

## Causes of Ecological Crisis and the Necessity of Ecological Education in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

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*The modern ecological crisis that today radically affects people and the nature reveals the deeper causes that lie within people themselves. First of all, people no longer understand themselves in the key of creation, they no longer understand themselves and the created world as gifts from the Creator, but are intoxicated with power combined with technology and science in the instrumental-rational key and understand themselves as the sole creators of their own fates. Relying on the hermeneutic key to understanding creation, Pope Francis starts from the Creator and exposes this crucial anthropological fallacy, the price of which has unforeseeable effects on the created reality. The paper points out the fundamental problems and difficulties of the modern ecological crisis, seeking to show that it is actually hidden in the crisis of the humanity. Following the contemplations and ideas that Pope Francis presented in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the paper seeks to highlight the neuralgic points of the contemporary ecological crisis by showing ways out of the labyrinth of anthropological self-sufficiency. The need for and importance of education for environmental awareness, i.e., a responsible, mature and moral approach to created reality, are emphasized. In the final part of the paper, the rapprochement to freedom is highlighted, in line with the human dignity that has its source in God the Creator. Answering the question of why ecological education is important and crucial, the conclusion shows that it is the only right path of authentic humanity that bears the mark of creation in God's image, and that people are called to act responsibly towards the created reality.*

Key words: *anthropocentrism, crisis, ecology, education, God, the humankind.*

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## *Introduction*\*\*

In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*,<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis pointed out the burning problems of our common home.<sup>2</sup> People's attitude towards the Earth, water, natural resources, climate and oceans causes deep concern, and the following question regarding the future is becoming increasingly relevant – what can we hope for with this approach? Today, more than ever before in human history, we are becoming aware of the dramatic consequences of people's actions in relation to themselves, to others, to the created world. People lie at the heart of that problem, together with their relationship to nature.<sup>3</sup> Today, the power that people apply to nature through technology, science, economics and politics reveals that the paradigm of understanding people has changed drastically. It is precisely the contemporary ecological crisis that uncovers the deeper crisis of people and their moral structure. Indeed, torn from the source from which they understood themselves and the created world, people have moved to instrumental rationality that leaves indelible traces, which in turn testify to the extinguished light of moral knowledge and recognition of good in creatures, as well as the abandoned command to preserve the gift of the Earth not only for themselves but others too, in order to keep the Creator's intention that all creation is good (cf. Genesis 1:31). The necessity for environmental education, i.e., an education for the adoption of a correct understanding of the created reality, an education inspired by the rich fountain of Christian Revelation, is rather evident. People can and should limit their unfettered action. In this they must be helped by education for a holistic approach to creation. Unless imbued with due care, responsibility and caring attention, all that has been created will fall into nothingness and death due to irresponsible human action. In this sense, the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* offers a path to a holistic approach to created reality and awakens people's dormant conscience and consciousness, revealing intoxication with the technique in which people find the fulfilment of their Promethean longings. People are called to live authentically and joyfully by sharing responsibility with all people of good will by caring for nature, for the poor, as well as striving for peace and a more just world.<sup>4</sup>

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\*\*Into English translated by Emanuel Maloča, prof.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Laudato Si' Encyclical Letter. On Care for our Common Home* (24.V.2015), Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor Publishings, 2015 (hereinafter: LS).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. D. SHULSKI, D. R. DiLEO, What is Happening to Our Common Home? Consideration from Catholic Climate Scientist and a Catholic Theological Ethicist, *Journal of Moral Theology*, 9 (2020) 1, 71-89.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. VANDERHEIDEN, Climate change and the challenge of Moral Responsibility, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 32 (2007) 5, 85-92; J. BARRY, A. P. J. MOL, A. R. ZITO, Climate Change ethics, rights, and policies: an introduction, *Environmental Politics*, 22 (2013) 3, 361-376.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. LS, 10.

## 1. Crisis of humankind – crisis of the created

Christian anthropology looks at the humankind and the created reality in the light of God's creation, emphasizing that humankind was created in God's image (cf. Genesis 1:26-27).<sup>5</sup> In doing so, it explicitly emphasizes that humankind is the culmination and goal of all creative work, and has the gift and task to reasonably, freely, responsibly<sup>6</sup> and with dignity dispose of the created reality – not as masters but as guardians of God's creative work that presupposes moral implications of responsibility and safeguarding the work of God.<sup>7</sup> People understand themselves through relationships. This means that

»People and all other creatures depend constantly and radically on their Creator. It is God who in the 'creatio continua' provides people with vitality and keeps them in existence«.<sup>8</sup>

From the fundamental relationship of the created reality that people understand and experience, cognition as the environment,<sup>9</sup> it is evident that people and their actions towards that reality cannot take a morally-ethically neutral attitude nor distance themselves from it.<sup>10</sup>

»This means that the Christian life and Christian service can never be reduced to our tiny interests or spiritual concerns. We cannot neglect our task and our responsibility to transform the created by discussing our selfish lifestyles or changing them and our greedy consumption of global resources. The way we treat material things directly reflects the way we treat God. And the attention with which we treat the things of the Earth clearly shows the sacredness we recognize in the heavenly realities. This is not an issue that concerns us only as individuals, but also as communities and societies as a whole«.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR »JUSTICE AND PEACE«, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Città del Vaticano – Washington, 2005, 451-455.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. VALKOVIĆ, *Odgovornost za život. Temeljni teološki i antropološki aspekti* [Responsibility for Life. Fundamental Theological and Anthropological Aspects], in: B. VULETA, A. VUČKOVIĆ (ed.), *Odgovornost za život. Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog simpozija održanog u Baškoj Vodi, 1.-3. listopada 1999.* [Responsibility for Life. Proceedings of the Scientific Symposium held in Baška Voda, 1-3 October 1999], Split, 2000, 71-92.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Bible and Morality. Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct*, Città del Vaticano, 2010, 8 (hereinafter: BM).

<sup>8</sup> BM, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. I. CIFRIĆ, *Okoliš* [Environment], in: I. CIFRIĆ, *Leksikon socijalne ekologije* [Lexicon of Social Ecology], Zagreb, 2012, 273-275.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. S. M. GARDINER, *Ethics and Global Climate Change*, *Ethics*, 114 (2004) 3, 550-600; E. KINGSTON, *Climate Change as a Three-Part Ethical Problem: A Response to Jamieson and Gardiner*, *Journal of Science and Engineering Ethics*, 20 (2014) 1129-1148.

<sup>11</sup> BARTOLOMEJ, *Predgovor* [Foreword], in: FRANCIS, *Naša majka Zemlja. Kršćansko čitanje ekoloških izazova* [Our Mother Earth: A Christian Reading of Challenge of the Environment], Zagreb, 2002, 10.

People's attitude towards the environment points to a much deeper relationship that is reflected today in the radical ecological crisis that calls for a holistic approach and attitude towards the created reality.<sup>12</sup>

»The human being was created to be a gift that expresses and realizes human transcendent dimension. Modern people sometimes live with the false belief that they are their own creators, that they create their own lives and societies. This belief, which leads to selfish confinement in oneself, is the fruit – using the religious terminology – *of the original sin*«. <sup>13</sup>

The belief that the world was created and that redemption is necessary directs our gaze to the truth that the whole reality is affected by sin. The obvious sign of this truth is the ecological crisis that illuminates our need for conversion in which we would adopt a sacramental approach to the created reality.<sup>14</sup> Also, Pope Francis points out that:

»We participate, to be exact, in the structures of sin (as St. John Paul II called them) which produce evil, pollute the environment, wound and humiliate the poor, uphold the logic of possession and power, overexploit natural resources, force entire populations to leave their countries, feed on hatred, violence and war. It is a cultural and spiritual trend that causes a distortion of our spiritual sense which relies on the strength of our condition, creation in God's image to naturally direct us to good, love, and the service of our fellowmen«. <sup>15</sup>

People's approach to creation has been radically changed under the influence of the scientific and technical belief in which *Homo technicus* prevailed over *Homo sapiens*.<sup>16</sup> Excessive and unreasonable exploitation and manipulation of nature are the result of a complex historical and social development and new opportunities arising from the deeper knowledge of nature itself, as well as the new technical discoveries by which humankind penetrates deep into the world of the created reality.<sup>17</sup> Technology and its absolutism ultimately incapacitate people to explain the world only by matter and experiment, as they overlook the existence of a deeper knowledge of reality transcending the materialist-experimental approach to reality.<sup>18</sup>

Today, the scientific and technical civilization uses power dominated by science and technology as a key lever and driver of development and progress.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. E. MARKOWITZ, A. SHARIF, Climate Change and Moral Judgment, *Nature Climate Change*, 20 (2012) 2, 243-247.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate – Charity in Truth. Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth* (29.VI.2009), San Francisco, 2019, 34 (hereinafter: CV).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. B. HÄRING, *Slobodni u Kristu* [Free in Christ], t. III, Zagreb, 1986, 296.

<sup>15</sup> Franjo, *Naša majka Zemlja...* [Our Mother Earth...], 119-120.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. L. SIDERS, Techno-Science, Integral Thought, and the Reality of Limits in *Laudato Si'*, *The Trumpeter*, 34 (2018) 1, 14-35.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Häring, *Slobodni u Kristu...* [Free in Christ...], 283-290.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. CV, 77.

It is also crucial to mention that it has also become a worldview in which the combined action of all the forces of modern development has created a civilization and culture that assumes dominant control over nature, the organic and inorganic world. It is a paradigm that shapes a specific landscape of understanding the quality of human life in which the dominant *quasi-human* ethics is disguised by technology.<sup>19</sup>

Pope Francis points out that even today, when it comes to the social issues that concern all people, a synthesis of reason and faith is needed, which we find precisely in the social doctrine of the Church.<sup>20</sup>

A historical overview of the Church's social doctrine in social encyclicals provides us with insight that the Church's teaching was well aware of the problems and difficulties associated with progress, technology and ecology,<sup>21</sup> but also that the Church's social doctrine has evolved with time, from a static vision to an evolutionary-dynamic one, with a growing awareness of the historical times in which the immutable had to be emphasized. The social doctrine of the Church cannot be thought of as an everlasting truth of human development and progress. But what remains immutable in the social doctrine of the Church is the gospel truth about humankind in ever new social circumstances and times. At the heart of the Church's social doctrine lie enduring values, namely the promotion of human dignity, the sublimity of human labour, the social dimension of private property, solidarity and subsidiarity that form the foundations of society, politics, economy and markets, advocacy for labour rights, encouraging the state to intervene in areas that endanger human freedoms, dignity and rights, the awareness of the need to preserve the environment and the perception of nature as a creature.<sup>22</sup> The issue of sustainable development<sup>23</sup> has become the most important political and social concept in which it is necessary to harmonize the development of the economy with social, cultural and environmental challenges.<sup>24</sup> In all this, it is necessary not to lose sight of »the

<sup>19</sup> Cf. T. MATULIĆ, *Metamorphoses of Culture. A Theological Discernment of the Signs of the Times against the Backdrop of Scientific-Technical Civilisation*, Vienna, 2018, 592-594.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. LS, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. BIŠKUP, Ekološki problemi u dokumentima crkvenog učiteljstva [Ecological Problems in Church Teaching Documents], in: V. POZAIĆ (ed.), *Ekologija. Znanstveno-etičko-teološki upiti i obzori* [Ecology. Scientific-Ethical-Theological Inquiries and Horizons], Zagreb, 2004, 203-230; D. J. O'BRIEN, T. A. SHANNON (ed.), Introduction: Roman Catholic Social Teaching, in: D. J. O'BRIEN, T. A. SHANNON (ed.), *Catholic Social Thought. Encyclical and Documents from Pope Leo XIII to pope Francis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rev. Ed., New York, 2016, 1-9; N. ORMEROD, *Laudato Si'* in the context of Catholic social teaching, *St. Mark Review*, 263 (2016) 2, 2-15.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. T. MATULIĆ, *Rerum novarum* nekad i danas [Rerum Novarum Then and Today], in: S. BALOBAN, G. ČRPIĆ (ed.), *O novim stvarima u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj*. 120. obljetnica *Rerum novarum* [On New Things in Modern Croatia. 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rerum Novarum], Zagreb, 2013, 53-54.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cifrić, *Održivost...* [Sustainability...], 272-273.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. F. J. RADERMACHER, *Ravnoteža ili razaranje. Eko-socijalno-tržišno gospodarstvo kao ključ svjetskog održivog razvoja* [Equilibrium or Destruction. Eco-Social-Market Economy as the Key to Global Sustainable Development], Zagreb, 2003, 21.

good in people, because the order of things should be subordinated to the order of people.«<sup>25</sup>

The causes of the ecological crisis can be reduced to three main factors: *unscrupulousness*, *ignorance* and *egoism*,<sup>26</sup> which means that the crisis has its roots in the anthropocentric paradigm.<sup>27</sup> And considering the complexity of the multitude of causes, it is necessary to overcome the interpretations that lead to uniformity.<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis points out:

»The ecological crisis we are experiencing is, first of all, one of the consequences of this ill view of us, of others, of the world, of the time that is passing; an ill look that causes us not to see everything as a gift offered to us to discover that we are loved.«<sup>29</sup>

Today's profound transformations that affect humankind are certainly related to moral, religious and psychological changes in which the modern ecological crisis is manifested as the phenomena of today.<sup>30</sup> The global changes that have affected our civilization, in the forms of climate, environment, air pollution, water, oceans, have had a devastating effect, and are the result of human action.<sup>31</sup> The Council has already recognized that deep metamorphoses have negative consequences for both humankind and nature.<sup>32</sup>

It is necessary to carefully distinguish the deep ecological problems that are results of human action from the biocentrism of radical ecology<sup>33</sup>, which denies the fundamental anthropological vision in which human beings are at the heart of creation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>25</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, (7 December 1965), New Revised Edition, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1996, 26 (hereinafter: GS).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Biškup, *Ekološki problem...* [Ecological Problems], 207-208.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. T. MATULIĆ, Ideja antropocentrizma u ozračju biocentrične paradigme [The Idea of Anthropocentrism in the Atmosphere of Biocentric Paradigm], *Socijalna ekologija* [Social Ecology], 15 (2006) 1-2, 25; P. BABIE, Antropogenic climate change: The choice we must make and how religion can help, *St. Mark Review*, 236 (2016) 2, 37-64.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. LS, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Franjo, *Naša majka Zemlja...* [Our Mother Earth...], 116-117.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. GS, 4; Matulić, *Metamorphoses of Culture...*, 73-80.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. S. M. GARDINER et al. (ed.), *Climate Ethics. Essential Readings*, New York, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. R. A. BUTKUS, S. A. KOLMES, Global Climate Change, and the Church in the Modern World: A Sign of the Times, <https://college.up.edu/showimage/Global%20Climate%20Change%20and%20the%20Church3d6.pdf>. (10 November 2021); N. ORESKER, The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change, *Science*, 306 (2004) 1686; UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, Global Climate Change. A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, 2001; <https://www.usccb.org/resources/global-climate-change-plea-dialogue-prudence-and-common-good> (12 November 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. T. MATULIĆ, *Život u ljudskim rukama. Nova biologija i biotehničko revolucioniranje života. Vodič kroz bioetiku 2* [Life in Human Hands. New Biology and Biotechnical Revolutionization of Life. A Guide to Bioethics 2], Zagreb, 2006, 21-64.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CLTURE – PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life. A Christian Reflection on the New Age*, Catholic Truth Society, London, United Kingdom, 2003, 35.

The Second Vatican Council<sup>35</sup>, discussing human activity, emphasized the value of human activity and responsibility in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Point 34, for example, discusses the notion that individual and collective human activity should strive to improve the conditions of human life. That is how humankind responds to the plan of the Creator according to which it received the right to rule the world in righteous and holy manner (cf. 1 Genesis 1: 26-27; Wisdom 9: 2-3), subjecting the Earth to itself with all that it contains and acknowledging God as its Creator, to whom humankind is directed with the whole created reality, constantly aware that it acts in the name of God because such action is the source of good and happy life and because that is how humankind glorifies the name of God.

The increase in power that humankind possesses also emphasizes human responsibility, individual and shared, pointing out that the properly understood Christian message encourages the building of the world and not its exploitation and neglect.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, in point 69, when discussing the purpose of earthly goods, the Council emphasizes that they are given for use to all people and should be shared in justice and love, and that no one can appropriate what belongs to all, that what is common to all people as a common good and as a source for sustaining the lives of the individual and the family. The Council also urges the necessary responsibility to take care of all, especially the most vulnerable, underdeveloped nations and individuals, so that the goods possessed by humanity would enable every human being to live in dignity.<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt that we live in a time where the whole reality is marked by anthropocentrism filled with hedonism, consumerism and profit.

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* particularly dramatically highlights the crisis that we are all experiencing and suffering from. The reaction of the encyclical is a sob caused by the evil and violence that humankind inflicts on the Earth through the irresponsible use and abuse of the goods provided by God. People have lived with awareness for a long time, brought up and educated with the notion that they are owners and masters of the Earth, convinced that they are allowed to use the given goods as much as they like. This awareness, culture and mentality of upbringing and education manifest the violence found in the human heart, which is wounded by sin, and represent symptoms of the diseases we see in the air, soil, water and living beings. Pope Francis sadly notes that we have lost the awareness that we ourselves are made up of the same elements as our planet and that at the end of our lives we return to dust.<sup>38</sup> – In what way is it possible to see life through theological optics, the essential feature of which is

<sup>35</sup> Cf. T. PETERS, Anticipating the Renewal of Earth: Theology and Science in *Laudato Si'*, *Interface Theology*, 1 (2017) 2, 32-34.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. GS, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. GS, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. LS, 2.

correlation? What is the theological-moral significance of the dense network of interconnections that connect living beings within the ecosystem? How to understand and through which perspective should we understand and interpret the relationship between God's otherness and closeness to the world?<sup>39</sup>

The novelty of the Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* is shown in the fact that for the first time a pope dedicated a document to the complex relationships that connect poverty, environmental devastation and the significance of these relationships for the future of humankind.<sup>40</sup>

Although there have been some misinterpretations of the book of Genesis and accusations that Christianity spawned anthropocentrism and dualism<sup>41</sup>, Pope Francis emphasizes that today we must strongly reject the notion according to which the fact that we are created in God's image (cf. Genesis 1: 26-27) and the task of subjugating the Earth to ourselves can in no way imply humankind's absolute dominion over other creatures. Biblical texts relating to the Earth<sup>42</sup> and the gift of possession must be interpreted in their context and with proper hermeneutics, so that we are aware of the necessity of preserving and cultivating the Earth (cf. Genesis 2: 15) which implies protecting and vigilantly monitoring the relationship with it. This also implies, as Pope Francis points out, a relationship of responsible reciprocity between people and nature. The Bible, therefore, does not give rise to despotic anthropocentrism<sup>43</sup> that does not care about other creatures.<sup>44</sup> Pope Francis further points out that unhealthy dualisms have significantly influenced certain Christian thinkers in a way that made them distort the gospel.<sup>45</sup> Caring for the environment and education on this topic must be linked to love for people and their dignity as well as with an unwavering commitment to solving social problems. Any abuse of any creature, Pope Francis points out, is contrary to human dignity.<sup>46</sup>

Speaking about people's attitude towards the created reality, the Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff explicitly emphasizes that these are prob-

<sup>39</sup> Cf. S. MORANDINI, *Teologija i ekologija* [Theology and Ecology], Zagreb, 2013, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. D. ANSORGE, Božja nježnost u svim stvorenjima: temeljna misao enciklike pape Franje *Laudato si'* [God's Tenderness in All Creatures: The Fundamental Thought of the Encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato si'*], *Crkva u svijetu* [Church in the World], 54 (2019) 3, 383-396, 383.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. L. WHITE, The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, *Science*, 155 (1967) 3767, 1203-1207.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Đ. PARDON, Biblijska teologija zemlje – potka enciklike *Laudato si'* [Biblical Theology of the Earth – the Weft of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*], *Diacovensia*, 24 (2016) 1, 13-43, 20-23.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. R. GLOBOKAR, Kritika antropocentrizma u enciklici *Laudato si'* [Critique of Anthropocentrism in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*], in: S. BALOBAN, D. PETROVIĆ ŠTEFANEĆ (ed.), *Laudato si'! Kako mijenjati stil života?* [*Laudato si'! How to Change a Lifestyle?*], Zagreb, 2020, 101-113.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. LS, 67-68.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. LS, 98.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. LS, 91-92; J. H. PRELLWITZ, *Laudato Si'*, Communication Ethics, and the Common Good: Toward a Dialogic Meeting amid Environmental Crisis, *Journal of Moral Theology*, 6 (2017) 1, 144-158.



lems of a structural nature. It is about the dominance of the logos separated from transcendence. The logos has fallen into progressive opposition to the dimension of life.<sup>47</sup> The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor reiterated that same idea. According to him, the dominance of instrumental reason is manifested in three malaises that essentially shape the world, mentality, culture, spirituality and education of modern people, namely individualism, the enchantment of the world and humankind and the politically devastating consequences of individualism and instrumental reason.<sup>48</sup> Due to all the above, the ecological crisis is proving to be dramatic, and its resolution rather urgent. This is the crisis of the entire system that has marked our history for the last few hundred years. The end of one era and the emergence of another is a fairly dramatic experience. Emerging forms of ecological crisis are manifested as emptiness, solitude, anxiety, depression and aimless aggression. Simply put, we are experiencing widespread dissatisfaction. Emptiness arises out of the feeling that little or almost nothing can be changed in life, society and nature. Solitude expresses the loss of contact with nature and people. Anxiety stems from multiple and objective threats to life – to all of humanity. Depression stems from artificially induced anxiety and the fact that we no longer know what to do, what to believe, and what to hope for.<sup>49</sup>

When the mentioned symptoms affect civilization, an alarm signal is much needed. Aimless aggression suggests that a person has quit the norms of own restraint without which a society cannot survive or protect itself. It is a sign of lawlessness, destruction, loss of sense of dignity of people and the created world, bringing about two consequences: on the one hand, vanity and banalization of speech in everyday communication and the lack of quality needed for deeper personal relationships, and on the other, the apparent loss of life-giving contact with nature. To an empty, endangered and anxious person, nature seems dumb, indifferent and dead. Irrationality spreads in abundance all around us and it becomes clear that we have crossed all moral and spiritual boundaries. The old myths are dead, and the new ones do not possess the strength to encourage the creation of a new cultural ethos.<sup>50</sup>

That is why Pope Francis bring a clear diagnosis of today's environmental difficulties that are associated with a deeper crisis and create a source of discord, relating to goals, meaning as well as the partial interest of technological and economic growth.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Cf. L. BOFF, *Nježnost i snaga. Franjo Asiški – štivo za siromašne* [Tenderness and Strength. Francis of Assisi – Texts for the Poor], Sarajevo, 1988, 19-22.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. C. TAYLOR, *Etika autentičnosti* [Ethics of Authenticity], Split, 2009, 7-18.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Boff, *Nježnost i snaga...* [Tenderness and Strength...], 19.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. LS, 109.

## 2 *The context of the origin of the encyclical Laudato Si'*

The contemporary challenges of today's world marked by the rapid changes and process of globalization that Pope Francis calls *a true epochal shift* occur on two levels: the anthropological level and the socio-ecological level, and both cause deep crisis and degradation of humankind, culture, society and the world.<sup>52</sup> It is well known that Pope Francis, during his service as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, inspired by the ideas and thoughts of the Uruguayan lay theologian neothomist *sui generis* Albert Methol Ferré, saw the gap between intelligence and reason as the crucial problem. He saw intelligence as fundamentally historical, and the *ratio* for intelligence as instrumental: when *ratio* gets separated from intelligence, it ends in ideology, and can take various forms of absolutist rationalism, while its emphatic form is in the nihilistic hedonism, which is gaining momentum, creating a new culture and atmosphere, becoming new opium for the people. For Pope Francis, such a process is also recognizable in the structures of theistic Gnosticism in which the obvious absence of the incarnate Christ leads to the disincarnation of history.<sup>53</sup> The difficulty arising from such analyses clearly shows that such processes create dehumanization<sup>54</sup> with severe consequences for people, culture, the world, society and nature itself.

There are three socio-social and spiritual-cultural levels within which the encyclical came about. These are the historical, the economic and the political contexts.<sup>55</sup> They determine the ways challenges are confronted, emphasizing above all that we are at a turning point in regards to the future of humanity and that we should be aware of »the need to change lifestyles, production and consumption to combat global warming and human actions that contribute to it or make it worse.«<sup>56</sup>

Pope Francis states the reasons that motivate us to change the way we live our lives and exploit nature, which is manifested primarily in the over-exploitation of land, deforestation, climate changes,<sup>57</sup> the issue of drinking water<sup>58</sup> and the loss of biodiversity.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Veritatis Gaudium – The Joy of Truth. Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties* (8.XII.2017), Città del Vaticano, 2017, 3 (hereinafter: VG).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 269-271.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (24.XI.2013), Dublin, 2013, 51 (hereinafter: EG).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Z. SPAJIĆ, *Uvod u društveni nauk Crkve* [Introduction to the Social Doctrine of the Church], Zagreb, 2019, 315-319; P. FERRARA, Sustainable International Relations. Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the Planetary Implications of »Integral Ecology«, *Religions*, 10 (2019) 466, 1-20.

<sup>56</sup> LS, 23.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. LS, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. LS, 27-31; C. Z. PEPPARD, Hydrology, Theology, and *Laudato Si'*, *Theological Studies*, 77 (2016) 2, 416-435.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. LS, 32-47.

The hermeneutic framework of the encyclical is also discursive on three levels: theological, philosophical, and political.<sup>60</sup> In the *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis already mentioned the challenges we face today, which relate to the arrangement of socio-political and economic life.<sup>61</sup> However, what is especially noticeable in his still current pontificate is the special care for the environment, which he prominently demonstrated with the publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* on 24 May 2015.<sup>62</sup>

A major step in the creation of the encyclical were certainly the scientific gatherings organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. The first gathering was held in 2013 on the topic of *The Plight of the Socially Excluded*, followed by the one in 2014 on the topic of *Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature: Our Responsibility*, and one held in 2015 on the topic of *Protect the Earth, Dignify Humanity. The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Humanity* (co-organized by UN SNSD – *Sustainable Development Solutions Network* and Religions for Peace). Pope Francis acknowledged the opinions of experts in these fields, and one of those experts, the leading German climatologist Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, assisted and played a significant role in the creation of this encyclical. Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, also had an extremely important role, as he was entrusted to create a draft of the encyclical, with the help of the Secretary of the Council, Bishop Mario Toso. Throughout the whole encyclical applies, the most consistently used method is the following: *to see – to judge – to act*. What characterizes this encyclical is the dialogical universalism, in the sense that all human beings are essentially similar in terms of the fundamental characteristics and values of well-being. The encyclical shows that a sole source of wisdom is not enough to achieve the general and common well-being; dialogue is needed, both between religions and sciences that are complementary, as well as between other sources of wisdom contained in other cultures, especially indigenous ones, to which the encyclical attaches great importance.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cf. E. O'NEILL, The Pope and the environment: Towards an integral ecology?, *Environmental Politics*, 25 (2016) 4, 749-754.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. EG, 53-67; M. S. NORTHCOTT, Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in *Laudato Si'*, *Theological Studies*, 77 (2016) 4, 886-904; R. LUCIANI, Francis and the Pastoral Geopolitics of Peoples and Their Cultures: A Structural Option for the Poor, *Theological Studies*, 81 (2020) 1, 181-202; S. S. BRAUN, Pope Francis and Economic Democracy: Understanding Pope Francis's Radical (yet) Practical Approach to Political Economy, *Theological Studies*, 81 (2020) 1, 203-224.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Spajić, *Uvod u društveni nauk Crkve...* [Introduction to the Social Doctrine of the Church...], 319.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. LS, 64.

### 3 *The causes of the ecological crisis lie within the humankind*

There is no doubt that the roots and causes of the ecological crisis lie within the humankind.<sup>64</sup> The understanding of the humankind also carries a certain moral and ethical aspect of people's attitude towards nature, caused by human action. The distorted understanding of the humankind and the action that resulted from it has caused the destruction of the environment.<sup>65</sup> That is why Pope Francis suggests that when it comes to understanding the crisis, it is necessary to focus on the prevailing technocratic paradigm and the place that people and their actions occupy in it.<sup>66</sup> The humankind possesses a power that has led to radical change over the centuries. Pope Francis acknowledges the benefits that come from the power of technology, because when properly directed, it can generate valuable resources to improve the quality of human life.<sup>67</sup> But he points out that modern people have not been taught to use that power properly because rapid technological progress has not been accompanied by human development in terms of responsibility, values and consciousness. Today's people lack appropriate ethics, culture and spirituality, which could set boundaries and educate them, teach them to have the necessary self-control.<sup>68</sup> It is obvious that the evolution of our capabilities does not follow the development of our moral strength. The moral strength and responsibility of people did not increase in proportion to the development of technology and science. The prevailing technical mentality diminished the power of moral strength in people and reduced morality to the subjective realm. We are in need of morals and ethics that would be able to respond to the dangers that have befallen us all. The greatest danger seems to lie in this imbalance between technical power on the one hand and people's moral strength and responsibilities on the other. What we need as a precondition for our freedom and human dignity cannot come from technical power and its control, but only from education, i.e., from people's moral strength. When there is no such moral education and strength, the power that the humankind possesses turns into a destructive power.<sup>69</sup> No one can abdicate part of the responsibility for what the existence of humanity depends on.<sup>70</sup> Pope Francis notices an even deeper problem, which lies in the fact that humanity has embraced technology and its development according to

<sup>64</sup> Cf. A. Le DUC, Christian Humanism, Anthropocentrism, and the Contemporary Ecological Crisis, *New Theology Review*, 30 (2018) 2, 10-19.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. A. PIOLA, »There can be no Ecology without an Adequate Anthropology« (LS 118). Which Man can take care of our Common Home?, *Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie*, 23 (2016) 31, 107-120.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. LS, 101.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. LS, 102-103.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. LS, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. J. RAZTINGER, *Kršćanstvo i kriza kultura* [Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures], Split, 2008, 20-21.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *O relativizmu i vrjednotama* [On Relativism and Values], Split, 2009, 8.

an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm. This paradigm uses logical and rational procedures in governing and thanks to them people subjugate the world to themselves. The relationship with nature has turned into a rivalry, as if nature is some impersonal reality that can be treated without any consequences.<sup>71</sup> Pope Francis therefore thinks that the roots of the difficulties of today's world are primarily in the unconscious desire to turn the method and goals of technology into a paradigm that shapes people's lives and the way society functions. The consequences of such a paradigm are not ethically nor morally neutral, as they create certain styles, consciousness, mentality and culture of life – simply put, it is all part of a person's educational process.<sup>72</sup>

Pope Francis points out that people know when it is about using technical power and disposing of that power. It is not just about profit, nor about prosperity, but about power in the most radical sense of the word. It is about the absolute mastery over life.<sup>73</sup> It became difficult for us to stop in order to restore the depth of life. People are increasingly moving towards tedious monotony. Pope Francis therefore raises questions about the purpose and meaning of everything, because otherwise we will only be able to confirm the facts, and we will need more substitutes to endure the emptiness that arises from that tedious monotony.<sup>74</sup>

Pope Francis also notes that one of the causes of the ecological crisis is anthropocentrism<sup>75</sup>, which has placed the technical thought above the reality, so that people would no longer experience nature as a valid norm or a living refuge. The technical mindset views nature objectively, as a mere given, as an object to be used regardless of the price and the path to which that use can take it. If people do not discover their true place in this world, they are not able to understand their own selves properly, ultimately working against themselves and against their own dignity.<sup>76</sup> Starting from the foundation of Christian anthropology on the Christian revelation contained in the Bible, St. John Paul II pointed out that God has put people in their own hands, and they should therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which they are endowed.<sup>77</sup> At the root of the ecological question, the crisis of the senseless destruction of nature and the humankind, lies the anthropological delusion that people can arbitrarily dispose of land and goods by subjecting them to their cruellest acts. Such acts result in poverty, misery and narrow-mindedness, pettiness and

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. LS, 106.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. LS, 108.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. LS, 108-109.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. LS, 113.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. R. RYAN, Pope Francis, Theology of the Body, Ecology, and Encounter, *Journal of Moral Theology*, 6 (2017) 1, 56-73.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. LS, 115.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II. *Centesimus annus. Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (I.V.1991.), United States Catholic Conference, Washington, 1991, 38 (hereinafter: CA).

greed, in lieu of people putting their action in relation to truth and good. That is the way people can get rid of that disinterested attitude, of the nobility and aesthetics which are born of admiration of being in the beauty manifested in visible things as a message from God the Creator.<sup>78</sup> Theological anthropology reveals that a trinitarian structure is manifested in a person's constitution, enabling that person's transformation on three levels: moral, intellectual and voluntary, so that he or she could act in accordance with the structure of his or her own being, which has its root and source in the God of the Triune Love.<sup>79</sup> Pope Francis emphasizes the fundamental truth of faith: »Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.«<sup>80</sup>

Pope Francis exposes romantic individualism shrouded in ecological beauty that closes off in suffocating immanence. Human beings possess an exceptional value that elevates them above other creatures. They open up space for valuing each person and their dignity as well as for valuing the created reality.<sup>81</sup> Pope Francis proposes the creation of a new synthesis of human beings and the created world that would be able to overcome the false dialectics of recent centuries. For Christians, this means returning to their own identity and the rich deposit of truth they have received from Jesus Christ and thus continuing the reflection on new issues and challenges by expressing their views in a fruitful dialogue with new historical situations.<sup>82</sup> For Pope Francis, a misguided anthropocentrism led to the misguided way of life.<sup>83</sup> This anthropocentrism creates a practical relativism that is a feature of our time, more dangerous than the doctrinal one because it is associated with the deepest and most sincere commitments that shape a new way of life.<sup>84</sup> For Pope Francis, practical relativism results in the worship of limitless human power, which is manifested in the degradation of the mankind, the environment and the decline of society.<sup>85</sup> Technology that is separate from ethics will hardly be able to set limits to its own power. We have forgotten, as Pope Francis points out, that the value of the human being far exceeds the stage of its development.<sup>86</sup>

Today, the theme of development is strongly connected with the duties that arise from people's relationship with the natural environment, as Benedict XVI pointed out in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. In the Christian vision of creation, God has given people the environment to use and bear responsi-

<sup>78</sup> Cf. CA, 37.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. E. R. SCHLESINGER, A Trinitarian Basis for a »Theological Ecology« in Light of *Laudato Si'*, *Theological Studies*, 79 (2018) 2, 229-355.

<sup>80</sup> LS, 83.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. LS, 119.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. LS, 121.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. LS, 122.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. EG, 80.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. LS, 122.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. LS, 136.

bility in regard to the generations to come. Believers recognize nature as the miraculous result of God's creative intervention by which people can satisfy their legitimate material needs with an awareness of respecting the inner balance of creation. If that awareness disappears, nature starts getting exploited uncontrollably or is considered an untouchable taboo. Nature is an expression of the plan of love and truth, it precedes us, it was given to us by God as a life environment. It speaks of the Creator (cf. Romans 1:20) and his love for the humankind. Therefore, for human beings, nature is a vocation. It is given to people not as a pile of randomly scattered waste but as a gift from the Creator. It is also important to point out that we must not consider nature more important than the human person. Nature is the Creator's gift to the humankind and has its own purpose, i.e., the criteria necessary for us to use it wisely, and not instrumentally or arbitrarily. In fact, nature is not only composed of matter but also of spirit and is therefore rich in meanings and transcendent purposes to be achieved through responsible human freedom aimed at moral constitution that derives from the requirement that people behave in line with the common good and truth.<sup>87</sup> The humankind is not the absolute master of the nature. It has no reason to exist in itself, but only in the creative will of God, which, in the entitative sense, makes nature what it should be – a creature.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to correctly understand the environment as not reducible to nature and not as a vehicle for manipulations and exploitations, though on the other hand, nature must not be considered as absolute and placed above the value of the human person.<sup>89</sup>

That is why it is necessary to educate people for such a human ecology which encompasses something very profound, and that is the necessary relationship between human life and moral law which is inscribed in our very nature and which is our prerequisite for creating a dignified environment.<sup>90</sup> In this sense, we should realize again that we need a purified and sober anthropocentrism that focuses on understanding the whole and recognizes that all reality is interconnected and that people have a certain responsibility for the created reality as an expression of justice<sup>91</sup> and love, both for God and for the humankind.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. CV, p. 48.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. T. MATULIĆ, *Metamorphoses of Culture...*, 339-400.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. KSNC, 462.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. LS, 155; V. ŠEREMETA, Cjelovita ekologija pape Franje – ključ za očuvanje zajedničkog doma [The Complete Ecology of Pope Francis – the Key to Preserving the Common Home], in: Baloban, Petrović Štefanec (ed.), *Laudato si'! Kako mijenjati stil života?... [Laudato si'! How to Change a Lifestyle]*, 135-149.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. E. McCARTHY, Breaking Out: Expansiveness of Restorative Justice in *Laudato Si'*, *Journal of Moral Theology*, 5 (2016) 2, 66-80.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. B. HÄRING, *Slobodni u Kristu...* [Free in Christ...], 299.

#### 4 *Vision of ecological education – core highlights*

We have seen the causes and consequences of the ecological crisis that is wraps us in its drama. The question that arises is how to educate people to acquire the right attitude towards themselves, others, the world and the nature that surrounds them.<sup>93</sup> Pope Francis emphasizes that lots of things need to change, and above all, that humanity needs to change. He notes that we lack an awareness of a common origin, our mutual belonging and a future that concerns us all and that belongs to each and every one of us. That is why today, more than ever before, we face cultural challenges, as well as spiritual and educational challenges, which certainly requires us to embark on the path of renewal without any delay.<sup>94</sup>

Pope Francis points to the fact that we must, above all, strive for a new lifestyle and overcome the fallacy of anthropocentrism by transcending false awareness, and that we must truly turn to nurturing people's moral and spiritual strength that can lead and guide them, avoiding the trap of anxiety-causing lack of identity. It is necessary to avoid self-referentiality, introversion, as it increases greed. The more spiritually poor and morally immature people are, the greater the risk of uncontrollably exploiting everything around them. They lack a true sense of the common good.<sup>95</sup> Pope Francis invites everyone to discover human dignity and its value as the true wealth of the humankind, because dignity reveals what is good, beautiful and true, and what God has placed in the heart of every person by the act of creation.<sup>96</sup> The process of educating a person requires a continuous exit from oneself, development of the ability to recognize other beings in their true value. This further means limiting the unbridled greed for possession and callousness due to the decay of the world, limiting the suffering we cause with our irresponsible actions. Pope Francis sees the education of people as a means of transcending oneself as well as rejecting self-sufficiency and self-centeredness. In this way, by educating people, we encourage them to act responsibly, so that our personal decisions in relation to the world around us make that world a better and more beautiful place for human and all other living beings.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Cf. T. PÖLZLER, *The Effects of Morality on Acting against Climate Change*, in: R. GARNER, R. JOYCE (ed.), *The End of Morality Taking Moral Abolitionism Seriously*, New York, 2018, 202-218; S. MICKEY, A. ROBBERT, L. REDDICK, *The Quest for Integral Ecology*, *Integral Review*, 9 (2013) 3, 11-24, S. ESBJÖRN-HARGENS, M. E. ZIMMERMAN, *An Overview of Integral Ecology. A Comprehensive Approach to Today's Complex Planetary Issues*, in: *Integral Institute Resources Paper*, 2 (2009) 1-14; [https://www.academia.edu/4820481/AN\\_OVERVIEW\\_OF\\_INTEGRAL\\_ECOLOGY\\_A\\_Comprehensive\\_Approach\\_to\\_Todays\\_Complex\\_Planetary\\_Issues](https://www.academia.edu/4820481/AN_OVERVIEW_OF_INTEGRAL_ECOLOGY_A_Comprehensive_Approach_to_Todays_Complex_Planetary_Issues) (20.12.2021).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. LS, 202.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. LS, 202-204.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. LS, 205.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. LS, 208.



For Pope Francis, the process of education means discovering the alliance between humanity and the environment. It means coming out of ourselves, feeling the call to jointly discover the challenge of living together, of mutual encounters, to embrace and support each other, to turn our common walk in this hour of history, our care and responsibility for the created world into a fraternal experience of solidarity and dialogue. Educating in this sense means connecting with others, not closing oneself off or in one's own small and narrow worlds, because that would mean tasting the bitter poison of immanence – each decision of that sort impacts our world, our lives and nature around us, making them worse.<sup>98</sup>

Contemporary educational challenges for Pope Francis are primarily issues of overcoming individualism, consumerism, various pathologies (fear, despair, lack of respect, violence, trampling on dignity) that burden people. Education should also strive to restore balance at various levels, above all ecological balance, but also the inner balance with oneself, balanced solidarity with others, natural balance with all living beings and spiritual balance with God. Ecological education should help people with stepping towards the Mystery from which ecological ethics draws its deepest meaning.<sup>99</sup> Ecological education also encourages environmental responsibility, which in turn encourages behaviours that significantly and directly affect the quality of life (the issues of using plastic, reducing water consumption, waste separation, showing care for other beings, planting new trees, turning off unnecessary lights, using public transport, etc.).<sup>100</sup>

When it comes to educational resources, Pope Francis emphasizes various areas such as school, family social communication, religious instruction. Namely, for Pope Francis, a good school education in childhood and youth sows' seeds that can bear fruit throughout life. He stresses out the role of the family, which is of central importance, as it is a place where life as a gift of God can be appropriately received and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed today. The family is the culture of life, it provides the first lessons on how to show love and respect for life, how to use things properly and how to care for all creatures. In the family, Pope Francis points out, we create a culture of life that expands and conveys respect for our surroundings.<sup>101</sup> For Pope Francis, the political environment and other social groups have the task of helping to raise awareness of the importance of ecological education.<sup>102</sup> Edu-

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. EG, 90; J. N. MOLINO, Engaging Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* in the Discourse on Environmental Communication, *Religion and Social Communication*, 17 (2019) 1, 51-71.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. LS, 210.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. LS, 211.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. LS, 213.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. LS, 214.

cation for the whole ecology<sup>103</sup> means education for the whole person, which implies promoting new ways of thinking about people, life and society as well as the relationship with nature.<sup>104</sup>

Pope Francis advocates ecological conversion given the rich heritage of Christian spirituality over the centuries. From this spring we draw inspiration to bring our spirituality and faith in Jesus Christ closer to us with greater love and care for the protection of the world. Spirituality must not be separated from the body, nor can nature be separated from earthly realities; it is necessary for nature to live with them and within them, in communion with everything that surrounds us. Therefore, Pope Francis emphasizes that all of us, without exception, need ecological conversion in order to live as guardians of God's work, which is an essential part of a virtuous life. Pope Francis hence expresses regret for the omissions and unhealthy attitude towards nature that Christians have had throughout history, and encourages internal change in attitudes, thoughts, ideas, consciousness, mentality, culture and spirituality, as shown by the world's first ecologist, St. Francis of Assisi,<sup>105</sup> who is still an inspiration to many women and men, not only believers but all people of good will.<sup>106</sup>

Ecological conversion (*metánoia, conversio*)<sup>107</sup> understood as a permanent renewal of the spirit and ecological education cannot be reduced to an individual; it involves the whole community. This conversion and education mean generous care filled with tenderness, which implies gratitude and acknowledgment of God's gift to the humankind, the awareness that we are not separated from other creatures, but actually form a miraculous communion with all creatures. Pope Francis calls on all people, and especially Christians, to clearly demonstrate this dimension of converted ecological life permeated with a world of values taught and nurtured within the depths of the human person, in conscience, freedom and reason.<sup>108</sup> Conversion as a process affects a person on the level of faith, morals, intellect and psyche, aimed at discovering truth, the good and the beautiful.<sup>109</sup>

Pope Francis sees education as the task of promoting responsible freedom that can meaningfully choose good. Education, on the other hand, reveals one of the most important forms of the human person, which is the promotion and protection of human dignity and all that is created. Only this cognisance of truth and good woven into the created world, people and nature can awaken the

<sup>103</sup> Cf. R. F. SADOWSKI, The Concept of Integral Ecology in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *Divyadaan*, 27 (2016) 1, 21-44.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. LS, 215.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. R. F. SADOWSKI, Inspirations of Pope Francis' Concept of Integral Ecology, *Seminare*, 37 (2016) 4, 69-82.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. LS, 218.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. N. ORMEROD, C. VANIN, Ecological Conversion: What Does it Mean?, *Theological Studies*, 77 (2016) 2, 328-352.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. LS, 219-221.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ormerod, Vanin, *Ecological Conversion...*, 330-332.

responsibility<sup>110</sup> of people's transcendent destiny, shown in relation to the created world.<sup>111</sup> If we start from the fundamental theological truth about people's creation in God's image, then education for a responsible attitude towards the created reality should help guide people to live according to this fundamental knowledge, which reveals to them that »every creature has its own purpose«. <sup>112</sup>

The key realization is that today's comprehensive education, awareness, conscience and responsibility of each human being must be integrated into ecological education. Along the way, the Church makes its contribution by opening people to the salvation truth of the creation of the world and the humankind, from which responsible action arises. In terms of ecological education, it is necessary to promote such policies that care for the common good of all, beyond ideological conflicts and interests.<sup>113</sup> In this sense, it is imperative to think critically about the ideas, motivations and inspirations of the common good that are value-oriented and that will steer people to beauty and the discovery of coexistence.<sup>114</sup>

Today's ecological education should be linked to the three levels of the human person: the intellectual, the emotional, and the spiritual. This means harmonizing human action with nature so that we could feel interconnectedness, respect, loyalty and responsibility while taking a fundamentally right attitude towards everything created, perfectly in line with St. Francis who showcased the path towards a holistic approach to created reality. In this sense, Pope Francis proves to be a promoter of environmental awareness<sup>115</sup> and responsible solidarity for the humankind and the Earth.<sup>116</sup>

### *In lieu of a conclusion*

Pope Francis certainly wanted to encourage each person's inner being, conscience, heart and mind to be open to a world of values which also essentially encompasses people's attitude towards the created reality that surrounds them. People are tempted to live an anthropology of non-transcendence, detached

<sup>110</sup> Cf. R. W. MILLER, Deep Responsibility for the Deep Future, *Theological Studies*, 77 (2016) 2, 436-465.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. J. M. BERGOGLIO/FRANCIS, *O odgoju* [On Education], Split, 2015, 147-149.

<sup>112</sup> LS, 84.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Häring, *Slobodni u Kristu...* [Free in Christ...], 312-316.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. D. HOLLENBACH, *The Common Good & Christian Ethics*, Cambridge, 2002, 56.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. M. PERKOVIĆ, Ekološka svijest [Ecological Consciousness], in: M. PERKOVIĆ, *Prema moralnoj zrelosti* [Towards Moral Maturity], Sarajevo, 2009, 110-125.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. L. BOFF, *Franjo Rimski i Franjo Asiški: novo proljeće za Crkvu* [Francis of Rome and Francis of Assisi: A New Springtime for the Church], Rijeka, 2018, 61-63; C. M. KELLY, Everyday Solidarity: A Framework for Integrating Theological Ethics and Ordinary Life, *Theological Studies*, 81 (2020) 2, 414-437; N. M. FLORES, »Our Sister, Mother Earth«. Solidarity and Familial Ecology in *Laudato Si'*, *Journal of Religions Ethics*, 46 (2018) 3, 463-478.

from deep roots; that temptation makes them irresponsible to the created world and life. It is the task of every education to open horizons in order to recognize the fundamental structure of human existence which reveals its appeal precisely through the emanation of values. A person, a unique human being endowed with reason, freedom and inviolable dignity in immediate experience reveals himself or herself and the surrounding world as a true value.<sup>117</sup> According to Pope Francis, the goal of education reveals a deep relationship with God in such a way that human behaviour in which a person discovers traces of God's creation results in practically valid consequences. The goal of education is to build the spirituality in people, together with freedom and ethics, to encourage people to act and assume responsible attitudes towards society and politics for the benefit of nature and humanity. For Pope Francis, the challenge of ecological education is to devise an education that would save the planet from destruction, a planet threatened by human activity. It is a wakeup call for awareness. Educating people for a contemplative and prudent approach to reality (ecology) means opposing the technocratic paradigm whose goals is solely focused on ruling and power. Human beings are a part of the created world in which they realize God's plan with the humankind and all that is created.<sup>118</sup> Comprehensive education, as shown in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, implies a changed attitude of people towards everything that surrounds them. This means permanently overcoming the logic of consumerism, utilitarianism and the technocratic approach to reality. When it comes to Pope Francis' considerations, the educational vision is in the service of achieving the higher goals of humanity, which are above all growth in freedom, harmonious development of intellectual and moral abilities that help the maturation process of the sense of responsibility and growth in true freedom. Only an education that is open to the Absolute can lead to the promotion of human dignity and responsible treatment of the gifted nature, freeing us from the temptation to be destroyers of the world and the humankind. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis shows that God reveals the humankind to itself, that reason and faith mutually intertwined show what is truly good and that people are obliged to do the known good both to themselves and to the nature that surrounds them.

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Matulić, *Metamorphoses of Culture...*, 320-321.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Ansorge, *Božja nježnost u svim stvorenjima...* [God's Tenderness in All Creatures...], 395.

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*Uzroci ekološke krize i nužnost ekološkog odgoja u enciklici Laudato si'*

Sažetak

Suvremena ekološka kriza koja danas radikalno pogađa čovjeka i prirodu otkriva nam svoje dublje uzroke koji se nalaze u samom čovjeku. Ponajprije, čovjek sebe više ne promatra u ključu stvaranja, ne poima sebe i stvoreni svijet kao Stvoriteljev dar, već – opijen moći koja je združena s tehnikom i znanošću – u instrumentalno-racionalnom ključu sebe uzima kao jedinog tvorca vlastitog udesa. U hermeneutskom ključu razumijevanja stvorenja papa Franjo polazi od Stvoritelja te raskrinkava tu ključnu antropološku zabludu čija cijena ima nesagledive učinke na stvorenu stvarnost. U radu se ukazuje na temeljne probleme i poteškoće suvremene ekološke krize i nastoji pokazati da se ona nalazi u krizi čovjeka. Prateći misli i ideje koje donosi papa Franjo u enciklici *Laudato si'*, rad ide ističe neuralgične točke suvremene ekološke krize pokazujući puteve izlaska iz labirinta antropološke samodostatnosti. Ukazuje se na potrebu i važnost odgoja ekološke svijesti, dakle na odgovoran, zreo i moralan pristup stvorenoj stvarnosti. Na kraju rada promiče se sloboda koja je u skladu s ljudskim dostojanstvom što svoj izvor ima u Bogu Stvoritelju. Odgovarajući na pitanje zašto je važan i ključan ekološki odgoj zaključuje se da je to jedini ispravan put autentične ljudskosti koja nosi oznaku stvorenosti na Božju sliku i priliku i da je čovjek pozvan na odgovorno djelovanje prema stvorenoj stvarnosti.

*Ključne riječi: antropocentrizam, Bog, čovjek, ekologija, kriza, odgoj.*

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