

RESEARCH GROUP - RELIGION, ECOLOGY and CITIZENSHIP

The Research Group - Religion, Ecology and Citizenship, hereby abbreviated as REC, has been constituted to ponder over the ecological issue and the global imperatively urgent ecological startle. The group starts from the understanding of the ecological issue as a *Kairos* - an opportune moment - for planet Earth, for Modernity, for religions in general, and, specifically, for the Christian religion, for all parties reassess, taking into account the crucial problems of ecological issues. In this perspective, religions and modernity are requested to work in order to bring to light the potential and actual "affinities between religion and ecology that can be 'pivots' in the recomposition of relationships between religion and modernity" (Danièle Hervieu-Léger) and can promote, with their specific knowledge and methods, the development of ecological literacy.

LOVING AND CARING THE EARTH. CRITERIA AND DYNAMIC OF INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Converging with the multiple global agendas, the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the care of common house (Pope Francis, 24 may 2015) converge at the same time, in an original manner, with the Earth's own agenda, which reveals deep and dramatic ecological imbalances by the direct action of mankind. The scientific community is consensual in identifying a new geologic era, the Anthropocene. The neologism Anthropocene, forged by Paul Crutzen, in the year 2000, denotes that the anthropogenic changes on Earth as a result, therefore, of the action of mankind, are so profound and global that mankind becomes a "geological force" that imprints irreversible changes on the Planet.

The Encyclical *Laudato Si'* reminds that "we are not God. The Earth exists before us and has been given to us"(LS § 67) and " we ourselves are the dust of the earth (LS §2). The land that we are, and the Earth that we inhabit in, thus appears as "our land" to love and to care for.

Returning to the concern already expressed by his predecessors John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Francis invites the world to "reflect on different elements of an *integral ecology*" (LS §137). Integral in that ecology covers, therefore, environmental, economic, social, cultural and everyday life. Integral Ecology with respect to Earth, the whole earth. Land that is by no means an abstract term: denotes the Earth we live in and the Earth that we are; denotes the creative action of God and the eternal love that accompanies it; denotes, ultimately, the responsibility of mankind and the privilege of being able to love and to care for Earth.

We want, then, to welcome the challenge made by Pope Francis to all mankind and especially to the scientific community: "I urgently appeal for a renewed dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet" (LS §14).

Goals and method

1. Identify the inter-epistemological nexus: Religion, Ecology and Citizenship.
2. Define the fundamental epistemological and pedagogical cores of the object under study.
3. Identify the potential of christian theology in the context of interdisciplinary knowledge about Earth.

4. Develop and explore innovative theses.
5. Systematize the Christian thought about Earth through out a diachronic and synchronic approach.
6. Increase the levels of ecological literacy in view of the development of ecological informed citizenship, environmental awareness and a culture of ecological responsibility.

two vectors are privileged in the process of achieving this goal: internal - at the level of the research group; external - for society in general, through the dissemination and discussion of the partial results and the democratization of access to the final product.

7. Develop methodologies to support and facilitate the performing of theoretical and practical research of processus (at the level of the Research Group) and can be applied to other levels of training and education.
8. Promote the construction of knowledge content, producing theoretical and didactic guides, to support personal and social training, in formal educational contexts and in cultural, social and religious contexts.
9. Develop a on-going training plan for ecological literacy and to support binding proficiencies to love and care for the Earth.

This on-going training plan highlights :

- the organization of a series of ***Earth-to-Earth Dialogues*** – to monitor and support the research throughout the development, implementation and completion of the project.
- the promotion and realization of ***Encounters with the Earth - Let's go to the Land!***, walking on the terrestrial core of the Earth, beyond cement and concrete.

10. Deepen the thinking behind the Encyclical *Laudato Si on Integral Ecology*.
11. Conduct a seminar on the *Encyclical Laudato Si* '.
12. Publish, in book form, the end product of the research on love and care for the Earth, as criteria and dynamic processes of Integral Ecology.
13. Create a Permanent Observatory of Integral Ecology (OPEI) within the Research Center on Theology and Sciences of Religion (CITER).

Vectors of performance

1. Establishment of protocols with various organizations: Episcopal Conference of Portugal, National Secretariat of Christian Education, Franciscan Order, Universities, Research Centres, research groups and research projects in the area and in related areas, schools, associations and foundations,
2. Operationalize mechanisms to monitor the development and completion of the project.

3. Periodical disclosure of product :

-Seminars at the Faculty of Theology of the UCP, in the framework of the Master's Degree in Theology, the Master's Degree in Religious Studies, doctorate and postgraduate courses. Expanding to other colleges of the UCP.

-Workshops and Symposiums opened to the general public.

-Life long learning and conferences in activities of university extension.

-Publication of articles in scientific journals.

-Disclosure via online platforms.

4. Publication of the final product in book form and its presentation in the framework of a scientific Congress on Integral Ecology.

5. Evaluation of the impact of the final product in the research group and the society in general, through the Observatory of Integral Ecology to be created within the framework of CITER.

Budget and financing – Resources from CITER are requested for the preparation of the budget and for its funding. All members of the research group are invited to envisage possibilities of financing the project.

Timeline

18th October 2017: Commencement with the philosopher Joaquim Cerqueira Gonçalves and the physicist and essayist Carlos Fiolhais, on *1st Earth-to-Earth Dialogue*. (Lisbon, UCP, exhibitions Room, 5pm - 7pm).

05th January 2018: 2nd Earth-to-Earth Dialogue - *The city and the earths. From Eça to Francisco*, with the writer and theologian Tolentino Mendonça and the theologian Isabel Varanda. (Braga, Faculty of Theology - 11am to 13am)

03th March 2018: 3rd Earth-to-Earth Dialogue: *The ecology of cities without land*, to be held in Macao SAR-China by the Group of researchers of the University of Saint Joseph, integrated into the research group REC.

September 2018: Symposium: *To love and to care for The Earth. Criteria and dynamics of Integral Ecology*. Presentation of partial results of research.

2019: Seminar on the encyclical letter *Laudato Si' on the care of the common home*.

November 2019: Conclusion. To coincide with the closing ceremony of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Faculty of Theology, of the Catholic University of Portugal.

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