development of the pastoral letter, see Alyssa R. Pasternak Post, "'Dare to Speak': *This Land is Home to Me* from Idea to Promulgation (May 1973-February 1975) And Beyond" (Master's Thesis, University of Dayton, 2011), 21-23.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, "Catholic Bishops Call for Justice for the Appalachian Poor," 2.

for the Catholic Church in Appalachia, responded much the same way as Smith, with a feeling of excitement but reservation about how far a “comprehensive plan of action” might go to effect meaningful change. Chuck Lathrop, part of a lay ministry in western North Carolina, worried that the letter might result in “too many saviors and too few sinners, a situation of doing one’s own thing, which has little or no relationship to the people around.” Still, the letter inspired a wave of resolutions, self-reflection within the church, and missionary work in the mountains carried out by people committed to restoring power to Appalachia’s poor. Although this warrants additional study, the letter likely contributed to the development of a “republican moment” across Appalachia in the late 1970s. Marie Cirillo was already working in the region in 1975, but the letter may have galvanized her interest in land reform and restoring control of the land to local residents. She established Woodlands Community Land Trust three years after the letter’s publication. Women like Cirillo proved particularly influential in translating the ideas contained within the pastoral letter to action; in May 1975 Sister Gretchen Shaffer reported to the *Mountain Worker*, “Sisters living and working in Appalachia ... have assumed the role of convening to stimulate members to awareness of the issue of powerlessness, to motivate them to action in dealing with the root issue and its attendant problems of the mountains.”<sup>31</sup>

Building upon the foundation laid by Lincoln County’s Catholic Workers, three Jesuit priests established a parish, called Christ-in-the-Hills, in the county in 1976. Their influence on grassroots movements in the county in the late 1970s cannot be understated. Fr. Joe Hacala and Fr. Robert Currie in particular emerged as vocal leaders in the anti-strip mine and tax reform movements. They and other activists employed green civic republican rhetorical strategies to successfully block surface mines and push for higher corporate tax rates. In December 1977, Fr. Currie responded to the owner of the Lincoln Journal, who had criticized non-native activists for their involvement in community debates about economic development, by urging the man to use his paper to support higher property taxes on absentee mineral owners “instead of cynically urging people to further enrich these corporations. The taxes,” Currie added, “would lessen the property tax

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<sup>31</sup> Pasternak Post, “Dare to Speak,” 88-99; Nicholas Nipolitano, “Four Decades Later, A Message from the Appalachian Mountains Resonates Today,” Jesuits USA Northeast Province, [www.jesuitseast.org/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20150422100343\\_a](http://www.jesuitseast.org/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20150422100343_a); John Klug, “Pastoral Dialogue in Appalachia,” *Mountain Worker* 32, May 1975, 1; Sister Gretchen Shaffer, “Women Respond to Bishop’s Pastoral,” *Mountain Worker* 32, May 1975, 3.

burden of ordinary home and farm owners” while enhancing other social benefits like education.<sup>32</sup> It is fair to say, then, that while Smith, Adams, and the other Catholic Workers had adopted a less confrontational approach to social justice in their early years in Lincoln County, by mid-decade, a growing awareness within the Catholic Church of the necessity for impoverished Appalachians to reclaim control over local affairs influenced later action. Through their newsletter, the Catholic Workers transmitted the central tenets of the pastoral letter to other activists working in and around Lincoln County.

Finally, there was a discernible shift mid-decade in the way the Catholic Workers discussed land and landownership. No longer were they so concerned with finding “simple solutions to poverty” on the land or attempting to achieve “common unity” with the poor. The “poor” as an abstract framework for action had ceased to exist. They now had neighbors with names, faces, and personalities. Broader conversations about economic decentralization in back-to-the-land circles, coupled with the pastoral letter, helped them to think more clearly about how land might bring the old republican promise of independence back to disempowered Appalachians. In spite of the pull of other commitments off the farm by the mid-1970s, Smith and the others continued to write about Maurin’s vision for social reform through the concept of the agronomic university. They began to write more extensively about land-based independence and “freedom,” particularly in their treatments of Maurin’s efforts to create a “new society within the shell of the old.” Workers in a small village, who would engage in meaningful labor in farms or small-scale industries, could find “complete freedom” by eliminating their reliance on outside “initiative or decision making.”<sup>33</sup>

The newsletter’s focus on freedom and independence became especially pronounced as the American bicentennial approached. For economic decentralists, it evoked a popular collective memory of Jeffersonian agrarianism and that founding father’s vision for the country. In May 1975, they published an essay by leading decentralist Ralph Borsodi, who, anticipating the upcoming bicentennial, wondered why “nothing” had been “done to save the backbone of the republic—the family farm and the small communities these millions of farms supported.” The bicentennial sparked a similar reflection from

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<sup>32</sup> Chuck Smith, “Peter Maurin’s Ideas Give Direction,” *Mountain Worker* 35, August 1987, 3; Tommy Galloway, “Tax Assessment Case Suit Filed in Circuit Court; Hearing Set Today,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, April 19, 1978, 1; Robert Currie, “The Editor,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, December 21, 1977, 10; Editor, “Abolitionists Should Put Up Or Else Shut Up,” *Hamlin Lincoln Journal*, December 14, 1977, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Sandy Adams, “Simple Solutions to Poverty,” *Green Revolution* 11, September 1971, 1-3; Chuck Smith, “Creating a New Society within the Shell of the Old,” *Green Revolution* 26, March-April 1974, 3; “Work Not Wages,” *Green Revolution* 30, November-December 1974, 3.

John Klug, who charged, "On the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their freedom," Appalachians are left "watching the coal trains leaving full and returning empty to a land that no longer belongs to the people. To suggest citizen control as a viable instrument of social change suggests that there is something left to control." "Land reform," he continued, would be the only way Appalachians could regain autonomy over their own lives.<sup>34</sup>

The Catholic Workers' interest in land reform found full, if temporary, expression in their efforts to create a community land trust. "Trust-in-the-Hills," as it was called, provides further evidence of the growing centrality of the republican ideals of land as the font of independence and an active, engaged citizenry as the bulwark against oppressive outside forces. Beginning in 1973, the Catholic Workers' newsletter began publishing articles that mentioned the concept of community land trusts (CLTs), which in their ideal form were landholding arrangements, typically run by a non-profit, that could "acquire, hold, and manage land" in perpetuity. Although the concept was still being developed in the mid-1970s, CLTs were supposed to have a tripartite board structure that included leaseholders or tenants, non-leaseholders from the larger geographic community, and representatives from other interested parties, like public officials. CLTs were meant to provide people with the opportunity to become less dependent on exploitative landowners, banks, or employers by providing them with human and natural resources, in the form of land and community labor, that could encourage self-sufficiency. Trust-in-the-Hills did not achieve full CLT status, for it only lasted two years and lacked broad-based community support. But importantly, the bylaws signaled a fusion of ideas about land and natural resource protection for the good of the commonwealth that came from Trust-in-the-Hills' diverse group of organizers.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ralph Borsodi, "What's Happened? 1776-1976," *Mountain Worker* 32, May 1975, 1; John Klug, "Pastoral Dialogue in Appalachia," *Mountain Worker* 32, May 1975, 1; John Klug, "Community Control Seen as Goal for Appalachians," *Mountain Worker* 33, August 1975; Chuck Lathrop, "Catholic Mission in the Mountains," *Mountain Worker* 34, November 1975, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Chuck Smith, "Money and Capitalism," *Green Revolution* 20, February 1973, 3; Larry Aaronspere, "Introduction to Land Trust," *Green Revolution* 24, November 1973, 1, 3; "What is a Land Trust," *Green Revolution* 25, January 1974, 2. For a description of the mechanics of community land trusts, see John Emmeus Davis, "Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust in the United States," in *Community Land Trust Reader*, ed. John Emmeus Davis (Massachusetts: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010), 3-4. For a more extensive history of Trust-in-the-Hills, see Jinny Turman, "'To Strike a Fair Balance': The Peacemakers and the Community Land Trust Movement in West Virginia, 1970-1982," *West Virginia History* (Forthcoming Spring 2017).

In late spring 1974, Sandy Adams indicated that the Lincoln County Catholic Workers were considering placing their land in trust. They planned to create a regional trust by merging their property with parcels belonging to other young people living in the county who had moved from Borsodi's Heathcote Center, an educational center that advanced the cause of economic decentralization, and pacifists' property in other areas of the state. Adams and Smith both believed that land should not be privately owned but should be held "in trust" for the common good. Adams noted that any profit from the sale of improvements on trust land should go back into the trust, for "The trust itself making any money ... would be contrary to its stated purpose." He continued: "More important than a legal statement of a trust is the spiritual reality that land is a human resource belonging to no one person, but to the entire human family." Accompanying the notion of land as a common good was trustees' belief that they would need to protect their land from environmental threats using non-violent civil disobedience. In a significant departure from the more muted approach to environmental activism that had so unsettled Adams in the summer of 1974, the following year trust members wrote into the bylaws their intent to employ active strategies to thwart coal industry domination over local land use and decision-making. Non-violent civil disobedience and direct action became a central fixture of the bylaws. "After years of mooting," noted Paul Salstrom, a former Heathcote resident who had moved to Lincoln County in 1972, "a trace of direct action sentiment has reemerged."<sup>36</sup> Thus the protection of the land, under threat from remote corporate forces, served as an important unifying symbol for the people who created the trust. Like the native eastern Kentuckians of the previous decade who understood the need to protect land, the font of independence, in terms of their "natural rights," the back-to-the-landers who wrote the trust's bylaws recognized the centrality of land to their liberty—albeit in different terms—and, thus, the need to defend it using more confrontational means if necessary.

The Catholic Workers in Lincoln County ceased publication of their newsletter at the end of 1975, although it reappeared for a few years beginning in 1987. This makes further analysis of their contributions to the emergence of green civic republican language in Lincoln County difficult, because it was precisely at the same time, 1976-1977, that activists started to employ the civic republican rhetorical strategy in letters to the county newspaper and statements at public

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Salstrom, "Coming Over the Hill: Land Trusts, Or Who Was Responsible," [School of Living] *Green Revolution* 32, no. 8, September 1975, 5-6; Sandy Adams, "The Farm," *Green Revolution* 27, May-June 1974, 1; Sandy Adams, "W.Va. Land Trust Begins Operation," *Mountain Worker* 31, February 1975, 1, 3. For his recollection of his move to Lincoln County, see Paul Salstrom, "The Neonatives: Back-to-the-Land in Appalachia's 1970s," *Appalachian Journal* 30 (Summer 2003): 313.

hearings. It remains impossible to determine the extent of the Catholic Workers' influence on the county residents who, two years later, advocated for protecting land and farms from absentee landowners and emphasized the importance of informed deliberation in the political life of the community. Yet it is clear that the Catholic Workers' personalism; emphasis on the centrality of land for independence and "freedom"; devotion to the common good; and role in transmitting broader conversations about regional powerlessness to the local community shaped the nature of grassroots activism in Lincoln County. Without question, they circulated ideas about the necessity of an active, engaged citizenry to reclaim power in Appalachia and the centrality of land in fostering greater regional autonomy and independence.<sup>37</sup>

The Catholic Workers, with their commitment to personalism, decentralization, and cultivating relationships between themselves and their native neighbors helped to lay the groundwork for the emergence of green civic republican strategies in Lincoln County. Smith and Adams understood that they had to overcome misperceptions about Catholics in general, and about countercultural Catholics at that, in order to carry out their mission of imparting a sense of dignity in the rural poor.<sup>38</sup> Once conditions ripened for a regional reform movement, a development signaled in part by the pastoral letter, the Catholic Workers' newsletter became an important platform for conversations about empowerment, civic dialog, and land reform. As their newsletter suggested, by mid-decade the image of land as the "backbone of the republic" had emerged as an important concept that could potentially unify Lincoln County's residents against absentee corporate landowners and coal executives. Although publication of their newsletter ceased in 1975, the nature and tone of their articles strongly suggest that they, like other residents in the county, had begun to realize the potential of drawing upon a vision of land-based independence to build a powerful resistance movement. By 1978, when county activists blocked a surface mine on the grounds that it posed a threat to the agricultural way of life in the community, green civic republican strategies had proven their merit.<sup>M</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Sandy Adams, "Bridge Over Time," *Mountain Worker* 35, August 1987, 4-5; Chuck Smith, "Peter Maurin's Ideas Give Direction," *Mountain Worker* 35, August 1987, 1.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the editorial that appeared in the *Charleston Gazette* after Smith had been beaten during an anti-Vietnam War rally that the Workers held in Hamlin, WV, in 1970. The editor, while sympathetic to the Catholic Workers, claimed, "They should have realized that Catholicism, communal living and pacifism are all foreign to Lincoln County, and require some getting used to." Editor, "Yahooism Demonstrated Again in Hamlin Incident," *Charleston Gazette*, June 10, 1970, 8.

# Discerning a Catholic Environmental Ethos: Three Episodes in the Growth of Environmental Awareness in Western Pennsylvania

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**P**OPE FRANCIS'S *LAUDATO SI'* articulates a theological argument for what many Americans would recognize as a clear environmental ethos, and roots that in scripture, Catholic social teaching, and Catholic tradition. He argues that

We have come to see ourselves as [Mother Earth's] lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 2)

Though expressed in clearly theological language, the focus on the care for the earth as an intrinsic good in itself rather than as a means to some other good, such as economic prosperity or human moral growth, resonates with environmentalists today. One might reasonably conclude that Pope Francis is an environmentalist as we understand such a position in the twenty-first century.

This paper seeks to discern whether such an environmental ethos, articulated so clearly by Pope Francis in 2015, has an antecedent among Catholics in northern Appalachia in the middle decades of the twentieth century. It examines three critical environmental episodes: the development of the subsistence homestead community of Norvelt, Pennsylvania, in the 1930s and 1940s, the Donora smog disaster of 1948, and the emergence of the modern environmental movement of the 1960s.

## **NORVELT (WESTMORELAND HOMESTEADS) 1930S AND 1940S**

Norvelt was founded in the 1930s as part of the New Deal's Subsistence Homesteads program, an effort to provide comfortable housing, vegetable gardens, and employment to struggling families throughout America. Four of these communities sought to uplift out-of-work coal miners, including Westmoreland Homesteads, which

residents later voted to call Norvelt in honor of EleaNOR ROOSEVELT. Norvelt consisted of 250 homes, each located on between two and five acres, along with an elementary school, daycare center, community center, cooperative dairy farm, and chicken range. Each family had a house, garage, grape arbor, chicken coop, and land for gardens required to be at least one acre in size. The plans called for families to cultivate sufficient fruit and vegetables to allow them to live on the wages of one part-time worker.<sup>1</sup>

Though Westmoreland Homesteads was a federal New Deal program, it emerged from a collaboration between the federal government and the Quakers' social action arm, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Its initial manager, David Day, and his federally employed supervisor, Clarence Pickett, maintained strong ties to the AFSC. Pickett held both his federal position and his directorship of the AFSC simultaneously. They infused the project with Quaker inspired ideals of community and cooperation and recruited Quaker college students to spend two summers helping to build the community during breaks from classes. Yet, few of the residents themselves were Quaker. In fact, numerous residents were Catholics and lived within a handful of miles from nine Catholic parishes and the nation's first Benedictine monastery, college, and seminary. And while Eleanor Roosevelt, the residents' clear patron saint, visited the Westmoreland Homesteads once in 1937, so too did Dorothy Day in 1936. Even without a Catholic church within its boundaries, the community was potentially as Catholic as it was any other denomination.

Norvelt remained controversial throughout the period of its affiliation with the federal government (1934-1946). Conservatives saw in all of the nation's thirty-four subsistence homestead communities a creeping shift to socialism, and the local press relentlessly opposed Westmoreland Homesteads.<sup>2</sup> This is an important background to reading the Catholic discourse on the community, which stood against the

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of Westmoreland Homesteads/Norvelt, see Timothy Kelly, Margaret Power, and Michael Cary, *Hope in Hard Times: Norvelt and the Struggle for Community During the Great Depression* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Western Pennsylvania had been a strongly Republican region from the late nineteenth century up through Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election to the presidency, when most voters embraced the Democratic party in the mid-1930s. The region's newspapers, with few exceptions, did not make the shift. They continued to champion Republican candidates and rail against the New Deal. The actual number of subsistence homestead communities is a bit elusive, in large part because similar initiatives emerged from different branches of the federal government. The Division of Subsistence Homesteads established thirty-four communities, but it was subsumed into the

powerful tide of editorial criticism from other sources. The first point to make about the Catholic discourse was the absence of the otherwise near-universal hostility to the project in area newspapers.

Though lay owned and operated in the 1930s, the *Pittsburgh Catholic* was the official diocesan paper. It had long favored efforts that fell under the broad heading of “back-to-the-land,” and heralded various manifestations of this impulse from the early twentieth century onward. As early as 1907 it had called for programs to support Irish immigrant efforts “to escape from New York, and the other great cities of the coast, and to pursue their way to Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, and other Western States, where they engaged in agricultural pursuits.”<sup>3</sup> A handful of years later it praised Father Bandini’s work to settle “a whole colony of these Italian [immigrants] on the land in one place” in Tonitown, Arkansas, away from “the wrecking of lives under the evil influences of the slums.”<sup>4</sup>

Though the *Pittsburgh Catholic* unvaryingly favored rural living over urban when it compared the two, it visited rural life directly on only a few occasions before the Great Depression. Once western Pennsylvania’s economy collapsed, the paper pointed toward rural living as a strategy to improve people’s lives. It discussed favorably the broader Subsistence Homesteads program that generated Westmoreland Homesteads, and noted in 1934 that Fr. L. G. Ligutti’s subsistence homestead program in Granger, Iowa “was but one manifestation of the widespread Catholic interest in the Subsistence Homestead project displayed during 1934.”<sup>5</sup> The “widespread Catholic interest” in the project derived in part from the concerted efforts of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC), which endorsed subsistence homesteads because they had the potential to draw people out of cities, combat cash crop farming, and insulate farmers from capitalism’s evils.<sup>6</sup> The paper followed the lead of Rev. Ligutti, leader of the NCRLC, who argued that

For the man who plants, and waters, and watches things grow, nature unfolds her secrets and the great fundamental truths of life and death,

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Resettlement Administration after a few years of operation, and joined another seventy or so projects then underway.

<sup>3</sup> “Bretherton Bowl,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 10, 1907, 10.

<sup>4</sup> “The Way Out: Remarkable Colonizing Enterprise of an Italian Community,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, July 25, 1912, 2.

<sup>5</sup> “Important Year for Church Ends,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 1935, 12. Curiously, the article never noted the establishment of Westmoreland Homesteads, the subsistence homesteads community within the Pittsburgh diocese.

<sup>6</sup> “Facing the Farm Problem,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, November 26, 1940, 10. For a thorough and insightful discussion of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference and its shaping influence on an emerging Catholic environmental sensibility, see Christopher Hamlin and John McGreevy, “The Greening of America, Catholic Style, 1930-1950,” *Environmental History*, 11, no. 3 (July 2006): 464-499.

toil and pain, time and eternity, and God take on a new and deeper meaning. The man's character develops, expands, and matures with the plants and animals he tends so carefully, until he partakes of that natural wisdom that is characteristic of the people throughout the world who live close to the soil.<sup>7</sup>

Ligutti was no friend of socialism, and he promoted Catholic participation in subsistence homesteads in large part to keep Catholics from being distracted by "radical" ideologies that appealed to many urban workers. But he did not join the condemnation of subsistence homesteads as "socialist" enterprises, and the *Pittsburgh Catholic* celebrated Ligutti's government-sponsored subsistence homestead in Granger, Iowa.

The paper was just a bit less enthusiastic about Westmoreland Homesteads. It addressed the project directly only twice, and in each instance did so through outsiders' eyes. The first came in October of 1934 when San Francisco priest F. Gordon O'Neil wrote an account of his trip to western Pennsylvania for the *San Francisco Monitor*, and the *Pittsburgh Catholic* reprinted it a week later. O'Neill recounted the story of his visit to Westmoreland County with Pittsburgh Bishop Hugh Boyle to see two communities of stranded coal miners.<sup>8</sup>

The first, and more impressive in O'Neill's view, was in Marguerite, a coal patch community near Greensburg, Pennsylvania. It began to flourish when nearby Saint Vincent monastery sent one of their monks, Father Maurus, to minister to the mission site full-time after the local coal company closed the mine around which it had built the patch. Fr. Maurus's success depended to a great extent on his personal skills and some unusual arrangements. He persuaded the company that owned the patch, and had allowed the families to stay in the homes, to lend him land, on which he laid out 5,000 square foot lots for each of the community's 200 families to plant their own gardens. Fr. Maurus also borrowed seeds for vegetables and taught the miners how to garden. They in turn planted flowers around their homes, painted white picket fences around their lots, and worked diligently to shore up the church. The American Friends Service Committee offered one hundred dollars' worth of meat and other items each month to the community. Then, Fr. Maurus persuaded a coal company to "lend" the community a closed mine so that the miners could extract enough coal

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<sup>7</sup> Rt. Rev. Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti, LL.D., and Rev. John C. Rawe, S.J., LL.M., *Rural Roads to Security: America's Third Struggle for Freedom* (Wisconsin: Bruce, 1940), 300.

<sup>8</sup> F. Gordon O'Neill, "Westmoreland Homesteads," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, October 25, 1934, 15.

to heat their homes and ovens.<sup>9</sup> O'Neill extolled Maurus' determination to include all residents, not only those 75% of whom were Catholic, in the community efforts.

The second community was still in development when O'Neill and Boyle visited with its manager, David Day. O'Neill praised the Quaker manager and the efforts the federal government had expended in Westmoreland Homesteads to provide a means for its 240 families to support themselves in stable homes and gardens. O'Neill conveyed Day and Boyle's agreement that "the main problem is to keep the families on the land; they must have the desire to hold their families together on it."<sup>10</sup>

Dorothy Day visited both communities two years later, once Westmoreland Homesteads was completed, and praised each. But she too extolled Fr. Maurus's efforts more robustly.

We haven't the figures for how much [Westmoreland Homesteads] cost for land, houses, relief, but the way we felt about it was that our mighty government, with huge sums at its disposal, was doing very little more than one humble parish priest who worked with the grace of God.<sup>11</sup>

Much of what Fr. Maurus helped Marguerite's residents to achieve was material security in a time of great economic distress. They did this by following many of the same prescriptions as Norvelt's residents. They both relied on subsistence gardening to offset lost income. And they both understood that practice in similar ways—as an engagement with the earth that generated physical nourishment and moral virtue.

If a Catholic environmental ethos existed in this moment, it was rooted in a firm condemnation of the urban built environment, the corrosion of the human soul that immersion in that environment necessarily entailed, and its likelihood to render urbanites receptive to socialist and communist appeals. The embrace of subsistence homesteads, or rural living, was rooted in a firm belief in the moral superiority of farming over other ways of life. Advocates did not express a concern for the environment itself, natural or built, but rather focused on the rural environment's positive impact on a person's character as well as their doubts about the possibility of industrial wage labor ever again providing sufficient means to support families. The rhetorical embrace of the rural life, however infrequent in a diocese dominated by the Steel City, was expressed as a concern for people's economic

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<sup>9</sup> O'Neill, "Westmoreland Homesteads," 15.

<sup>10</sup> O'Neill, "Westmoreland Homesteads," 15.

<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Day, "How Pittsburgh Looks to a 'Catholic Worker,'" *Pittsburgh Catholic*, July 30, 1936, 9.

security and spiritual development rather than for any “symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”

### DONORA SMOG DISASTER

One might expect then, that an urban industrial calamity fourteen years after Norvelt’s establishment, in October, 1948, would provide ample opportunity to drive home that message. For what greater danger might the urban industrial life have created than to directly kill nearly two dozen of society’s most vulnerable members and lead to the death of perhaps hundreds more over a few years’ time? And yet, one can find little evidence of Catholic public discourse on America’s first air pollution disaster among Pittsburgh Catholics.

The disaster started when a mass of cold air settled over western Pennsylvania. It created heavy fog conditions for roughly a week, and caused major problems for drivers navigating the region’s roads. It also trapped the warmer air beneath the blanket of cold air and kept it from dissipating into higher altitudes. In Donora, Pennsylvania, a mill town along the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh, it trapped the exhaust from three metal mills. Contained between the hills on either side of the river, the resulting smog settled over Donora and its neighbor Webster. As the stacks continued to emit their smothering effluent, the air filled with life-depriving pollutants.<sup>12</sup>

The people of Donora had long suffered in the mills’ shadows. Webster, located just across the river from Donora, had been a reasonably prosperous farming community before the mills arrived. Within a short time their crops died and their cows could find no grass to eat. The smoke killed all vegetation and the farms collapsed. But the people of Donora appreciated the jobs that the mills provided and so endured (and generally denied) the price that they paid physically for that modest prosperity. Long accustomed to the foul smelling air and the soot that permeated everything, the townspeople continued that October with their normal activities. The high school football team played its archrival Monongahela on Friday night, after younger children had participated in the annual Halloween parade down the town’s main commercial street. But people found it harder to see as time passed, and many fans found it difficult to follow the action on the

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<sup>12</sup> For general overviews of the incident, see Lynne Page Snyder, “Revisiting Donora, Pennsylvania’s 1948 Air Pollution Disaster,” in *Devastation and Renewal: An Environmental History of Pittsburgh and Its Region*, Joel A. Tarr, ed. (Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 126-144, and Devra Davis, *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 1-30.

football field just yards away. By the time the game ended, people had started to collapse. They couldn't breathe. Nine died that Saturday and nine more on Sunday. The death toll reached twenty by Monday.

Perhaps because the mills had operated in Donora for decades without an incident of this magnitude, their operators did not accept responsibility for this particular smog attack, even as residents gasped for air and died. U.S. Steel at first resisted pleas to stop production and the stacks continued to emit the deadly effluent. It finally did shut the furnaces down, roughly when the fog lifted and the effluent escaped.

The killer smog took at least twenty lives in Donora within three days. The longer-term effect was far greater, with some estimates suggesting that the smog was responsible for fifty "excess" deaths within a month of the incident and thousands of premature deaths in the months and years to follow. The debate over the smog's cause heated up. U.S. Steel denied any responsibility for the health struggles, but 150 Donora residents believed otherwise and sued for over a half million dollars. State investigators came to town, as did the United States Public Health Service. The town hired an independent chemist to assess the pollution. A public health physician from the University of Cincinnati came to study the town as well. Historians suggest that the Donora catastrophe prompted the U.S. Congress to enact the first national air protection legislation in the nation's history a few years later.

The air pollution disaster garnered national attention, as it made the front page of the *New York Times*. But the *Pittsburgh Catholic* took little notice. One of its two articles on the events, which did make the front page, informed readers that nine of those killed, nearly half of those who died in the days of the fog itself, would soon have funerals in Catholic parishes. Furthermore, the article noted that "[d]octors, hospitals and undertaking establishments were all overwhelmed by the sudden onset of the catastrophe, which affected hundreds of persons besides those who died." But it was also careful to temper its judgment of the cause of the killer smog, as it reported only that the fumes were "supposed to have come from industrial plants nearby." And the editor positioned the story low on the front page, well below the fold, beneath even an article announcing that the Western Pennsylvania Regional Unit of the Catholic Library Association would hold its 15<sup>th</sup> semi-annual meeting at Duquesne University nine days later.<sup>13</sup>

The championing of rural living in the not-so-distant past would seem to have offered a clear lens through which to view this environmental disaster. Those killed would have been physically safer living on modest plots of land with subsistence gardens. Yet the *Pittsburgh Catholic* revisited the Donora smog only once, when it recalled briefly

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<sup>13</sup> "Donora Victims of 'Smog' Buried," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, November 4, 1948, 1.

in its summary of the year's events that some of those killed were buried from Catholic parishes. Curiously enough, it reduced the number from nine to six.<sup>14</sup>

Why was there so little discussion of this dramatic catastrophe that indicted urban industrial life in the Catholic discourse? Perhaps the ready privileging of farming that had emerged in the midst of the Great Depression so powerfully ran into another powerful strain in western Pennsylvania culture. Those who worked the mills and mines did not feel economically secure through most of the twentieth century, and certainly not before the 1950s and 1960s. They assented to the common assertion that "smoke meant jobs," and concerns for environmental degradation almost invariably took a back seat to the desire for employment. Challenging that uneasy accommodation, even in the face of one of the worst air pollution disasters in American history, would have put the community at great economic peril.

### THE BIRTH OF MODERN ENVIRONMENTALISM

Western Pennsylvania was the birthplace of the catalyst for the modern environmental movement, and one might reasonably expect that place of privilege to have sparked a keen interest in the environmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s. But area Catholics seem not to have been inspired by Rachel Carson's local ties to embrace the movement that the publication of *Silent Spring* energized.

Rachel Carson was born and raised in Springdale, Pennsylvania, just a few miles up the Allegheny River from the City of Pittsburgh. She graduated from the Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham University) in the city's Shadyside neighborhood before heading off to graduate study at Johns Hopkins University, and a career with the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and, more importantly, as a nature writer who made complex biological systems comprehensible to a general reading public. In 1962, she published *Silent Spring* and, according to many historians, gave birth to the modern environmental movement by transforming the way that Americans came to understand nature and the human place within it. One historian called it "the basic book of America's environmental revolution."<sup>15</sup> Given its transformative

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<sup>14</sup> "Naming Coadjutor Bishop Outstanding Event in 1948 Chronicle of Diocese of Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, January 6, 1949, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993), 99. Robert Gottlieb argues that Carson aimed in *Silent Spring* to create "nothing less" than a "new environmental consciousness"; see *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993), 84. Shabecoff observed that *Silent Spring* achieved exactly this, as it "changed the way Americans, and people around the world, looked at the reckless way we live on this planet" (*A Fierce Green Fire*, 107). See

power, it generated a great deal of controversy and sparked tremendous criticism from the chemical industry that it indicted so persuasively. President John F. Kennedy established a special committee to look into its charges even before Houghton Mifflin brought the book to publication—the result of the great response to its serialized publication in *The New Yorker* magazine. That committee vindicated Rachel Carson and her conclusions.<sup>16</sup>

But Pittsburgh area Catholics would not have encountered Rachel Carson or *Silent Spring* in the region's Catholic public discourse. The *Pittsburgh Catholic* took little notice of *Silent Spring* and seemed oblivious to concerns about ecology, pollution, nature, or any other environmental matters. One cannot discern an overtly environmental consciousness in the Catholic public discourse manifested in the Pittsburgh diocesan newspaper or in the paper of the newly established Greensburg diocese, carved out of the Pittsburgh diocese just years before.<sup>17</sup> There were bits and pieces for sure, such as Msgr. Charles Owen Rice's complaints about air pollution in 1962—the same year that *Silent Spring* came out. Nationally syndicated columnist Donald McDonald lauded *The New Yorker* magazine in 1963 for publishing *Silent Spring*'s text across three consecutive issues, but mentioned this only as one of a number of meaningful stories that helped make the publication relevant once more. The following year, McDonald devoted an entire column to a lament that new developments in cities and rural areas were “maiming, if not murder[ing]” nature and beauty. He noted that “we pollute our streams with industrial and human waste and contaminate the air with our car exhaust gases. Now we are threatening to level the centuries-old redwood trees in northern California.”<sup>18</sup> Otherwise the paper remained silent.

Just as the *Pittsburgh Catholic* found nothing worthy to report about *Silent Spring*, it also contained little on the other event often credited with starting the modern environmental movement. The first Earth Day, celebrated by millions of Americans on April 22, 1970, drew little coverage. The paper did note in advance that Duquesne University students helped to organize a four day teach-in on ecology,

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also Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993), 3; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Texas: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 85-90.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Hamilton Lytle, *The Gentle Subversive: Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, and the Rise of the Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 182-185.

<sup>17</sup> The Greensburg diocesan paper, the *Catholic Accent*, made no mention of Carson's publication or of the movement that it ignited.

<sup>18</sup> Donald McDonald, “The New ‘New Yorker,’” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, February 28, 1963, 4; Donald McDonald, “The Maiming of Nature,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, May 14, 1964, 4.

along with students from Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, but it failed to report on what occurred during the teach-in.<sup>19</sup> Subsequent mentions of this annual manifestation of environmental consciousness were rare and focused exclusively on local grade school and high school programs, such as clean-up projects and school plays.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of attention paid to this transformative moment in 1970 marks a dramatic contrast to the coverage given to its 1990s celebrations, and especially to its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1995. Long-time readers of the *Pittsburgh Catholic* in 1995 might reasonably wonder why the paper would laud so highly the silver anniversary celebration of an event that escaped notice almost entirely when it first occurred.

In fact, it was not until the early 1990s that one can find anything that resembles an environmental ethos discussed robustly in the diocesan paper. In 1990, the paper quoted Fr. Albert J. Fritsch's admonition that

We are all called to share the limited resources of the earth in a proper manner with the less fortunate, exert an effort at actually cleaning up the pollution that afflicts our earth, and profess a constant faith that our earth can be renewed and not destroyed by the greedy and thoughtless.<sup>21</sup>

That same year, Saint Vincent College held a fifteen-week "Environment Semester" that included a five-day Earth Day commemoration.<sup>22</sup> One week later the paper reported on its front page Youngstown, Ohio, Bishop James Malone's exhortation to American Catholics "to accept their responsibilities as stewards of creation."<sup>23</sup> A pronounced environmental ethos had arrived.

If this ethos arrived just before 1990, it does not seem to have been spurred by the regional developments that might reasonably have inspired it in 1934, 1948, 1962, or 1970. Nor does it seem to have come from high in the church hierarchy, as John Paul II's January 1, 1990, message *Peace with God the Creator, Peace With All of Creation* came itself in response to "a new *ecological awareness* [that was] beginning to emerge, which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be

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<sup>19</sup> "Ecology Prof Will Keynote 'Teach-In' Here," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, March 27, 1970, 12.

<sup>20</sup> "So. Side Students Clean Up," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, May 5, 1972, 7; "SS. Simon & Jude First-Graders to Star," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, March 30, 1973, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Liz Schevtchuk, "Earth Day Links Churches to Creator," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, April 13, 1990, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Schevtchuk, "Earth Day Links Churches to Creator," 5.

<sup>23</sup> "Stewards of Creation," *Pittsburgh Catholic*, April 20, 1990, 1.

encouraged.”<sup>24</sup> One can see elements of this awareness in a 1975 pastoral letter *This Land is Home to Me* from the Catholic bishops representing 24 Appalachian dioceses, but even this letter received little coverage in the western Pennsylvania Catholic press.

A Catholic environmental ethos surely developed in the latter decades of the twentieth century, and emerged clearly in the public discourse in 1990. Its development remains opaque, however, and it is likely that it percolated at the grassroots for some time before getting official recognition. **M**

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<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Saint Vincent College must have planned its “Environment Semester” prior to the December 1989 release of the text of the New Year’s message.

## The Consequences of Fossil Fuel Addiction in Schoharie County

Nancy M. Rourke

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**F**OLLOWING POPE FRANCIS'S LEAD in *Laudato Si'*, this essay uses Catholic Social Teaching to examine the impacts of fossil fuels on family farming in New York state's Schoharie County. Our fossil fuel use (or addiction) has driven families out of farming, has led to disastrous flooding, and has brought an imminent threat of natural gas pipelines and hydraulic fracturing mining. This close look demonstrates the rebounding effects of injustice when principles of social ethics are ignored. The essay then briefly notes thought about *place* in Reformed theology to extend the discussion to the Reformed Church of America, a significant denomination in Schoharie County.

In Northern Appalachia, in Central New York, in the county of Schoharie, there is a hollow where my mother and her father were both born and raised. Ecker Hollow is the location of Bixby Road. Of the thirty-one thousand people who live in Schoharie County, about a dozen of these live along the one-and-a-quarter miles of Bixby Road. About half of these people, the Bixbys, are my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. My sisters and I visited Ecker Hollow for a week each summer from childhood through my high school years. My grandparents live in the big farmhouse on the right, just after the hill. James Bixby, my grandfather, was raised in that house, and two of his sons, my uncles, live in the neighboring houses.

Schoharie County, first settled by the Germans and Dutch in the early eighteenth century, was "the breadbasket for the colonies."<sup>1</sup> But farming in the United States changed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Increased automation and health and safety regulations,

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<sup>1</sup> Schoharie County Planning & Development Agency, "Schoharie County Long Range Economic Development Strategy," 1.2, <http://www.schohariecounty-ny.gov/CountyWebSite/Planning/lredsforScreen.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For more see Deborah Kay Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003); Emery N. Castle, "Agricultural Industrialization in the American Countryside," *Policy Studies Pro-*

which take as normative large-scale, factory-style farming, have combined to pressure small family farms to give up farming. Accordingly, Schoharie's population is shrinking. The years between 2010 and 2014 saw a population decrease of about 3.5 percent (just over one thousand people), one of the largest population losses in the state during that time.<sup>3</sup> Schoharie County schools lose about 2 percent of their students every year. The lack of job prospects is the most likely explanation.<sup>4</sup>

The economic context of Schoharie County is difficult. Median household income in the county was under forty-nine thousand dollars in 2016, and the rate of unemployment was over 6.5 percent.<sup>5</sup> A recent poll surveying Schoharie County residents found that fewer than half of those polled operate a farm as their primary occupation. Is this no longer a farming community? Not exactly. The market value of agricultural products sold in Schoharie is over thirty-nine million dollars per year.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, farming is happening, although most people are no longer doing it themselves.

From farming, Schoharie County has turned to factory work. Schoharie County is less than an hour from the capital district (the cities of Schenectady, Albany, and Troy) and, as small scale farming became impossible, people began to drive to Schenectady for work at the American Locomotive Company facility and General Electric (GE). When these plants began to close, the county lost nearly 75 percent of its manufacturing jobs.<sup>7</sup> At its peak, GE had employed forty thousand people at this facility, but fewer than three thousand worked there by 2004. GE found cheaper processes and lower hourly wages elsewhere in the world and relocated to take advantage of that opportunity.

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*gram Reports*, <http://ideas.repec.org/b/ags/hawall/134118.html>; Miguel Altieri, "Ecological Impacts of Industrial Agriculture and the Possibilities for Truly Sustainable Farming," *Monthly Review* 50, No. 3 (Jul/Aug 1998): 60-71; and Lloyd G. Carter, "Reaping Riches in a Wretched Region: Subsidized Industrial Farming and Its Link to Perpetual Poverty," *Golden Gate University Environmental Law Journal* 3 (2009-2010): 5.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Poole and Patsy Nicosia, "Schoharie County Loser in Census," *Times-Journal*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.timesjournalonline.com/details.asp?id=93993>. Nearby Otsego, Delaware, Fulton and Montgomery counties also showed rates of decline, though none as large as Schoharie's.

<sup>4</sup> Poole and Nicosia, "Schoharie County Loser in Census."

<sup>5</sup> "Schoharie County, New York," *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2016*, <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app>.

<sup>6</sup> Steve Wilson, "Message from the New Schoharie County Administrator," *Schoharie County Farm Bureau News*, [http://www.nyfb.org/img/county\\_docs/newsletter\\_8crf6hniif.pdf](http://www.nyfb.org/img/county_docs/newsletter_8crf6hniif.pdf), 3. Wilson cites the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

<sup>7</sup> Schoharie County Planning & Development Agency, "Schoharie County Long Range Economic Development Strategy."

In 2004, Schoharie planners retained a consulting firm to help them think about their economic future. The resulting report described a difficult situation. Here is a brief excerpt:

There are farming families in the county that will want to hold on to their farms and want protection from land value escalation and nuisance law suits from near neighbors. In addition, farming families frequently seek additional jobs off the farm to supplement farm income, particularly to pay for healthcare benefits.... Many families have lived in the county for generations, deriving their livelihood from the land and small local businesses. Looking out the kitchen or office window and seeing the hills, driving on the back roads through the pastoral farmland, or going into the non-congested villages for an errand is what people have done here for centuries. Residents realize that progress is somewhat inevitable but there is a deep desire not to lose what currently exists.<sup>8</sup>

Today, the largest employer for the county is Wal-Mart. A county route that I remember skirting the edges of the hills, offering views of silos, ponds, churches and fields, is now a busy street with turning lanes in and out of a Wal-Mart superstore and distribution center. Families' histories move in response to the social, political, economic, and ecological policies within which they are embedded. Our national fossil fuel dependency marks this history, as can be seen in Schoharie Country through the changes in farming, floods, and gas pipelines.

### **CHANGES IN FARMING**

My mom remembers getting up early in the morning as a teenager to move cows from barn to field. After school, she brought them back home for dinner, with the help of the family's dog. Hay and corn grew in the hollow between road and houses. By the 1960s, farming on smaller scales was becoming impossible. My mother's family sold their cows. Many other farming families did the same. Other families followed the opposite strategy: they dramatically expanded the scale of their production and industrialized their methods in accordance with the encouragement they received from new economic and public policies. Faster, fossil fuel-driven automation enabled these farms to

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<sup>8</sup> Schoharie County Planning & Development Agency, "Schoharie County Long Range Economic Development Strategy," 4.3.

survive. The farm of one neighbor, Farmer Stan, flourished financially. Today, Farmer Stan farms four hundred and fifty milking cows. He keeps over nine hundred animals in total on fifteen hundred acres.<sup>9</sup>

After his own dairy farm ended, my grandfather became a district manager of sales for DuPont Pioneer, a major hybrid seed company.<sup>10</sup> The barn full of hay was replaced by a warehouse full of pallets stacking bags of seed. These were the perfect size and durability for children to climb over and build forts with. DuPont Pioneer took my grandparents to exotic conference locations in Hawaii and overseas. The house on Bixby Road stores dozens of boxes of slides taken on these trips. Rows of smiling white men and women stand in front of foreign landscapes and famous places, many adorned in DuPont Pioneer swag: hats, jackets, penknives. The house in which I grew up north of Ecker Hollow was always well outfitted with DuPont Pioneer hats, kitchen knives, and pens.

My grandparents knew what was happening to farming and were simply not willing to make the changes necessary to remain competitive. Small farms either failed or changed their ways, incorporating more automation and farming on larger scales. This is why Schoharie today has fewer small family farms and more very large farms. The large farms, whether run by corporations or as family businesses, produce commodities at such a scale that industry, rather than agriculture, is a better name for what they do.

Today, the Bixby hay fields are sown, cut, turned, baled, and collected by two or three smaller, older tractors and the muscle power of family and neighbors. Bales are picked up one at a time, tossed up onto a trailer behind the tractor, stacked neatly by my cousin as he perches ten feet in the air, and hauled to a warehouse for sale.

Neighboring farms use larger tractors, more fuel, and automated processes at each of these steps. Rather than walking alongside a tractor and picking up a bale at a time with two-to-four others, someone drives a machine, which is the rough equivalent of a factory floor on wheels. Bales are sucked up, thrown into the air, and hauled however they land on a much larger trailer which follows along. The process, my grandfather noted, is much less efficient and messy. “They don’t even stack the bales,” he said. They don’t need to, he notes, because the machines can carry so many more bales each trip. But still...they aren’t carried efficiently.<sup>11</sup> More fuels are required and more energy

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<sup>9</sup> “Farmer Stan” is a pseudonym. Lisa Keuhnle, “Docket PF 14-22-000,” Letter of public comment, June 10, 2015, <http://www.massplan.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Schoharie-County-Soil-and-Water-Conservation.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Sandra Rourke, private conversation, December 26, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> For more on this conversation see Nancy M. Rourke, “God, Grace, and Creation: Shaping a Catholic Environmental Virtue Ethic,” in *God, Grace, and Creation (College Theology Society Annual Volume, 55)*, ed. Philip J. Rossi (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 222–34.

is consumed. Fewer humans are needed in the field. There is an apparent efficiency here, but it is only that: apparent. Actual efficiency has been displaced.

It may seem odd that the small-farming model would evolve into an industrial agricultural model that is actually less efficient. It is the desire for greater efficiency that seems to impel increased automation in farming and in many other areas of life and work. Industrial agriculture's ways of collecting and storing bales are only one example among many that small farmers recognize as inefficient. Milking and moving cows; feeding cows, chickens, and pigs; and even farm animals' reproduction offer more examples. Industrial agriculture's definition of efficiency reflects its beliefs about which sources of energy ought to be used and which ought to be eschewed. In this view, the preferred sources are gas and oil.

*Laudato Si'* reflects on this preference of fossil fuels over human labor. Although conserving human muscle energy with automation, specialization, and a specific ordering of specialized tasks for workers seems good in many ways, the benefits of this preference does not factor in the commensurate costs to human wellbeing. As anyone who has experienced work-related satisfaction knows, there are goods that come with the experience of labor itself. As fewer workers are needed to harvest a field, fewer individuals have access to those goods and to that satisfaction.

This agricultural evolution has costs. Each person who is at work in farming a field experiences the goods of a variety of tasks which involve creative thinking, muscle effort, and an engaged bodily experience. These are also lost with the specialization required by industrial agriculture. Efficiency as an effort to conserve human effort is a good, but it ought not to be an end of such primacy that the goods of expending effort are lost.

This evolution fails to value what Catholic Social Teaching calls "participation." Participation in work is necessary for a person to flourish (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 263). Excessive reduction of human labor runs counter to a complete theological anthropology. Excessive specialization of the work that does remain for a person limits the satisfaction of that person in his or her work. This is also a limitation against participation. When only unsatisfying labor is available because of a society's definition of efficiency, we can conclude that the only goods valued in the system are the benefits to others, not to the workers themselves. The many kinds of benefits that come from helping things grow are forgotten. This is an awful lot to forget, particularly on a finite planet.

Claims that industrial agriculture is more efficient fail to recognize that farming methods employing fossil-fuel powered forms of labor replace human labor and that these sources are not more efficient. Human labor is traded off against gas or oil driven labor, and those sources of energy come at additional costs. Harmful global consequences result. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are emitted, finite resources are depleted at an unsustainable rate, and further consequences follow from these. Fossil fuels must also be extracted and distributed. Each of these steps requires additional fossil-fuel based energy expenditure. All of this necessitates and accelerates the consumption of a finite fuel source with no certain knowledge of how much remains to be used. (At the same time, we in the United States see few signs of widespread preparation to transition to other energy sources.) Efficiency, a laudable goal when defined accurately, is not approached. Participation, stewardship of energy, and prudence itself are systematically ignored or counteracted. The faults in such a short-sighted and careless system are clear, and they are clear before we even take into account the pace of these GHG emissions that are destabilizing the global climate.

## FLOODING

This brings us to a second major consequence of fossil fuel addiction which Schoharie County has endured. Climate change has unleashed many hardships, including extreme weather events. When, on August 26, 2011, Hurricane Irene struck Schoharie County, the water level at Dave and Denise Lloyd's farm rose seven feet in twenty minutes.<sup>12</sup> In an interview with local author Meta Watts, the Lloyds said:

We had twenty minutes... Twenty minutes to move everything. I could see the water coming over the field like the tide rolling in on a beach. But there wasn't time. In twenty minutes we went from dry ground to seven feet of water in the barn. Twenty minutes . . . We really lost everything. It wiped out our farm, our house, our trucks, my car, our business, my business on Main Street. Everything . . . We had a bumper corn crop that year, and had expected to start harvesting the following day...but we lost that, too. And all the feed that we had harvested and stored got washed down river.<sup>13</sup>

Hurricane Irene destroyed a third of all houses and businesses in the village of Schoharie. The water level on Main Street reached eight feet above ground. Three hundred people became homeless immediately. All over the county, fuel oil storage tanks fell over and spilled. Live-stock feed was ruined, entire crops and many animals died, and roads

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<sup>12</sup> Meta Watts, *It's a Hard Life - It's a Good Life* (New York: The Troy Book Makers, 2015), 55.

<sup>13</sup> Watts, *It's a Hard Life*, 56.

were torn apart. Eight bridges were destroyed. Drinking water was gone. Topsoil—an extremely valuable resource—was carried away. Normally eighty yards wide, Schoharie Creek swelled to a mile wide.<sup>14</sup> Eleven days later, Tropical Storm Lee struck, and the flooding began all over again.

Recovery continues today after over a billion dollars in relief came to the region.<sup>15</sup> The local organization SALT (Schoharie Area Long Term) continues to marshal resources and to shape the area's recovery.<sup>16</sup> The impact on vegetation is noticeable even if you had not known what the area looked like before the floods. Many houses are simply abandoned, irretrievable. Year by year the topsoil is still slowly rebuilding. The memory of white water rapids roaring down the main street of the town of Middleburg and almost taking my cousin Jenny away with it is fresh. Federal aid, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) forms, and flood insurance policies are still a topic at gas stations and in kitchens. This area had flooded before Irene and Lee, but the scale and scope of this disaster was on a new order. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo commented that we now experience “a hundred year flood every two years.”<sup>17</sup> The storms left a struggling county even more vulnerable. Ecker Hollow experienced power losses

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<sup>14</sup> Ali Stewart, “Schoharie Highlights 4 Year Anniversary of Hurricane Irene,” *News10 ABC*, August 28, 2015, <http://news10.com/2015/08/28/schoharie-highlights-4-year-anniversary-of-hurricane-irene/>; “Photos: Storm Damage in Schoharie County,” *Times Union*, August 31, 2100, <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Photos-Storm-damage-in-Schoharie-County-2149047.php>.

<sup>15</sup> “Schumer, Gillibrand Announce More Than \$800,000 in FEMA Funding for The Town of Richmondville in Schoharie County,” *Charles E. Schumer, United States Senator for New York*, <http://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/schumer-gillibrand-announce-more-than-800000-in-fema-funding-for-the-town-of-richmondville-in-schoharie-county>; “Governor Cuomo Announces Grants to Help First Responders in Schoharie and Delaware Counties Rebuild After Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee,” *States News Service*, <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-grants-help-first-responders-schoharie-and-delaware-counties-rebuild>; “Governor Cuomo Announces \$128 Million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Projects Advance for Federal Action,” *States News Service*, <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-128-million-hazard-mitigation-grant-projects-advance-federal-action>.

<sup>16</sup> Recovery effort needs include temporary housing, rebuilding communications infrastructure, disaster-related costs to individuals and businesses, consequent unemployment, crisis counseling, over fourteen thousand insurance claims paid out, further flood mitigation projects. For more on the area's recovery efforts see Jim Poole, “SALT Marks Five Years, Recovery since Irene,” *Times Journal*, August 31, 2016, <http://www.timesjournalonline.com/details.asp?id=100138> and “Schoharie Area Long Term, Inc.,” <http://www.saltdevelopment.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> “Cuomo: ‘Extreme Weather’ Needs New Reality,” *UPI NewsTrack*, <http://www.upi.com/Cuomo-Extreme-weather-needs-new-reality/46541351634041/>.

but did not drown to the degree that many other valleys did. Bixby Road itself was spared the worst of the flooding.

### **GAS PIPELINE**

The third consequence of our fossil fuel addiction, though, brought Ecker Hollow much closer to ruin. Only a few weeks before the floods, a conglomerate of four large natural gas companies<sup>18</sup> announced their intention to build a new 125-mile gas pipeline north from Pennsylvania through Delaware, Broome, Chenango, and Schoharie Counties of New York to a substation in the town of Wright. From there, they would begin to supply the northeast with a higher volume of natural gas. The Constitution Pipeline was slated to begin moving gas from Pennsylvania's sites of hydraulic fracturing by late 2017.

My family soon learned that the proposed pipeline would run through Ecker Hollow, entering my grandparents' land to the south, over the top of the mountain. It would cross the hollow at an angle, running through hay fields, protected wetlands, and my uncle's front yard. It would pass underneath his driveway and proceed across that valley to cross a county road, climb the hill north of the valley, and continue from there to cross Farmer Stan's land.

The proposal was greeted with both welcome and opposition in Schoharie. Individual households and farms received letters to sign to grant Constitution access to their lands. Beginning in December of 2012, the company held eight rounds of competitions for proposals for development grants in the area.<sup>19</sup> Local groups competed to win money to buy an ambulance, construct a schoolyard, and replace a town hall roof. In addition, Constitution began making financial offers to all who lived along the proposed route to gain easement access to the land. Damage release papers were distributed for residents to sign.

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<sup>18</sup> Constitution Pipeline Company, LLC, is owned by subsidiaries of Williams Partners L.P., Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation, Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc., and WGL Holdings, Inc.

<sup>19</sup> Constitution Pipeline, "Community Grant Program," <http://constitutionpipeline.com/constitution-community-grant-program/>: "The Constitution Pipeline Community Grant program was developed to demonstrate the company's commitment to placing safety, environmental stewardship and community support at the heart of its operations. The program was established a fund [sic] to benefit local communities within the counties traversed by the pipeline project. Since its inception in 2012, more than \$2 million has been awarded by the Constitution Pipeline Community Grant Program to 159 organizations to help fund noteworthy projects that directly benefit communities in the pipeline project area." See also "Constitution Pipeline Doles Out Another \$50K in Grants, Despite NY," *Marcellus Drilling News*, June 3, 2016, <http://marcellusdrilling.com/2016/06/constitution-pipeline-doles-out-another-50k-in-grants-despite-ny/>; and "Constitution Pipeline Awards Another Round of Grants," *Columbia-Greene Media*, [http://www.registerstar.com/the\\_mountain\\_eagle/news/article\\_18c4b170-e410-11e2-8cd0-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.registerstar.com/the_mountain_eagle/news/article_18c4b170-e410-11e2-8cd0-0019bb2963f4.html).

Farmer Stan challenged the proposed route and won some concessions, which reduced some of the harm his farms' lands and buildings would experience.<sup>20</sup> His own resistance, paired with his standing as a successful businessman in the area, was critical to the pipeline resistance effort. The effort he expended to demonstrate that this pipeline would hurt his business carried much more weight than arguments about threatened species, quality of life, or water contamination.

A small non-profit group installed an advocate in the town of Richmondville to assist local opposition.<sup>21</sup> Meetings and hearings for and against the pipeline were held. Both sorts of public events were widely attended, more and more widely as the notices and easement access papers appeared in more and more roadside mailboxes. Often, groups of men wearing matching t-shirts in favor of the pipeline attended the hearings.<sup>22</sup> "Job creation" was the buzzword.

An Environment Impact Statement (EIS) draft was assembled as a part of the process of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) approval of the proposed pipeline.<sup>23</sup> Public comment periods produced a large volume of responses demonstrating both support and opposition, and this feedback was categorized and quantified for the next draft. In the end, FERC gave approval to the project, with the stipulation that the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the Army Corps of Engineers must grant Constitution certain necessary permits.

Farmer Stan and my grandparents rejected offer after offer from Constitution to gain access to their lands. Eminent domain proceedings began. All through this multi-year process my family repeatedly discovered workers from the company illegally surveying and even

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<sup>20</sup> An alternative route along the corridor of the state highway (Interstate 88) was also possible, but the company did not prefer this route and so rejected it. Even the *Marcellus Drilling News* newsletter agreed with Famer Stan's opposition to the Constitution Pipeline's route and methods on this question. See "Good News & Bad News with Constitution Pipeline in PA/NY," March, 2015, <http://marcellusdrilling.com/2015/03/good-news-bad-news-with-constitution-pipeline-in-pany/>. Unfortunately, the full text of this article is now only available to *Marcellus Drilling News* registered members but the beginning is still freely available.

<sup>21</sup> Patsy Nicosia, "Center for Sustainable Rural Communities Opens in Richmondville," *The Times-Journal*, November 13, 2012, <http://www.timesjournalonline.com/details.asp?id=77089>.

<sup>22</sup> Personal conversation with Robert Nied of the Center for Sustainable Rural Communities on March 24, 2014 at 296 Main Street in Richmondville, NY.

<sup>23</sup> This document is produced by FERC in close consultation with the company. The EIS draft was published in February 2014, FERC published its response in June 2014, and the final EIS appeared on October 24, 2014. For a useful schematic of the steps of this process see FERC, "EIS Pre-Filing Environmental Review Process," <http://www.ferc.gov/resources/processes/flow/process-eis.asp>.

excavating along the proposed pathway. These trespassers were repeatedly told to leave, but everyone kept a vigilant watch over the hayfields and the hills because soon a new group of men would appear with either clipboards or shovels.

Financial offers from the company to area landowners were renewed. Everyone who had not conceded to the company began to worry that the next offers would be both less generous and more insistent. In fear and worry, some in my family at last signed the easement papers, taking the thousands of dollars for the company to gain access to field, yard, and driveway. Others (Farmer Stan and my grandfather) rejected the renewed offers. A large group of landholders hired lawyers to resist the pressure to sign. More rounds of contests for development grants were held and celebrated in the local media.

What did these papers say? According to Constitution's "Damage Release" waiver, landowners who agreed to sign an easement for the company also agreed to "release and forever discharge" Constitution from any liability for "injury and damage to the property" that may happen related to the pipeline. In other words, the easement effectively required landowners and their heirs to take on legal responsibility for the safety of the pipes themselves.<sup>24</sup>

The potential employment this pipeline would bring was enormously inflated in Constitution's press releases, reports, and public statements. The number of jobs created directly and indirectly along the pipeline's route was projected to be significant, but only during the months of the pipeline's construction. After construction, the number would be, according to the EIS, only twelve new full time jobs.<sup>25</sup>

The route itself presented an additional threat. Pipeline pathways which avoided the hills were possible, but the proposed path seemed to seek them out. The proposed pathway was laid out in a way that crossed over higher peaks above shale at several points. This is relevant because fracking at hilltop peaks is faster and more efficient<sup>26</sup> due to higher pressure from shale gas at higher altitudes. As the pipeline

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "We're Linked to the Land," *Schoharie Times Journal*, March 6, 2013, 6; and Constitution Pipeline, "Damage Release" (Tract ALT-O-NY-SC-013.010).

<sup>25</sup> Rourke, "Letter to Editor," *Schoharie Times Journal*, April 1, 2014. "The Constitution Pipeline will not provide these jobs. A Center for Governmental Research study (released 2/11/2013) found that the long-term economic impact of this pipeline would be the addition of twelve—12—jobs to the counties where the pipes would lay. FERC's estimate is even lower. As for short-term work, FERC estimated that unemployment rates in Schoharie County would improve by less than 0.8 percent and only temporarily. About seventy five percent of the temporary workforce needed for construction is expected to be 'non-local.'" See Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement 0249D," February 2014, sections five (5.1.9) and four (4-133 through 4-136).

<sup>26</sup> Robert W. Kolb, *The Natural Gas Revolution: At the Pivot of the World's Energy Future* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2013).

proposal was made, New York was considering to permit hydraulic fracturing. The question of whether the natural gas in the Utica and Marcellus Shale regions would be mined was up in the air. Until the state's decision not to permit fracking was announced in June of 2015, it was genuinely unclear which direction the state would take in this matter.<sup>27</sup>

In October 2015, local news announced that the pipes were being assembled in the Guilderland, NY, area.<sup>28</sup> Newspapers printed pictures of pipes piled and awaiting installation. These pictures made the threat to Ecker Hollow even more real. After all, why would a company be willing to invest in building and storing these pipes unless they were quite sure that they were about to be allowed to proceed in installing them? At every stage the resources and experience of the company, which was, after all, a conglomeration of several energy companies, dwarfed the experience, knowledge, resources, know-how, and connections of the local pipeline opposition.

On one visit, I was photographing letters and forms and discussing the latest news and documents with my grandparents when my grandmother said she had a question she really wanted to ask me. She said, "Do they think we are just ignorant hicks? They look at us, and they see old people who don't matter anymore, who are kind of stupid and can't understand what's really going on. Is that what they are thinking?"

In 2015, a second pipeline proposal appeared. The Northeast Energy Direct line would parallel the Constitution pipeline. Constitution responded to the proposal with a lawsuit, claiming that insufficient customer demand existed for both lines to be necessary or even sustainable. Local pipeline opposition was not surprised because it was already widely understood that one pipeline would beat a path for others. But this second proposal raised a concern that someone, somewhere—someone with legal advisors, contacts in Albany, and experience in these matters—was reading the state's intentions as favorable

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<sup>27</sup> NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, "New York State Officially Prohibits High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing," June 29, 2015, <http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/102337.html>. In the months leading up to the DEC announcement, two studies of this method (one federal and one state) were still under way, and the governor of New York was giving no indication as to which decision he might favor.

<sup>28</sup> "Controversial Constitution Pipeline Project Inches Closer as Crews Build Site for Coating Gas Lines in Upstate New York," *Albany Business Review*, October 30, 2015, <http://www.bizjournals.com/albany/news/2015/10/30/crews-preparing-for-construction-of-constitution.html>; Anne Hayden Harwood, "Constitution Pipes Set to Be Made in Guilderland," *The Altamont Enterprise*, October 29, 2015, <http://altamontenterprise.com/10292015/constitution-pipes-set-be-made-guilderland>.

to increased natural gas passage and possibly even to mining in New York. In my own experience, the fear and dread was at its peak when these two energy conglomerates began to quarrel with each other over access to land they had not yet, as best we could tell, even won.

On April 22, 2016, New York's Department of Environmental Conservation announced that it would not grant Constitution the 401 Water Quality Certification permit.<sup>29</sup> This permit was necessary for Constitution to begin laying pipe. The letter announcing the denial did not announce this rejection with a friendly tone. In addition to noting the immediate water-related reasons for disallowing this proposed pipeline, this fourteen page letter also named reasons to suspect that the company itself would not follow conscientiously the requirements already in place to regulate its next steps. It chastised the company's manner of proceeding thus far and cited residents' reports of premature and unauthorized work being done in places along the proposed path.

(T)he Department has received reports that tree felling has already occurred in New York on the Project's right of way. This tree cutting, both clear cutting and selective cutting, has occurred notwithstanding the fact that Constitution has right-of-way agreements with the property owners where this cutting has occurred. The tree felling was conducted near streams and directly on the banks of some streams, and in one instance has resulted in trees and brush being deposited directly in a stream, partially damming it.<sup>30</sup>

Constitution responded with indignation and disappointment and promised to appeal. Since its latest communication to this effect (May 16, 2016), no further announcements have been made.<sup>31</sup> At the time of writing, Schoharie County is safe.

Is this era of difficulties over for Schoharie County? This will depend on us. As long as we support and participate in fossil-fueled energy systems, we supply the motivation to mine these GHG-producing fuels. Obviously, Schoharie County has a lot at stake in whether we will face and end our collective fossil fuel addiction. Consider again

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<sup>29</sup> John Ferguson and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Environmental Permits & Pollution Prevention, "Joint Application: DEC Permit # 0-9999-00181/00024 Water Quality Certification/Notice of Denials," April 22, 2016, [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/constitutionwc42016.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/constitutionwc42016.pdf); and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, "New York State Department of Environment Conservation Denies Water Quality Certificate Required for Constitution Pipeline," April 22, 2016, [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/constitutionwc42016.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/constitutionwc42016.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, "Joint Application," 2.

<sup>31</sup> Constitution Pipeline, <http://constitutionpipeline.com/constitution-pipeline-challenges-decision-by-new-york-state-to-block-federally-approved-pipeline/>. The organization's twitter feed is still active.

the story told here. Increased reliance on gas and oil removed from small farmers' hands the capacity to continue farming. Consequences of the resultant increased GHG presence in the atmosphere globally contributed to this farming area's flood plain conditions and enabled two disastrous storms in one month's period. The health, the quiet, and the beauty of the region, its air and water quality, biodiversity and resilience were then besieged by these planned natural gas pipelines.

The culprit for all these events is our fossil fuel addiction. The interrelatedness of these damaging consequences demonstrates that a failure of justice in one respect gives rise to further injustices. This characteristic of injustice is well known to social ethics thinkers. Examples include ecofeminists who show how injustice against women and injustice against environments collaborate, as well as womanists who explain the relationship between racism and sexism and the ways these two evils feed one another. Accordingly, Catholic Social Teaching has described the connections between practices of disregard for laborers, for children, for the poor, for the elderly, and for the marginalized. More recently, Catholic Social Teaching has explicitly described how these injustices and those carried out against creation itself grow from the same roots. *Laudato Si'* is the fullest description of this so far. In *Laudato Si'*, these roots feed on our "technocratic paradigm" mindset and our "rapidification" (no. 18) tendency (among other things). Injustice has an ecological fecundity. This makes sense because injustice is always carried out within ecosystems. But here, exactly, is where Catholic Social Teaching can bring hope.

### CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* recognizes solidarity as both a social principle and moral virtue (no. 193). Catholic ethicist Meghan Clark sees in solidarity "at once a feeling, an attitude and an activity."<sup>32</sup> Solidarity requires us to seek "points of possible agreement where attitudes of separation and fragmentation prevail. It translates into the willingness to give oneself for the good of one's neighbor, beyond any individual or particular interest" (no. 194). It means being aware of the ways in which we are indebted to (all) others and adopting that willingness to give which results from that awareness (no. 195).<sup>33</sup> Solidarity also values differentness because it assumes that taking in the lived experience of the "other" both exercises

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<sup>32</sup> Meghan J. Clark, "Anatomy of a Social Virtue: Solidarity and Corresponding Vices," *Political Theology* 15, no. 1 (2014): 26–39, 26.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the significance of "indebtedness," this see Hannah Ka, "Environment," in Grace Y. Kao et al., *Asian American Christian Ethics* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016), 203–223.

and enhances wisdom.<sup>34</sup> Awareness of our indebtedness isn't just nice. It is accurate.

"They think we're just a bunch of dumb old hicks, don't they?" My grandmother's question identifies a cultural divide with which many of us are familiar. A mutual animosity is at work between American rural and urban communities.<sup>35</sup> The plan to port natural gas through an economically distressed rural area in order to sell to a large number of customers in Boston and New York City creates a situation in which the risks, invasion, inconvenience, and other burdens are borne by one (smaller) community in order to supply another (larger) community with benefits. Practices of imaginative solidarity could have nurtured in both communities an awareness of the mutual indebtedness that exists between rural and urban communities. Awareness of mutual indebtedness leads to gratitude, to a sense of partnership and to trust and collaboration.<sup>36</sup> Without this solidarity we spiral together into deeper fragmentation. The suffering of the poor in both communities continues but their laments are not properly heard.<sup>37</sup>

The preferential option for the poor asserts "a special form of primacy" in our obligation to love the poor (CSDC, no. 182). This love is due as both attitude and concrete, material help because we are to direct love as God directs love. Our industrial and domestic spheres of life and work contribute disproportionately to climate change and the harmful effects of the climate's changes are hurting exactly those humans who are poorest and most vulnerable (*Laudato Si'*, no. 48). The preferential option for the poor requires that we respond to the poor and the vulnerable first and most urgently (*Laudato Si'*, no. 158, and CSDC, no. 186). Such responses must be genuine and beneficial to those who are at risk.

The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is not always recognized. Environmental racism in the United States is one proven example.<sup>38</sup> In Schoharie County, the preferential option for the poor

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<sup>34</sup> Nichole M. Flores, "Latina/o Families: Solidarity and the Common Good," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 2 (September 2013): 57–72, 68. See also Kristin E. Heyer, *Kinship Across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 114.

<sup>35</sup> Others have made similar observations. See for example Lisa Heldke, "Farming Made Her Stupid," *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 151–65, and J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> Ka, "Environment," 222.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the connections between lament and justice see Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> See the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, "Toxic Wastes and Race," 1987, <http://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1310/ML13109A339.pdf> and the follow-up report from the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries, "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty (1987-2007)," 2007, <http://www.ucc.org/environmental->

and vulnerable was violated with some contempt. Pipeline opposition from individuals representing large farms carried much more weight than others' arguments. Economic success translated directly into political success. A starker example of this is Constitution's way of purchasing good will in Northern Appalachia. Constitution's "development grants" targeted the county's economic vulnerability for the purpose of gaining the residents' willingness to permit an expanded harm to their own wellbeing. This is inherently exploitative. No proposed pipeline appeared to the counties of Westchester or Rockland. Seismic changes in farming practice had already rendered Schoharie and neighboring communities economically vulnerable, and Constitution's periodic competitions to grant awards played to this vulnerability. Schoharie residents recognized this. They perceived these as bribes or soft coercion. There is also a kind of malice perceptible here. A large company suggests, before even joining the community in any sense, that the people bare their specific vulnerabilities, their rawest need, and then offers single, one-time bandages for a systematically generated privation—a privation fueled in part by that company's own industry. Even aside from all considerations of compassion, love, and acknowledgement of one's own culpability—the real heart of the preferential option for the poor—this principle also demonstrates that justice, very simply, has beneficial consequences. Constitution's "development grants," on the other hand, were a raw demonstration of power masquerading as beneficence.

The principle of subsidiarity requires that larger groups aim to "support, promote and develop" smaller groups (CSDC, no. 186). Subsidiarity both protects and emphasizes local agency. It aims to shield smaller social groups from seeing their interests overwhelmed by the force of larger groups (including larger groups of which the smaller groups are constituent parts). This principle also values local knowledge and understandings. A lived, intimate understanding of an area or a subculture is both precious and practically useful.

Subsidiarity upholds particularity. When pipelines and other projects are proposed, the process of public hearings and the writing of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are meant to protect and enable subsidiarity. Public comments are solicited and incorporated into the final EIS. In the case of Constitution pipeline, the EIS was co-authored by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

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which then determined whether the proposed project could proceed. The EIS process ideally amplifies local knowledge about environmental concerns. After all, community members know who lives there. They understand the local bird population patterns, the area's flora, the soils' history, etc. The process also highlights local residents' own preferences regarding the proposal. But public comments are open to everyone, local or not, and voices representing larger groups are often at least as present. Sections of the final draft of the EIS incorporated the comments that were gathered, but the conclusions drawn from those comments did not agree that any of the objections merited substantive changes.<sup>39</sup>

The EIS process has potential to meet what subsidiarity asks, but two elements get in the way. First, public comment periods do not systematically favor the local community. In fact, energy companies' staffing, connections, and experience with these processes mean that, if the local community does not deliberately and broadly organize and educate broadly, it will not be able to comment in numbers sufficient to raise necessary questions about what is proposed. Second, the agency responsible for evaluating the final EIS is the Federal *Energy* Regulatory Commission, not any agency responsible for safeguarding ecological health. The pipeline in Schoharie County was halted because FERC deferred to the Army Corps of Engineers and to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), deciding to approve the project only on the condition that these two organizations grant the necessary permits. New York's DEC denied Constitution the permit. In the case of other pipelines (like the Dakota Access Pipeline) other local communities have not been so fortunate. Violations of subsidiarity can obscure the true nature of proposed projects by rendering invisible their consequences because consequences are always experienced in the particular.

The principle of participation reminds us that we can and should take part in politics, in economic life, in culture, in every good, neutral, or necessary communal practice and that we must also see that all others have access to them as well (CSDC, no. 195).<sup>40</sup> This principle asserts a right and a duty to take part in all aspects of social and cultural life because we are the sorts of beings who require that for our fulfillment, individually and collectively (*Laudato Si'*, no. 79, and CSDC,

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<sup>39</sup> The public comment period garnered over two hundred statements made at public meetings, over eight hundred letters, and over two thousand written comments and five hundred motions to intervene. See Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement: Constitution Pipeline and Wright Interconnect Projects*, FERC EIS 0249F, docket CP13-499-000, CP13-502-000, PF12-9-000 (October 2014): Vol. 1, ES-2 and I-8 through I-9. This document is publicly available through the eLibrary link at <http://www.ferc.gov>.

<sup>40</sup> For more on this see Ka, "Environment," 220-223.

no. 194). This means that we have a duty to encourage the participation of those whose participation has been specifically impeded or prevented. It requires that we raze the obstacles which prevent others from joining in. The vision of the principle of participation has an abundant life spirit.

Participation envisions the good of each as wrapped up with the good of all. It encourages each to step forward and take part in the activities of larger groups, and it knows that a more vibrant, more interesting, resilient, nuanced, multi-colored, and joyfully cacophonous sort of communal life results from active contributions from all sorts of individuals. The principle of participation cultivates thriving in its preference of inclusive corporate activity over orderly, sparsely-joined, carefully controlled activity. It is, in spirit, a very ecologically minded principle. As such, we might look at the principle more broadly, first with an eye to the communities of all life and then with an eye to human communities.

In the United States, practices of industrial agriculture (like those pushed upon farmers in Schoharie County) aspire to a level of “ecological” control which limits lives’ participation. Plants and animals are living beings which must participate in their ecosystems in order to flourish. When they fail, we fail. Our efforts to restrict lives’ participation leave us constantly scrambling to replace, supplement, correct, re-engineer, and manufacture the benefits that plants and animals would have otherwise gained from participation. We must regain our recognition that all species *need* to participate in their ecosystems. Nonhuman animals in our food systems, for example, are not machines but living beings that have roles to play in creation—including its enjoyment!<sup>41</sup> We will not be able to replicate the cycles of life of these species and their communities, but we could re-learn how to work with them. Now, speaking of this kind of participation as a moral duty is inappropriate but certainly the basic idea that participating is good for all and for each holds true in the broader communities of life.

In human realms, participation could require that opportunities to take part directly in growing and preparing food are available to all

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<sup>41</sup> For more on nonhuman forms of enjoyment see Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) and Celia Deane-Drummond, “Evolutionary Perspectives on Inter-Morality and Inter-Species Relationships Interrogated in the Light of the Rise and Fall of Homo Sapiens Sapiens,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 2 (2014): 72–92. See also Laura Hobgood-Oster, *The Friends We Keep: Unleashing Christianity’s Compassion for Animals* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010); Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, eds., *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009); and Andrew Linzey, *Creatures of the Same God: Explorations in Animal Theology* (New York: Lantern Books, 2009).

persons. Growing food might well be something which we all need to try to do. This is among the “components” of life which “respond(s) more immediately to the intimate nature of man” and within which it is good to participate (CSDC, no. 151). An opportunity to farm, on some scale, can teach us like nothing else can what life requires, how eating fits in with the cycles of all life, and how similar to and connected with all life and the Earth itself we really are. Widespread practices which enhance our awareness of where food comes from, which hold us into direct engagement with the many miracles of growing food would enhance our gratitude, our stewardship, and our awareness of life’s value. This would counter our current food system’s attempts to mask where food comes from and to hide how it is procured and distributed. It would counteract widespread American ignorance about growing food and preparing it for eating. Mass industrialization of agriculture with its turn to fossil fuel dependence has countered the values and benefits that participation wants to offer.

Catholic Social Teaching can be complemented by the Reformed tradition’s emphasis on *place*. The Reformed Church in America, America’s oldest continuous Protestant denomination, is the religion of many of the farmers and others of the county.<sup>42</sup> In many ways, it emphasizes knowing one’s place.<sup>43</sup> After all, Christian cosmologies which emphasize God’s providence recognize easily why one’s “place” in a broader pattern matters. This appears in reminders that we must respect our emplaced-ness (as Presbyterian philosopher Holmes Rolston III has noted<sup>44</sup>) and live well in it. It also appears in appeals that we understand what our own places are like. Reformed theologian Steven Bouma-Prediger notes that this is part of the message we are to learn from Job: we are not at the center. God is. “When God is at the center, and the human is thereby displaced, there is a world wide and wild enough to absorb the pain of human suffering.”<sup>45</sup> Ecological literacy (an aim also encouraged by an entire chapter of *Laudato Si’*) is a central piece of this knowledge.<sup>46</sup> Ecological literacy brings not

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<sup>42</sup> To learn more, see the Reformed Church of America’s web home at <http://www.rca.org>.

<sup>43</sup> The connection to humility should be clear. Of course, any call to us to “know your place” must be heard with critical care. The nature of all “places” is influenced both by God’s grace and by the reality of original sin.

<sup>44</sup> Rolston praises the virtue of being “well-emplaced.” See Holmes Rolston III, “Environmental Virtue Ethics: Half the Truth but Dangerous as a Whole,” in *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, eds. Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 61-78, 70.

<sup>45</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*, 2nd edition (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 98.

<sup>46</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 4.

only knowledge but joy, gratitude, and wonder.<sup>47</sup> Knowing where you are relates to knowing why you are and whose you are.

The First Reformed Church of Bethlehem, just outside of Schoharie County, produced a statement explaining its opposition to the second proposed gas pipeline. Their resistance took the form of hosting meetings and offering ecological education to the community. They called this resistance a “mission project,” a term with clear theological overtones. How did they come to this? Since 1795, this church has held over one hundred acres of land “in sacred trust.” Generations of responsibility to a place inculcated in this church an awareness of its duty to protect this one particular forest preserve. This church’s statement sees in its specific geographical location a sacred duty to protect a place. When gas pipelines approached Schoharie County, this congregation took its duty very seriously and carried it out faithfully. All of us who hope to break our fossil fuel addiction owe this church gratitude for its witness.

This emphasis on place, fits well within *Laudato Si’* perspective.

The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighborhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves. (*Laudato Si’*, no. 84)

Schoharie County, like much of Northern Appalachia, is a place which bears the wounds of our overreager use of fossil fuels. Yes, we have permitted our addiction to become a mandate but now we can and must find new ways to feed and fuel ourselves. Let us hear the stories of places like Schoharie, move in hope toward an integral ecology, and find in these the fuel we truly need.<sup>M</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For more on this see Nancy M. Rourke, “A Catholic Virtues Ecology,” in *Just Sustainability: Ecology, Technology, and Resource Extraction*, eds. Christiana Peppard and Andrea Vicini (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 194–204.

## *Laudato Si'*, Communication Ethics, and the Common Good: Toward a Dialogic Meeting amid Environmental Crisis

John H. Prellwitz

**P**OPE FRANCIS'S SECOND ENCYCLICAL, *Laudato Si'*, directly addresses the responsibility all persons share for the care of our common home, the earth. This essay investigates Pope Francis's conception of integral ecology as a communication ethic that calls humans to being in communion with God and all of God's creation. *Laudato Si'*, therefore, reveals integral ecology as a constructive means to embrace a pastoral and existential call to care for our common good and our common home.

### COMMUNICATION ETHICS AND THEOLOGY

As ethics implies philosophical investigation and analysis, philosophy of communication and communication ethics share a symbiotic relationship that characterizes each as forms of alterity or as "two gatherings of radical difference that demand our understanding and learning."<sup>1</sup> Such radical alterity emerges through communication and analysis of competing perspectives of value and meaning. As globalization continues to reinforce, we "dwell within otherness, a diversity of positions that we bring to the Other."<sup>2</sup>

Situating communication ethics then within the contesting narratives of social reality whether of political orientation or faith tradition, Arnett defines communication ethics as "a multiplicity of communication ethic positions, each of which recognizes a bias or ground that

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald C. Arnett, "Introduction," in *Philosophy of Communication Ethics: Alterity and the Other*, eds. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Arnett, "Introduction," xi. The Other characterizes all subjects that are distinct from oneself as well as one's relation to meaning as brought forth into being through one's encounter with and response to the call of the Other. The self is always situated within a community of alterity in terms of persons, times, locations, narratives, and meanings. The idea of Other employed within this essay can refer to other human persons, ideas and ideologies, religious perspectives, as well as one's relationship to the Trinitarian God as radical Other in relation to and distinct from one's temporal human self.

promotes a given sense of the 'good.'"<sup>3</sup> Such a position assumes the centrality of meeting difference and alterity situated within interpersonal, cultural, historical, and existential contexts. Situating meeting thus limits and clarifies that a "glimpse, not a grasp, guides communication ethics that protects the ground of another."<sup>4</sup> Communication ethics inquiry allows for discovery of how orientation to the Other communicates and reveals ethical conceptions of identity, agency, and orders of values that allow one to discern good and evil amid the choices demanded within everyday life.

The development of dialogue as a philosophical orientation to communication ethics draws heavily from the scholarship on narrative, featuring the works of Alasdair MacIntyre and Walter Fisher as synthesized by Arnett. "Dialogic ethics begins in narrative bias that situates an ethic. The dialogic turn takes us to the Otherness of temporality and conviction walking side-by-side with doubt, vulnerability, and a willingness to learn."<sup>5</sup> Narratives then may be viewed to function as continuing dialogues that bring tradition forward into communication within evolving existential reality and may therefore be dialogic in terms of their ethicality as providing orders of values and ways of living. Consequently, within the developing conceptual framework of Mikhail Bakhtin, "Life by its very nature is dialogic."<sup>6</sup> Engaging other consciousnesses in open dialogue allows a person to participate with the entirety of his being throughout his "whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium."<sup>7</sup> The embodied being of a human person can then be perceived through the lens of dialogic communicative activity.

However, Michael Holquist states that this is not to mean that the dialogue is a dyadic structure, rather it is triadic, and perhaps even Trinitarian. Bakhtin's conception of dialogue is composed of an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two. It is the relation that is the most important of the three. This relation which Bakhtin designates as the superaddressee characterizes a third presence to dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson, "A Conversation about Communication Ethics with Ronald C. Arnett," in *Exploring Communication Ethics: Interviews with Influential Scholars in the Field*, ed. Pat Arneson (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 57.

<sup>4</sup> Arnett and Arneson, "A Conversation about Communication Ethics," 60.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald C. Arnett, Pat Arneson, and Leeanne M. Bell, "Communication Ethics: The Dialogic Turn," in *Exploring Communication Ethics: Interviews with Influential Scholars in the Field*, ed. Pat Arneson (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 169.

<sup>6</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. ed. and trans., Caryl Emerson (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 293.

<sup>7</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 293.

situated outside the present context that completes the dialogic nature of the word through its responsive understanding of the subject's utterance. The irony is that it is through this outsideness that understanding develops. For Bakhtin, it is in this idea of the third party to the dialogue that the author "presupposes a higher superaddressee, whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee)."<sup>8</sup> Each dialogue always takes place before this assumed responsive understanding.

Ruth Coates, an early interpreter of the theological elements of Bakhtin's thought, offers two reasons why one may rightly ascribe the role of the supradressee to God in the work of Bakhtin. First, the terminology Bakhtin uses places it in a theological context. Second, Coates argues, that Bakhtin's conception of dialogue requires that "undoubted personalism because being less than personal must be considered unworthy and incapable of the ultimate understanding of the superaddressee."<sup>9</sup> For inherent in Bakhtin's thought is the necessity of embodied speaking. Dialogue requires the voices of at least two figures engaged. The role of the superaddressee, a personage able to give understanding, is therefore also required to be embodied. For only God can be simultaneously within human relations and without so as to provide the necessary distance to make each utterance understandable. For as noted previously, personality (being) is born in relation and "understanding is its highest goal."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, if to exist is to communicate and communication is then viewed from the perspective of Bakhtin's conception of dialogue, God serves as superaddressee, an eternal author of meaning that calls one to communion, to our common home. Working from Bakhtin's conception of dialogue as implicating a speaker, addressee, and superaddressee, we perceive within this Trinitarian nature Being intertwined with communication, as God, the *Logos*, spoke the world into existence. Hence, from a human perspective, communication and the ability to communicate equate to being, social presence, and identity. Without the ability to voice one's heart and mind, one essentially ceases to exist.

The contexts of dialogue extend into the deepest past and the most distant future. Even meanings born in dialogues of the remotest past will never be finally grasped once and for all, for they will always be renewed in later dialogue. At any present moment of the dialogue, there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be recalled

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<sup>8</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. trans. Vern W. McGee, eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986), 126.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin: God and the Exiled Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 160.

<sup>10</sup> Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin*, 160.

again and given new life. "For nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will someday have its homecoming festival."<sup>11</sup> Meaning, then, emerges through encountering the Other in dialogue. Through acknowledgement of one's situatedness within alterity and subsequent response to the eternally recurring call of the Other to dialogue, one communicates the meaning of one's existence as being in relation.

The theological implications of Bakhtin's conception of human existence and communication as a dialogue engendered between a speaker, addressee, and superaddressee can be further realized through encountering John Zizioulas' theological anthropology. Zizioulas conceives of the person as relational in nature. As with Bakhtin's claim that "nothing is absolutely dead" and that being is viewed as akin to communication, Zizioulas asserts that:

Human personhood implies the 'openness of being', and even more than that, the *ek-stasis* of being, i.e., a movement towards communion which leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of the 'self' and thus to *freedom*.... [T]he person in its ekstatic character reveals its being in a *catholic*, i.e., integral and undivided, way, and thus in its being ekstatic it becomes *hypostatic*, i.e., the bearer of its nature in its totality.<sup>12</sup>

Zizioulas then clarifies and expands upon his idea of human personhood as he states that *stasis* or being "is realized in human personhood as *ek-stasis* (communion, relatedness) and as *hypo-stasis* (particularity, uniqueness)."<sup>13</sup> The human person is called to be in relation, in dialogue with the Other in the human faces we meet in temporality as well as in the eternal radical Otherness of the Trinitarian personhood of God. Then as Bakhtin conceives of meaning as emergent through embodied speaking as the person meets the Other in the relation of dialogue, Zizioulas states that "*To be* and *to be in relation* becomes identical."<sup>14</sup> The relation allows meaning to emerge and connects the activity of communication as embodiment of human being.

Zizioulas also reconciles the union of one and many within the Trinitarian personhood of God as he states that the "substance of God, 'God', has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion."<sup>15</sup> Traces of this sense of the Personhood of God realized in the

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<sup>11</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 170.

<sup>12</sup> John D. Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 401-447, at 407-08.

<sup>13</sup> Zizioulas, "Human Capacity," 425, n 1.

<sup>14</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 89 (emphasis original).

<sup>15</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 17.

relations of the divine mystery of the Trinity are also present within *Laudato Si'*. While each person, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, performed related yet distinctive work in authoring creation, creation resounds with the beauty of the mystery of “one God who is Trinitarian communion” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 239). Pope Francis connects the nature of creation to the nature of God. He continues:

The Franciscan saint [Bonaventure] teaches us that *each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure*, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile. In this way, he points out to us the challenge of trying to read reality in a Trinitarian key. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 239)

Following the little poor man of Assisi, Pope Francis relates that “Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of Trinity” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 240). Relationship unites three within one God and unites all creatures on earth toward God, all integral within the ecology of the relationships that form the Trinity and all life.

In this way, communion through ecological instruction situated within Church teaching on the mystery of the Trinity reveals “why the Church set before the world the ideal of a ‘civilization of love.’ Social love is the key to authentic development” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 231). Authentic development moves us toward openness to love of the Other and allows one to encounter God in creatures and creation as revealed through the gift of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, “creation is projected towards divinization, towards the wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself.” Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 236, quoting Pope Benedict XVI)

Therefore, creation prompts an openness to revelation as a form of instruction in the mysteries of God’s own life. The teachings of the Church Fathers guide us to a dialogic orientation to revelation. Through the interplay and interpenetration of meanings among *theologia* (theology) and *oikonomia* (economy), we come to the “mystery of God’s inmost life within the Blessed Trinity” (theology) with and through “all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life” (economy).<sup>16</sup> Through these interpenetrating communi-

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<sup>16</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 236.

cative encounters, we come to learn of how God manifests God's being within the created world. As Pope Francis states, "Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 12). Such a mystery invites one to contemplate the ways in which God communicates throughout the myriad forms of creation.

Revelation derives from the Greek *apokalypsis* and Latin *revelatio*, translating the Hebrew *glh*, which designates an "unveiling" or "disclosure" of something hidden. As previously noted, engaging revelation as a dialogic orientation to instruction on the mysteries of God through encounters with God's works, we can come to encounter God through openness and attentive listening with our hearts to the Word of God: "The most intimate truth thus revealed about God and human salvation shines forth for us in Christ" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 2). Such encounters with the creative and communicative activity of God through meeting his Word in dialogue provide "constant evidence of himself in created realities" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 3). Acknowledgement of God's presence in creation communicates an openness and assent to God's revelation, and helps to form the narrative of faith, "Tradition and scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the church" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 10). The narrative accumulation of such teachings and recordings of theology and economy show how the Church's continuing interpretation and communication of God's revelation of the Word in Christ may transform the context and being of a person's life in coming "to know the ineffable loving-kindness of God and see the thought and care he has given to accommodating his language to our nature" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 12). As the Second Vatican Council affirms: "Indeed the words of God, expressed in human language, are in every way like human speech, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the weak flesh of human beings, became like them" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 13). Hence, as we gain wisdom from the revelation of narrative history of sacred Scripture and the Magisterium, from the writings of saints' lives and miracles, and from the living narrative tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, we understand how to situate human activity within and for the love of God and God's creation.

The virtue of *caritas*, love of God, along with the virtues of faith and hope, embedded within this developing dialogue as communicative activity that encounters the Other based upon an ethics or set of ethical commitments oriented toward relationship with the Other—how does this lead us toward an integral ecology that communicates love for all creatures as emanating from God and within God? How does this dialogic standpoint/perspective open us to revelations that

can enrich our living in communion? To be means to communicate, one's existence tells the story of one's values, commitments, choices, consequences; yet how can this be realized in relation? Authoring a constructive ethical response requires acknowledgement of the importance of embodied listening, listening situated within temporality that enriches our ability to hear the Word of God in revelation, as well as the call of the Other to being in communion.

An important component of this call to being in dialogue is that such dialogic encounters occur at the nexus of time and space, interpenetrating human identity, as Lisbeth Lispari suggests when she argues that we address time as "the very relationship of the subject with the other."<sup>17</sup> This insight also affirms Pope Francis's conception of time and space as interdependent, as noted above. "Two concepts from the ancient Greek language give us insight into the relation of ethics and temporality: the words *kairos*—right timing or the opportune moment—and *akroasis*—listening and invoking the idea of secret, esoteric teachings."<sup>18</sup>

Lispari connects both concepts to ideas of harmony and balance. This positions *kairos* as an ethical response that arises from *akroasis*—from "a listening attunement that transcends binary oppositions and the presumed spatial linear progressions of past, present, and future."<sup>19</sup> From this perspective, Lispari characterizes *kairos* as a "nonlinear way of synchronous listening and speaking, a dialogic midwifery that, as an ethics, can give birth to speech."<sup>20</sup> Thus, in dialogic meeting, listening bears speech. "The ethical relation is thus a temporal, embodied, and intersubjective process, an achievement accomplished by weaving the weft of *kairos* into the warp of *akroasis*."<sup>21</sup> The dialogue of eternal and temporal is likewise made present through Trinitarian communion and the mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word, spoken in and eternally speaking throughout history.

However, one must prepare oneself to hear with one's inner ear and soul the call to a universal communion. This relates to Nelle Morton's insights and Lispari's description of "how listening others to speech is itself an ethics" as "we empower one another by hearing the other to speech. We empower the disinherited, the outsider."<sup>22</sup> This leads Lispari to conclude:

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<sup>17</sup> Lisbeth Lispari, "Ethics, Kairos, Akroasis: An Essay on Time and Relation," in *Philosophy of Communication Ethics: Alterity and the Other*, eds. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 76.

<sup>18</sup> Lispari, "Ethics," 76.

<sup>19</sup> Lispari, "Ethics," 77.

<sup>20</sup> Lispari, "Ethics," 77.

<sup>21</sup> Lispari, "Ethics," 79.

<sup>22</sup> Lispari, "Ethics," 84.

Listening is the source of the ethical relation with alterity: Listening is a form of co-constitutive communicative action fundamental to dialogic ethics. That is, listening is neither a secondary subordinate process that follows and flows from speech, nor is it a futile gesture. Rather, listening is the invisible and inaudible enactment of the ethical relation itself; upon it, everything depends.<sup>23</sup>

Pope Francis can therefore be shown through his invitational dialogic appeal to live within an ecology open to embrace the Other in gratitude, humility, respect, and love. Pope Francis calls this dialogic relationship between thou and Thou a “universal communion” and also uses the terms “sublime communion” as well as “deep communion” to announce the value and ethical import of this orientation to being within Being (*Laudato Si'*, no. 89-92).

### **LAUDATO SI', COMMUNICATION ETHICS, AND COMMUNION**

Pope Francis's conception of being in relation as dialogue therefore enacts embodied speaking, bringing forth one's being as open to a “universal communion” with the myriad forms of difference one encounters in the temporal existential moment. Therefore, communion may come forth within creation through understanding the dialogic nature of human being as in relation with and open to dialogue with the Word. The various adjectives of communion Francis employs in *Laudato Si'* help to uncover layers of meaning relevant for how his encyclical unfolds Catholic social teaching beyond the regular audience of the Catholic hierarchy to “a conversion which includes everyone” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 14). Therefore, it is important to explore the related meaning each conception adds to our understanding of Pope Francis's idea of a “universal communion.”

Pope Francis describes a “sublime communion” as originating from our realization that “as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 89). Our recognition of our belonging to this universal family “fills us with a sacred and humble respect” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 89). Our sense of belonging to one family unites our destiny with that of all who share our familial bonds, all of God's creation.

This recognition confronts and challenges the rampant greed and narcissism present in our created culture of death crippled by human trafficking, exploitation, and pollution of natural resources for profit of the privileged few. A recognition of our familial bond granted by God requires that we resist efforts to normalize inequality, poverty,

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<sup>23</sup> Lispari, “Ethics,” 85.

economic exploitation for the profits and pampering of a wealthy minority caste as of more worth than the remaining members of our human family (*Laudato Si'*, no. 90). This should not be used to devalue conceptions of the human person as made in the image of God or cause cynicism that prompts notions that the human person should not be valued and viewed as less worthy of respect and protection than other forms of life or the environment. Pope Francis warns that if we continue with perpetuating the dangerous illusion that some persons are "more human than others," we risk the destruction of the planet (*Laudato Si'*, no. 90). Such disregard for the Other as validated through comparisons of material wealth as sole and inviolate arbiter of worth, leads only to the demise of all.

"Sublime communion" therefore requires the "deep communion" of hearts of tenderness and compassion for all our human siblings. Once we reconcile ourselves to our connectedness, we grow in our ability to forgive. Quoting St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures," Pope Francis continues, "'Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love.' Everything is connected" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 91). When we forgive, we open each to the Other. Such coming to communion through love then bonds love and care for the environment and other creatures to love and care for our human brothers and sisters. In this way, communion can be viewed as deep when love, peace, and justice guide concern for the environment as our duty to God within God's creation with a "sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 91). This trinity of virtues: love, peace, and justice leads us onward to how "the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: 'All things have been created through him and for him' (Colossians 1:16)" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 99). In the mystery of Jesus, the incarnation of God's eternal Word in the created order generated by that same Word, is the mystery of "universal communion," a communion that includes the entirety of the created universe and invokes the mystery of the triune life of God.

*Laudato Si'* enacts a dialogue where listening bears teaching, bringing forth instruction in the mystery of the Word, especially the incarnate Christ who, as Word made flesh, bears witness to the communion of God, humanity, and creation. In this embodiment of the second person of the Trinity in the flesh of humanity and the world, sacred Scripture powerfully affirms the value of the created world and of its ultimate end. As Robin Attfield notes, in the Apocalypse, the author's "vision symbolically concerns the restoration of Eden and the

tree of life, the leaves of which 'were for the healing of nations' (Revelation 22:2)."<sup>24</sup> From manifestations of living speech, where listening bears teaching, we gain appreciation for the insight of Emmanuel Levinas that, "[t]he essence of discourse is ethical."<sup>25</sup> The nature of the ethical character and essence of discourse is elaborated by Gerald Hauser as he states that our commitment to "communicate is, after all, a reaffirmation that to be is to be in relationship with the Other and commitment to a relationship of a certain sort: it is a commitment to community."<sup>26</sup> Community as the situating of a communication ethic foregrounds the dialogic nexus of relationship and responsibility, hearing our ethical call, with love, to acknowledge and openly engage the Other in God, sojourners, the poor, and the animals and elements of the created world. In this way, communion through ecological instruction situated within Church teaching on the mystery of the Trinity reveals "why the Church set before the world the ideal of a 'civilization of love.' Social love is the key to authentic development" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 231).

*Laudato Si'* invites a dialogic response as a communication ethic open to radical difference and leading into mystery as teaching an expansive and inclusive thankfulness for our union with all God's creatures. What Pope Francis enacts through his encyclical letter embraces listening in dialogue with God, and all of God's creation, including our fellow creatures and our shared natural environment. This circular letter unfolds Catholic social teaching with an openness to alterity and the Other. The Pope offers a listening heart to the travails of this age and an attunement of spirit to the Lord for ways to more faithfully honor our fraternity with all God's gifts evident through our existence as pilgrims within God's creation.

A constructive response then grows out of wisdom of the narrative ground of *Laudato Si'*. As Pope Francis states,

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature," for it has to do with God's loving plan in which each creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled,

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<sup>24</sup> Robin Attfield, "Christianity," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 99.

<sup>25</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 216.

<sup>26</sup> Gerard A. Hauser, "Afterword: Machiavelli's Question Mark and the Problem of Ethical

Communication," in *Philosophy of Communication Ethics: Alterity and the Other*, eds. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 313.

whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 76)

Pope Francis utilizes as his hermeneutic an ethic of interpretation grounded in the theological and rhetorical elements of dialogue, as exemplified in his approach to the economy of alterity, difference, and the Other. Humans and nature share one environment; harm to one simultaneously wounds the Other (*Laudato Si'*, no. 33-34). In causing harm to God's creation, whether it be to the environment or one of God's creatures, humans wound the image of God in which they are made and called to uphold and cherish.

The emphasis upon the human person as created in the image of God is recalled through the Hymn of St. Francis of Assisi. The ethical consequence of acknowledging each human being as created in God's image requires acceptance that each creature "has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 84). This eternal speaking of God's love throughout all of creation also reveals God's plan for how we are to live to within God's created universe. Pope Francis, quoting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 340, writes, "God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 86).

### **LAUDATO SI', DIALOGUE AS COMMUNICATION ETHIC, AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**

Pope Francis's evocation of this "interdependence" foregrounds his notion of integral ecology. This definition of ecology as the study of the "relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 138) enacts a dialogue with science as it leads to his construction of an integral ecology. Such an approach emphasizes the quality of interrelatedness—time and space viewed not as independent but interrelated (*Laudato Si'*, no. 138). The environment exists as and within relationship (*Laudato Si'*, no. 139). The narrative ground of sacred Scripture, the Magisterium, and Catholic social teaching serves as the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a "sublime communion" which fills us with a sacred, affectionate, and humble respect. To see the world as relationships oriented toward the Trinity

that reveals relationships of the mystery of three persons in one God, the interconnectedness of all becomes the call of social love to hear and respond to how “God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 89).

Such unity which results from enactment of an integral ecology rests upon an obligation of justice: “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 159) and sense of interdependence—one world/one common plan (*Laudato Si'*, no. 165). Interdependence and unity which result from enactment of an integral ecology disclose the inseparability of ecology from the “notion of the common good ... 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” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 156). Answering the call to care for our common good requires a conversion of ecological consciousness “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 217). Given the nature of life as embedded within relationship with the Other, any ecological conversion involves the conversion of communities in which individuals exist as well. Such conversion brings about a communication and social ethic grounded in “gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift” and that we share this gift “joined in a splendid universal communion,” wherein we strive to use our abilities to their fullest to protect, sustain, and contribute to the ecologies that comprise the relationships of our being toward the Trinity (*Laudato Si'*, no. 220).

Integral ecology then provides guidance in how to live according to the Word of God as sons of daughters of Jesus’s call to conversion. As Pope Francis states,

An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence “must not be contrived but found, uncovered.” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 225)

If we turn our attention toward the love God shows us through encounter with creation, we then come to better understand “why the Church set before the world the ideal of a ‘civilization of love.’ Social love is the key to authentic development” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 231). This recognition of the shared existence of human and natural environments

opens a place to explore one way that *Laudato Si'* may be brought into dialogue with existing threats to human and natural environments within the Northern and entire Appalachian region due to the continuance of mountaintop removal mining.

Mountaintop removal mining explodes the tops of mountains for a quick and inexpensive route to exploit the coal beneath. However, this practice comes at an incredibly expensive cost to the life of the mountains and all the life they sustain. Mountaintop removal mining illustrates the danger of fostering lies that Pope Francis warns value one human life as worth more than another, ushering in a culture of death (*Laudato Si'*, no. 90). Deification of the market and the quest for economic profit nurtures destructive practices such as mountaintop removal mining that “pollute the air, foul the water, rape the land” and leave the poor voiceless without hope.<sup>27</sup>

Causes of problems such as mountaintop removal mining relate back to *Laudato Si'* as Pope Francis authors a call to respond to the crying of the Earth and creation in a time of reckless greed, rampant materialism, and runaway corporate power generating a throwaway ethic that engenders a culture of death. Such formative crises serve as cause and call for a response, to which Pope Francis responds through *Laudato Si'*. Listening with openness to diverse perspectives generates a vision for ecology that engages faith and reason, religion, philosophy, and science. Such an invitational cast to social teaching points toward a co-operation and collaboration through learning from Scripture, philosophy, and the sciences. Such an ecological approach to learning and knowledge helps us to come to know our duties and responsibilities and foregrounds elements of relationships with God, with our neighbors, and with the earth that reveal the foundation of human life (*Laudato Si'*, no. 66). However, unwillingness to acknowledge our interconnectedness leads to injustice, “when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 70). To counter this potential Pope Francis states that we must expand consciousness to be attuned to the Other seen in the figures of the sojourner and the poor (*Laudato Si'*, no.71). Such an attuned orientation to our neighbor “presupposes a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship on the part of a ‘Thou’ who addresses himself to another ‘thou’” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 81). Each human being therefore possesses an inherent dignity and identity and agency from God that demands one is always seen as a subject and never reduced to an object of another (*Laudato Si'*, no. 81). In this way, one is called to see behind the eyes of each other the light and love of the Creator.

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<sup>27</sup> Catholic Bishops of Appalachia, *This Land is Home to Me*, 16, [www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/109298/374764/514494/Appal\\_Pastorals.pdf](http://www.glenmary.org/site/files/919/109298/374764/514494/Appal_Pastorals.pdf).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A vision that heeds the call of the poor and the sojourner and gives witness through words and acts that creation is only owned by God, given to humanity as a gift to be cherished for all and not exploited for the privileged few, reveals the dialogic ethic afforded by an embrace of a “universal communion.” Such a communication ethic would seek to collaborate with the poor and voiceless of Northern Appalachia to develop dialogue and foster acknowledgement of each person’s equal worth before God and to cherish, not seek to capitalize upon, the bounty of nature. Such greater awareness affords being through communication to all parties and neighbors for mutual and sustainable benefit that draws all toward love, toward God.

The guiding idea of integral ecology reveals the dialogic element of Pope Francis’s communicative praxis, a dialogic ethic to serve what Aquinas described as the common good – Aquinas affirms that it is natural for humans to live in society, the reason for this being that it is only in this way that humans will be able to attain their ends. The aim of human society is not merely to ensure the private good of individual citizens. “Rather, its aim is to seek the supreme human good, the common good which is superior to the good of the individual.”<sup>28</sup> As Pope Francis states, “Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 240). The call to embrace the mystery of our interconnected nature articulates the communicative praxis of integral ecology as a dialogic communication ethic—*mystagogy* in *kairos*.

Johannes Hofinger states that “religious instruction is, from the very beginning, not so much history as ‘*mystagogy*,’ that is, an introduction into the mystery of Christ, instruction in the practice and development of this life.”<sup>29</sup> Pope Benedict XVI states that “The mature fruit of *mystagogy* is an awareness that one’s life is being progressively transformed.”<sup>30</sup> “*Mystagogy* promotes faithful participation in the time of *Kairos*.”<sup>31</sup> The present environmental and humanitarian crises that ravage the globe regularly announce a time of *kairos* that demands an ethical constructive response grounded in love of God and for all of God’s creation. As a response to this call, integral ecology

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<sup>28</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Politicorum* I, 1, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Gerard F. Baumbach, “Eucharistic Mystagogy,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [uscbb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/eucharist/upload/catsun-2011-doc-baumbach-mystagogy.pdf](http://uscbb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/eucharist/upload/catsun-2011-doc-baumbach-mystagogy.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 64.

<sup>31</sup> Baumbach, “Eucharistic Mystagogy.”

functions as a communication ethic—a dialogic enactment of narrative fidelity to God’s revelation, the embodied speaking of God’s Word, Jesus Christ, into time and throughout time. Pope Francis’s communication ethic then serves as instruction into the mystery of Trinitarian dialogue as relational being, as a fitting response in a time of crisis engaged and offered with gratitude for the mystery of sustaining narrative fidelity within the fleeting, contingent nature of human existential reality.

For as Pope Francis seeks to help us embrace Christ within creation and the face of the Other, and guides us to lead others to experience the gospel of love he derives from the narrative of Holy Scripture and Church teachings, we witness a listening calling forth speech grounded in a narrative meeting contingency, inspired by the meeting of God and humans in a time of *kairos*. *Kairoi* as crises in history create opportunities and demand an existential response by a subject, the coming of Christ as the prime example within Christian theology. In this time of *kairos*, Pope Francis listens to crises of human and natural devastation and poverty. His embodied listening then informs how he serves as a *mystagogue* to lead people to free themselves of the chains of the worldly and embrace the freedom, peace, and love that may only come through Trinitarian dialogue with and fidelity to the narrative of God’s revelation of God’s Word. Pope Francis’s communication ethic of integral ecology authors a path to a “universal communion” with God through working to realize the common good of all through the common care of all. **M**

## *Strange as This Weather Has Been: Teaching *Laudato Si'* and Ecofeminism*

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**A**NN PANCAKE'S 2007 NOVEL *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, which Wendell Berry describes as one of the bravest he has ever read, explores the horrid effects of Mountaintop Removal (MTR) on both the natural and human environment.<sup>1</sup> Set in West Virginia, the novel describes the impact of MTR on a low-income family, especially mother Lace and her daughter, Bant. Throughout the novel, Pancake poetically denounces MTR. While exploring the complicated relationship between religion and caring for the environment, the novel echoes ecofeminism in its focus on female characters fighting against a practice (MTR) rooted in the patriarchal exploitation of the environment.

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* serves as a helpful complement to *Laudato Si'* by filling a crucial gap in the encyclical: the absence of addressing the importance of ecofeminist issues in the environmental crisis. Indeed, this novel would work well with *Laudato Si'* to teach about the environmental crisis, the gendered components of that crisis, and the complexity of spirituality amid it all.

### **ECOFEMINISM AND *LAUDATO SI'***

Pioneered by Françoise d'Eaubonne<sup>2</sup> and advanced initially by Rosemary Radford Ruether,<sup>3</sup> ecofeminism has as its central argument that the patriarchal oppression of women is inextricably bound with the patriarchal oppression of nature. Women are repeatedly connected to nature in disparaging ways, such as by being called bitches and chicks, while nature is feminized, such as by being called Mother Nature or Mother Earth, a description that is not necessarily problematic except for the fact that humanity repeatedly ravages nature. Ecofeminists also frequently note that, when humans exploit the non-human

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<sup>1</sup> From a quote on the front cover of the book, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The quote is from a letter from Berry to the author (n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le féminisme ou la mort* (Paris : P. Horay, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

natural world, women often suffer the most, especially since they depend highly on working closely with nature for their livelihood, such as through agriculture. Ecofeminists strive to liberate both nature and women from this oppression, mainly through replacing the patriarchal mindset with one that is less androcentric, anthropocentric, and hierarchical. A web of interrelatedness is a common ecofeminist metaphor.

*Laudato Si'* does repeatedly stress the unity of creation and the interrelatedness of all things, two important ecofeminist themes. The encyclical is, indeed, critical of anthropocentrism and the toxic understanding of humans having dominion over creation in a way that suggests human entitlement to exploit creation. The Pope is illuminating and trenchant in his criticism of the "technocratic paradigm," the perception that technology is a panacea for every human problem. Further, he is sharply critical of both consumerism, which demands an unsustainable lifestyle based on the devouring of material goods at the expense of creation; and also rampant individualism, which disregards attention to the "common good." Indeed, "integral ecology," which for the Pope is the understanding that social and economic issues are interrelated with environmental ones, is at the heart of his argument. Along these lines, the pope makes a crucial connection that many people seem to overlook when considering the environmental crisis: yes, nature suffers because of anthropocentric hubris and greed, but so do the poor. The destruction of nature is tragic on its own, but its destruction also means great violence against the poor. As Pope Francis declares,

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet. (*Laudato Si'*, no. 48)

Hurting the environment is sinful in of itself as well as sinful because of the harm it does to the most destitute members of society.

While all of these points in the encyclical are laudable and compatible with the ideals of ecofeminism, Susan Rakoczy points out in "Is Pope Francis an Ecofeminist?" that *Laudato Si'* contains no treatment of ecofeminism *per se* or even of prominent Catholic women theologians such as Ruether and Elizabeth Johnson.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Rakoczy notes that only two women are mentioned by name in the encyclical, Mary and Saint Thérèse de Lisieux, and neither is given much attention. In

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Rakoczy, "Is Pope Francis an Ecofeminist?" *Transformation: Where Love Meets Social Justice*, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/susan-rakoczy/is-pope-francis-ecofeminist>.

addition, Pope Francis begins the document by repeatedly feminizing nature – “sister”, “mother,” and “Sister, Mother Earth” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 1) – and continues to use the feminine pronoun for the Earth in the next paragraph – “We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will” (no. 2). This feminizing could be in line with ecofeminism if Pope Francis went on to explicate how such gendering has contributed to the exploitation of the Earth by a patriarchal society. Instead, as Rakoczy notes, he repeatedly refers to “sister earth” and the call for us humans to be “instruments of God our Father” to come to her rescue. There is not even an acknowledgement of the gendered language; Pope Francis simply uses it as if it were a given that God should be thought of in masculine terms only and the Earth in feminine.

In addition to the gendered language that Rakoczy notes, Pope Francis applies the feminine pronoun to the Earth as a whole, and thus, by extension, to all of creation. The pope does quote the famous hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi, which uses both genders to describe creation, such as by calling the sun, wind, and fire “brother” and the moon and water “sister,” but these gender assignments also reflect traditional gender roles in that the sun, wind, and fire, which are seen as more forceful, are masculinized, while the supposedly less forceful moon and water are feminized. Never does the Pope stretch or challenge this feminization in any way that pushes the gender binary that ecofeminists argue have long oppressed both women and nature.

By contrast, Ruether also employs a feminization of the Earth but in a way that challenges the binary. For example, Ruether intentionally critiques the heavily patriarchal language for God while also exploring the Greek understanding of the Earth as Gaia, a goddess, which some scientists have adopted as a metaphor to underscore that the Earth is a living entity who deserves our respect and with whom we share a complex, dependent relationship.<sup>5</sup> This entity, Ruether argues, has been ravaged by patriarchal hegemony, which the masculine language for God has long reinforced. The feminization of the Earth, she contends, presents a healthier understanding of the Earth that is more relational and less about domination. Thus, while she, like the pope, feminizes the Earth, she is doing so with an awareness of the problematics of the gendered language and with the intent of challenging the patriarchy of Christianity with alternate metaphors.

Essentially, my main ecofeminist critique of *Laudato Si'* is that the encyclical does not go far enough. The pope brilliantly analyzes and

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<sup>5</sup> See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 4-5.

denounces consumerist greed, the obsession with technology, rampant individualism, and anthropocentrism as paradigms underlying the human ravaging of the Earth. However, ecofeminists would go further with the diagnosis to contend that, beneath those sins, is the root sin of patriarchy, which has created and reinforced a binary that places humans above the rest of creation and men above women and nature. Men, who are associated with technology and power, have been given license to exploit and even destroy that which is associated with nature, that historically and linguistically has included women. His integral ecology falls short by neglecting to address the sexism beneath environmental exploitation.

Further, while Pope Francis does an admirable job of highlighting how the toxicity of anthropocentrism has contributed directly and indirectly to a host of crimes against the poor, he never indicates that women are far more likely to be poor than men. Women are consistently paid less than men and are more likely to shoulder the expensive burden of caring for children. When the natural world suffers because of human arrogance, such as through anthropogenic climate change and the resulting disasters in nature and pollution, it is the poor who suffer most, and the majority of the poor are women. In addition, there have been remarkable instances of empowerment of women in the face of such a crisis. An outstanding example, which Rakoczy mentions, is Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan woman who responded to the environmental crisis of deforestation in her nation by launching the Green Belt Movement in the 1970s, which recruited women to replant trees. That campaign helped to improve the environment against erosion and pollution while also employing women. The movement spread to other countries. To date, it has led to the planting of over fifty million trees and has trained about 30,000 women in various related jobs. For her efforts, Maathai, a Roman Catholic, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.<sup>6</sup> That the pope makes no mention of such heroines who addressed the relationship between gender and the abuse of nature is unfortunate.

This critique is in no way meant to minimize the profound contribution that *Laudato Si'* makes describing the environmental crisis and calling the entire world to immediate action. Rather, my intent is simply to point out that the pope's understanding of integral ecology misses a crucial piece. Therefore, in discussing the encyclical, it would be beneficial to provide a complementary text that can augment the Pope's work. From the writings of Thoreau, Emerson, and Muir to Carson's *Silent Spring* to the writings of Edward Abbey, Terry Tempest Williams, and Barbara Kingsolver, literary texts have long helped readers to understand the environmental crisis anew through

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<sup>6</sup> "Who We Are," *Greenbelt Movement*, <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/who-we-are>.

narratives and characters that sharpen the reader's understanding of the consequences of that crisis.

#### ANN PANCAKE'S *STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN*

One author especially skilled at bringing to life environmental issues is Ann Pancake. Pancake grew up in West Virginia and has a Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington. Although she now lives in Seattle, Washington, Pancake tends to set her stories in rural West Virginia, focusing her attention on social issues, such as poverty, domestic violence, and, of course, anthropogenic environmental degradation. *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, her 2007 debut novel, makes vivid the enormity of Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR) by highlighting the gender dynamic of the practice. Because of this, her novel is useful in a study of *Laudato Si'*.

Pancake severely criticizes MTR by vividly depicting its deleterious effects on both humans and nature. The plot revolves around Lace and Jimmy Make, a married couple in West Virginia, who find themselves and their children in growing danger because of the destructive effects of the mining. They are also simply grieving the death of their beloved mountains.

Yellowroot Mountain, dead... after they blasted the top off the mountain to get the coal, they had no place to put the mountain's body except dump it in the head of the hollow. So there it loomed. Pure mountain guts. Hundreds of feet high, hundreds of feet wide. Yellowroot Mountain blasted into bits, turned inside out, then dumped into Yellowroot Creek.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the novel, the characters face flooding as a result of MTR, as well as garbage and polluted water. People's homes are damaged from the reverberations of explosions detonated to blast off the mountaintops. One of Lace and Jimmy's children, Corey, ends up killed as a result of an accident created because of MTR.

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* takes on an ecofeminist tone in that the female characters of Lace and her daughter Bant fight against MTR by becoming involved in activism, while MTR itself is depicted as related to male dominance. The workers who destroy the mountains and carry out the mining are men. Further, while Lace and Bant want to fight against MTR, Jimmy Make gives up and moves away, first temporarily to North Carolina, and then permanently at the end of the novel, leaving Lace and Bant behind. Also, Lace's mother longs to

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (New York: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2007), 20.

preserve the mountains and laments their demise. So then, women are associated with preserving the mountain and defying men who seek to threaten that preservation. Bant even thinks at one point, "... the girls, the women, are tougher than the men, because the men just take it from the industry and the government, and then they take that out on the women. So the women are tougher, because they take it from the industry, the government, and the men."<sup>8</sup> Sadly, though, the novel offers little hope, ending with Lace and Bant persevering but with MTR persevering as well.

The novel echoes a central concept in *Laudato Si'*, that the destruction of nature is especially harmful to the poor. Lace's family is low income, so, when their world is ravaged by MTR, they have little in the way of resources with which to fight back and protect themselves. Pancake's story goes beyond the encyclical, however, by devoting considerable attention to the androcentric aspect of the exploitation of nature and how women have often been at the forefront of challenging that exploitation. The men generally enable or at least condone MTR while the women fight it.

However, in no way is the novel demonizing men and idealizing women, a shift that runs the risk of simply replacing one hegemony with another. For instance, while Lacy is the heroine, she is shown as not always effectively parenting her children or interacting lovingly with her husband. Further, there are male characters who recognize the plight of MTR. One is Lacy's son Dane, who is highly sensitive and not macho like his brother Corey. Dane is "even more girl than girl"<sup>9</sup> and is described as "full of fish," meaning that his insides are flipping from anxiety, while his tough brother Corey is "full of metal, like a little steel-made man."<sup>10</sup> Both Dane and Corey hate MTR, but Corey defies it in a stereotypically macho fashion, by riding over some of the industrialized and ravaged area with his four-wheeler as an act of protest. In the process, he ends up flipping his vehicle and is killed. Dane, by contrast, is still alive at the end of the novel, although he moves away with Jimmy Make. However, at the very end, Bant finds a buried box of photos that Dane left behind, so Dane's gentle presence is still felt in the mountains. Thus, Pancake is critiquing, not men, but a kind of masculinity that enables and/or begets destruction rather than healing.

A significant connection between the novel and *Laudato Si'* that relates directly to the environmental theme is religion. In fact, at times, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* edges toward being homiletic. Granted, a homily is decidedly different from a novel. A homily is generally unambiguous regarding proper conduct for the Christian,

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<sup>8</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 108.

and that conduct is based on the teachings of the Church. Pancake's novel, by contrast, contains characters and plots full of ambiguity and complexity. In addition, homilies, of course, are usually delivered orally and are much shorter than a novel. Even so, at times Pancake's novel has homiletic moments. For example, Dane, who is spiritual and often praying, thinks all of the destruction indicates that he is living in the last days, that the end of the world is nigh. Bant connects the destruction brought about by MTR to the crucifixion when she recalls, "I gazed away from the fill to a couple of left-behind trees on the ridge, raggedy. I'd seen at church a picture of Calvary. Thorn trees set in a bleached earth and sky."<sup>11</sup> The novel, then, associates MTR with apocalyptic language and the death of Christ. Further, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* contains moments of lamentation that call to mind several biblical books, such as Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, and some of the prophetic literature. We see this struggle especially in Dane. Despite his spirituality, as MTR gets worse, he struggles to connect with God, as if MTR is an obstacle to communion with God. Regarding MTR, "Dane sees. God may not have done it, but God let it be done. His will be... God smaller and farther away and no longer big enough to cover him..."<sup>12</sup> Later, Dane struggles to feel the "heat" of God but cannot.<sup>13</sup> Soon after, Dane concludes that "God wasn't working around here anymore. God had been leaving ahead of time to get safe from this mess. Save Himself."<sup>14</sup> Such a line is reminiscent of the tradition of lamentation in the Hebrew Scriptures. Pancake has a clear message, a kind of jeremiadic lament, with Christian evocations.

In its homiletic moments, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is part of a long tradition of homiletic fiction, which has received more scholarly attention over the past decade or so. For instance, Gregory S. Jackson argues that American literary realism has its roots in American preaching.<sup>15</sup> He demonstrates how some nineteenth century American novels draw from the form and methodology of sermons. Dawn Coleman also describes the influence of homiletics on novels such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>16</sup> The latter provides an especially striking example of a novel operating like a sermon. Stowe, a devout Christian, is unequivocal (even to the point

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<sup>11</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 110.

<sup>13</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 114.

<sup>14</sup> Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, 117.

<sup>15</sup> See Gregory S. Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> See Dawn Coleman, *Preaching and the Rise of the American Novel* (Ohio: Ohio State University, 2013).

of heavy-handedness) in her denunciation of slavery as sinful. In fact, the last lines of the novel read like a jeremiad in which she warns that slavery, if continued, “shall bring on nations the wrath of Almighty God!”<sup>17</sup>

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* continues this exploration of religion. Although Lace is initially angry with the church for its support of MTR, she later finds herself returning to church, and at least some church leaders denounce MTR. Also, at the center of the novel, one of the characters, Moge, reflects that he used to struggle to match up what he had learned in church and what he experienced in the woods, but that, ultimately, he could embrace a kind of spirituality that arose from being immersed in nature. Further, in its treatment of religion, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is in keeping with the traditions of Appalachian literature, which highlights religion, as well as the plight of the poor, the destructive effects of industrialization on the natural environment, and the relationship between the people and their beloved land.

#### **TEACHING *STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN***

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* would be quite effective in the classroom. This homiletic aspect makes Pancake’s novel especially useful pedagogically in a discussion among parishioners of *Laudato Si’* by being a clear, jeremiadic denunciation of MTR that fits well with the encyclical’s somewhat homiletic call to action in response to the environmental crisis. Further, as an instrument of pedagogical praxis, the novel, with its homiletic flavor, would be effective in the classroom to help students apprehend the consequences of violence against the environment.

One way to use the novel pedagogically is as part of a unit on Catholic Social Teaching. One could assign the novel and then the encyclical and then discuss the relationship between the two. Having students read the novel with minimal introduction enables them to experience as fully as possible the shock of Pancake’s depiction of the destructive effects of MTR on both the natural environment and the people. Also, starting with the novel but with some introduction will create a situation in which students can discover the novel’s emphases without top-down guidance; this approach is in keeping with ecofeminist pedagogy (among other pedagogies that are descendants of Paulo Freire), which moves away from the teacher dictating the lesson and more toward collaboration with the student.

The novel could be covered in one week. For the following week, the students could read *Laudato Si’* and then be asked to consider how

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<sup>17</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 388.

the encyclical relates to the novel. Students will likely note the treatment of religion in both works, specifically that the encyclical is, of course, centered in Roman Catholicism, while the novel provides a more complicated attitude toward religion. Students will probably not be aware of ecofeminism and are likely not to notice that the encyclical does not consider the role of gender issues regarding care for the environment. Therefore, the professor will need to help students see the gap between the two works regarding this issue. However, the professor may be able to guide the students in that direction by asking them to consider the role of gender in the novel and then the role of gender in the encyclical.

So then, the following questions could be fruitful in a discussion on the relationship between *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Laudato Si'*:

1. How does the novel help to amplify the message of the encyclical?
2. What are the understandings of religion in the novel and the encyclical? How does the latter help us to understand care for the environment from a Roman Catholic perspective in a way that the novel does not?
3. How does each work address gender? What does the novel suggest regarding a relationship between gender and care for the environment?
4. How can that aspect of the novel help to complement the message of *Laudato Si'*?

The objectives of this discussion would be:

1. To introduce students to an important Catholic Social Teaching theme and document, *Laudato Si'*;
2. To introduce students to an environmental issue they are likely unaware of, MTR;
3. To use the novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been* as a way of complementing the encyclical by providing an illustrative example of an environmental issue and how it impacts nature and humans;
4. To use the novel to highlight an omission in the encyclical, namely the lack of addressing of the role of gender issues in the environmental crisis.

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Laudato Si'* could be used in a similar fashion in a discussion group in the parish. Both texts are highly accessible. In the parish, I would spread out the reading of these two works since parishioners often do not have the same literacy skills as college students and also since there is no need to be held to the

constraints of a semester-based schedule. For example, a study group could easily read both the novel and the encyclical during Lent.

### CONCLUSION

*Laudato Si'* does a brilliant job of making the case that Christians need to make serious changes for the care of creation as part of honoring God and serving the common good. However, the encyclical does little to address feminism in general and ecofeminism in particular. Ann Pancake's anti-MTR novel, with a kind of jeremiadic vehemence, does explore the gendered components of the ravaging of nature while portraying some lamentation about sensing God's absence. The novel, then, serves well as a complement to the encyclical. *Laudato Si'* offers a strong Catholic understanding of the crisis as well as hope that Christians can be part of the solution instead of part of the problem and that God is in the midst of the struggle. *Strange as This Weather Has Been* provides a more gendered understanding of the MTR crisis as well as a lament about God's absence reminiscent of parts of Scripture.

Using the two together can be invaluable in helping readers to grapple with their understanding of God, their understanding of the abuse humans visit upon nature, and in helping readers join with Pope Francis toward finding a solution. Such reading and discussion are imperative as we humans keep arrogantly doing violence against God's creation and bringing ourselves closer to extinction. **M**

## At Home in Northern Appalachia: *Laudato Si'* and the Catholic Committee of Appalachia

Jessica Wrobleski

**T**HE LONGSTANDING MANTRA OF ACTIVISTS, “Think global, act local!” has received a new articulation in Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*.<sup>1</sup> While *Laudato Si’* addresses the need to care for our common global home, Francis is attentive to the fact that this means developing local networks and strategies for action, since “each country or region has its own problems and limitations” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 180). This is certainly true of the region of Northern Appalachia, with its own particular history formed by its rugged and resource-rich terrain as well as by the brutal industries that have dominated its economy. Given this local particularity, Francis argues that “Local individuals and groups are able to make a real difference,” because “They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity, and a deep love for the land” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 179).

The Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA) is one such group, founded in 1970 as part of wider regional and ecumenical efforts among religious communities during the War on Poverty. Since then, CCA has been a widely-respected advocate for justice in the region and is best known for its role in the planning and publication of two Appalachian Bishops’ Pastoral letters, *This Land Is Home to Me* (1975) and *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995).<sup>2</sup> Both letters spoke boldly in support of the land and its people, decrying the idolatry of profit maximization which leads to human and environmental exploitation, and offering an integrated vision of sustainable local community. Although these letters were officially promulgated by the bishops of the region, it was the effort of this grassroots organization of priests, religious, and laypeople that initiated and guided the composition of these letters. In the Catholic community and beyond, the Appalachian pastorals have been noted for the way they honor the dignity of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, May 24, 2015. [w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

<sup>2</sup> CCA republished these letters in a single volume in 2007, which may be accessed at [ccappal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/CCAbook040307-2.pdf](http://ccappal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/CCAbook040307-2.pdf).

people of Appalachia by listening to their particular stories and hopes before daring to suggest possibilities for action.

Plans for a message on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *This Land Is Home to Me* began in 2011, well before *Laudato Si'* or even the election of Jorge Bergoglio as pope. Some of the new letter's themes and images arose out of brainstorming sessions with CCA's board, but, as with the earlier letters, the Committee held listening sessions throughout the region to hear the voices of those who struggle and who may not be heard in other church documents.<sup>3</sup> Michael Iafrate, the lead author of the Pastoral, explains,

What this pastoral is saying is that we need... to start hearing stories of people who have been hurt by industry in mountaintop removal and fracking. The main new story we need to tell is that God did not give us this planet only as a resource to exploit, but gave us a home. We need to start changing the story of how we live in harmony with one another and take care of the home we've been given to live in.<sup>4</sup>

Although dozens of people were involved in revising and editing the draft of the pastoral, there was a sense among the CCA membership that because of changes in personnel and political priorities, the bishops of the region would be unlikely to promote a letter that was as sharp in its criticisms of capitalist ideology and industry as the earlier letters had been.<sup>5</sup> Rooted in a liberationist ecclesiology which understands authority to reside in the voice of the people, members of CCA were determined to proceed with a "people's pastoral," regardless of whether they were able to secure the support of the bishops as the earlier letters had done. Yet CCA members were encouraged in their work by Pope Francis's participatory vision of church. Soon after his election in March 2013, it became clear that the new pope's priorities were aligned with CCA's focus on an integrated social vision and a church in service of the poor. On several occasions, Pope Francis has asked the church's bishops and theologians to "humbly listen" to the

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<sup>3</sup> Much of the background on the process of writing the pastoral is taken from an interview with Michael Iafrate, December 29, 2015. I was also involved in the final editing of the document.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Michael Barrick, "Putting Liberation Theology to Practice in Appalachia," *Appalachian Chronicle*, Jan 24, 2016, [appalachianchronicle.com/2016/01/24/putting-liberation-theology-to-practice-in-appalachia/](http://appalachianchronicle.com/2016/01/24/putting-liberation-theology-to-practice-in-appalachia/).

<sup>5</sup> "Current bishops told us that had they been around when the first two pastorals were written that they wouldn't have signed it," CCA Executive Director Jeannie Kirkhope explains. "People have their own authority in the church. We didn't feel it necessary to get their endorsement" (quoted in Barrick, "Putting Liberation Theology to Practice in Appalachia"). Beyond its critique of capitalism and industry, the letter also affirms the dignity and relationships of LGBT persons and the leadership of women. Even if interpreted as compatible with Church teaching on such matters, CCA anticipated that these statements would make it difficult to gain episcopal support for the letter.

voices and experiences of ordinary people,<sup>6</sup> and he has repeatedly called for a church of the poor<sup>7</sup> that is attentive to the integrity of creation.

*The Telling Takes Us Home: Taking Our Place in the Stories that Shape Us* was released through CCA's website on December 21, 2015.<sup>8</sup> The pastoral takes its title from a song by the American labor organizer and folk singer Utah Phillips, and the idea of storytelling as a way of finding and making a home is central to the document. The pastoral also features photographs of the region and paintings from local artist Christopher Santer. Like the earlier two letters, *The Telling Takes Us Home* is written in a free-verse style which is intended to pay homage to the region's heritage of songwriting and storytelling. In its introduction, the letter proclaims,

Here in Appalachia,  
we are people of stories.  
These mountains have heard  
the stories we tell,  
and have told,  
across time and space.  
These mountains hold our stories,  
and they have stories of their own ....  
When the story of these mountains as "resource"  
takes over the story of the mountains as "home,"  
we become homeless in our own place,  
and disconnected from Earth and one another.<sup>9</sup>

Also in continuity with the earlier letters, *The Telling Takes Us Home* utilizes a "see-judge-act" format, first telling the stories of the people that emerged through listening sessions, evaluating these realities through the lens of scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, and then calling for action and lifting up the examples of those whose lives bear witness to a vision of community and care of creation. The letter affirms a commitment to "hearing the voices of the poor and of Earth" and states that

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<sup>6</sup> Nicole Winfield, "Pope to theologians: Listen to the ordinary faithful," Associated Press, December 5, 2014, [gazette.com/pope-to-theologians-listen-to-ordinary-faithful/article/feed/185061](http://gazette.com/pope-to-theologians-listen-to-ordinary-faithful/article/feed/185061).

<sup>7</sup> Joshua McElwee, "Pope Francis: 'I would love a church that is poor,'" *National Catholic Reporter*, March 16, 2013, [ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/pope-francis-i-would-love-church-poor](http://ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/pope-francis-i-would-love-church-poor).

<sup>8</sup> Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA), *The Telling Takes Us Home: Taking Our Place in the Stories that Shape Us*, [ccappal.org/peoplespastoral/the-document](http://ccappal.org/peoplespastoral/the-document).

<sup>9</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 3.

To listen deeply to the authority  
of the poor and of Earth in this way,  
and to recognize them—  
using Catholic language—  
as *magisterium*,  
is not to challenge the official authorities  
of our churches ....  
It is rather a recognition  
of the different gifts and roles  
among the diverse Body of Christ  
and of the truth that there are authorities  
to which all of God's people,  
including the powerful,  
must bow in humility and reverence.<sup>10</sup>

*The Telling Takes Us Home* begins with the “voice of the land,” echoing Pope Francis’s statement in *Laudato Si’* that “the Earth is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” and affirming that “Earth itself is a kind of magisterium with its own authority that must be respected.”<sup>11</sup> The letter shares the stories and experiences of women, of coal miners and coalfield residents, of the homeless and imprisoned, of people of color, of LGBT people, of those affected by the oil and gas industry, and of communities that suffer because of their economic vulnerability. The Committee writes that, “although the suffering and struggles here are specific to this region in some ways, Appalachia also serves as a window to so many other suffering places in our world created by an economy that, by design, kills.”<sup>12</sup> It offers specific examples of struggle even as it recognizes the challenges that remain for becoming a church of the poor in Appalachia.

The letter’s second section reflects on the traditions which ground its vision—not only the Biblical narratives of Israel and of Jesus of Nazareth, but also the earlier Appalachian pastorals and the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. It attends to Pope Francis’s recent teaching on integral ecology and the importance of a “culture of encounter” fostered through openness and listening to others. “The transformation that Francis envisions happens locally in places and in our relationships with one another ...[it] comes from below, happening primarily among movements and communities of struggle.”<sup>13</sup> The pastoral discusses the need for “practicing resurrection in crucified places” that have been ravaged by destructive economic systems:

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<sup>10</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 37.

We crucify the Earth and each other  
in many ways.  
But we believe in a God  
who brings the dead to life  
and who is bringing about  
a new heaven and a new Earth....  
Our survival on this planet,  
and in the places we call home,  
depends on our ability to become  
attuned to the mystery  
at the heart of creation.<sup>14</sup>

The letter calls its readers to openness to the Spirit of God and attention to the “ecological saints” who offer examples of activism that is moved by this mystical awareness that “the whole universe is charged with the presence of the Spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

The final section of *the Telling Takes Us Home* points to possibilities for transformation of economics, food and energy systems, politics and churches. It calls its readers, young and old, to become “living pastorals” by incarnating a vision of sustainability, justice, and partnership. The letter emphasizes that this must take place locally, through attentive listening and commitment to specific places:

We must forge relationships  
and become comfortable  
feeling our way in the dark with one another,  
nurturing within us a *holy hope*  
that pulls us beyond what we can see  
and gives us assurance  
that God’s story is bigger  
than the false stories by which we live.  
Yet in God’s grand story  
everyone must find a place,  
and everyone’s story,  
including the story of Earth,  
must be welcomed and honored  
in its telling.<sup>16</sup>

While *The Telling Takes Us Home* was not initially intended as a response to the pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, it could be seen as a sign of the movement of the Spirit of God that the timing should work out this way. The people’s pastoral, which was published only a few

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<sup>14</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 45.

<sup>15</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> CCA, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, 59.

months after *Laudato Si'* but represents years of planning and conversation, might be understood as a particular, local articulation of the vision of integral ecology and personal encounter that Francis proposes in his encyclical on our common home. Sharon Abercrombie of the *National Catholic Reporter* writes that the people's pastoral "offers a smoothly transitioned, localized sequel to Pope Francis's environmental encyclical '*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home,' reading every bit as beautifully and powerfully."<sup>17</sup> Like Francis, the pastoral offers a holistic vision which recognizes that "it cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 138). Throughout *Laudato Si'*, Francis not only underscores the relationship between local and global problems but also the relationship between social and environmental issues and the need for spiritual as well as structural approaches to them. The pastoral also shares Francis's commitment to fostering a culture of encounter, where we mercifully recognize that our fundamental commitments are to people rather than to ideologies.

Perhaps as a result of this confluence of theology "from above" and "from below," CCA has in fact been able to gain the support of Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, a conventual Franciscan who was appointed bishop by Pope Francis earlier this year. Stowe, who became a member of CCA shortly after his appointment, has agreed to serve as a liaison to the other Catholic bishops, much as Bishop Walter Sullivan of Richmond (to whom the recent pastoral is dedicated) did for the earlier documents. In a letter introducing the pastoral to his brother bishops, Stowe wrote, "The new pastoral letter highlights the 'magisterium of the poor' and continues the tradition of the earlier letters, with more than a thousand listening across Appalachia with special attention to marginalized persons and the devastated earth. They have listened with their hearts as Pope Francis has called us to do."<sup>18</sup>

The paradox that is at the heart of such a commitment to listening and encounter is that careful attention to particular stories often leads to deeper and more truly "universal" insight than abstract generalization, revealing patterns of suffering and reasons for hope that transcend distance and difference. But such particularities may not therefore be ignored. One hope that CCA has for *The Telling Takes Us Home* is that it might inspire a similar process of reflection and action in other communities who are trying to respond to *Laudato Si'* in light of their own challenges. CCA members also want to see the process

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<sup>17</sup> Sharon Abercrombie, "Suffering, hope of Appalachia shared in new pastoral letter from its people," *National Catholic Reporter*, January 12, 2016, [www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/suffering-hope-appalachia-shared-new-pastoral-letter-its-people](http://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/suffering-hope-appalachia-shared-new-pastoral-letter-its-people).

<sup>18</sup> Bishop John Stowe, O.F.M. Conv., Letter of December 21, 2015, courtesy of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia. This quotation is available at [ccappal.org/peoplespastoral/endorsements](http://ccappal.org/peoplespastoral/endorsements).

of listening, reflection, and action continue in their own regional communities. Even with a specific local place, such as Northern Appalachia, listening is not the kind of activity that can be completed and set aside once a particular statement or action plan has been developed. Listening—like prayer or local action—must be ongoing, as new voices and new local *and* global realities emerge. **M**

## CONTRIBUTORS

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