**PROMOTE LASUDATO SI’ IN YOUR CONGREGATION**

**The Transition to Integral Ecology**

28th May 2021

**SLIDE 1 – COVER**

When about a year and a half ago the Dicastery presented the Laudato Si’ Action Platform initiative, we the JPIC coordinators of Religious Congregations started asking ourselves what practically it would entail for Religious communities and Congregations. This presentation is about sharing how far we have gone with our reflection on how Religious communities and Congregations could actively participate in the effort that the whole Catholic Church is planning to complete a transition to Integral Ecology by 2030.

**SLIDE 2 – THE ENCYCICAL LETTER**

In 2015 Pope Francis published his Encyclical letter “Laudato si’ - On the care of our common home”. Written in 6 chapters that follow usual pattern of the Social Teaching of the Church (See – Judge – Act), the encyclical first tackles an analysis of what is happening to our common home. Climate changes impact on eco-systems and on the poor. The loss of biodiversity has become a global threat, as also the current pandemic shows. The current economic trends are unsustainable (cf. Carbon footprint) both in terms of production and consumption. Various issues are discussed, such as agriculture, water, the ecologic debt and so forth.

= Then the reflection moves on to the root causes of the problem, that is, the anthropological question. The cultural assumptions behind our unsustainable global system have lost touch with the foundation of human existence, that is based on 3 relationships: with God, with the Earth and with the human community. Breaking such relationships is what sin is about.

= Our unsustainable development model, the global economic system and technological capacity are causing ecological devastation and exploitation of people. The anthropocentric worldview is at the root of the problem.

= All is connected: ecology is multi-dimensional and tied to the notion of the common good.
LS 139 states that:

When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality.

= The encyclical also gives some practical guidelines for action: for example, changing lifestyle, increase energy efficiency, invest in renewable energy, changing patterns of production and consumption, commit to advocacy campaigns for policy and systemic change.

= Integral ecology is also made up of single daily gestures which break the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms.
As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings.

**SLIDE 3 – THE NEED FOR ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION**

Pope Francis invites us to an ecological conversion. That starts by heeding the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

= (Environmental and social crises) LS 139 states that:

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

= (Social transformation) Therefore, what the world needs is a radical social transformation, that is, a change both in mentality (a cultural revolution) and in socio-economic systems.

= (Comprehensive solutions) LS 139 also states that:

Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem. It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems.

= A whole chapter is finally dedicated to education and spirituality – which makes it particularly relevant to the Religious. It elaborates on :

* Embracing new lifestyles
* Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment
* Ecological conversion… whereby the effects of the encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us. Living up to our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork.
* Prophetic and contemplative lifestyle – sobriety, humility, peace
* Civic and political love: building a better world, a culture of encounter and care

**SLIDE 4 - LIVING *LAUDATO SI’***

Back in 2018 scientists raised yet another alarm: unless by 2030 we reverse the current trends in carbon emissions, the dramatic climate changes we are already experiencing will become irreversible. From there it came a renewed sense of urgency, which suggested the need to speed up the transformation envisaged in Laudato si’.

= That is why this year we are celebrating Laudato si +5 and the special anniversary year for that encyclical letter.

= We are grateful and encouraged by the so many initiatives Religious Institutes have already started to promote integral ecology. But there is also a need to move on together, in communion and forming a critical mass for systemic change.

= As pope Francis stated, “Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan” (LS 164).

**SLIDE 5 – A PARTNERSHIP**

The initial plans for a special anniversary year developed into a much bigger endeavour, under the invitation of pope Francis: a commitment to complete the transition to integral ecology by 2030, involving the whole of the Catholic world.

= The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development has been tasked with the overall direction of the initiative. Then many partners have been involved, on account of various domains within the Catholic community.

= One of such domains is that of Religious Congregations. UISG and USG are therefore a major partner of the Dicastery, collaborating to facilitate the involvement of Congregations around the world.

Since last February, we have been reflecting on how that could be done practically, namely, what kind of approach could make it easier for Religious communities and Institutes to involve themselves and participate actively.

= Then there is also the Global Catholic Climate Movement, contributing technical support and a digital platform.

= So the question is: how can we facilitate the involvement and participation of religious communities and Congregations?

**SLIDE 6 – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It has three main pillars: economic, environmental, and socio-cultural.

Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permits fulfilling of the integration of the requirements of these four pillars for present and future generations.

**SLIDE 7 – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS**

Religious are asked to look at their sphere of influence and determine their planning. Consider the harmonious interconnection (integration) in these areas according to their capacity for responsibility.

It is an opportunity to make a contribution informed by their own charism to the common effort for integral ecology; and so they can also energise their specific mission as they respond to the cry of the Earth and of the poor.

By doing so, they actually end up requalifying their ministerial service…

…and, on the other hand, they participate in shared responsibility for a sustainable world and contribute to the synergy that will take us there.

**SLIDE 8 – LAUDATO SI’ GOALS**

The horizon of such systemic change is defined by 7 Laudato Si’ Goals, namely:

= Responding to the cry of the Earth

= Responding to the cry of the Poor

= Ecological Economics

= Adoption of Simple Lifestyles

= Ecological Education

= Ecological Spirituality

= Community Engagement and Participatory Action

**SLIDE 9 – LAUDATO SI ACTION PLATFORM**

This is the overall framework worked out by the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development (DPIHD)

= It will be officially launched on May 24th, 2021

= Participating communities and Institutes, commit themselves to a 7 year journey to complete their transition to Integral Ecology

= However, it is hoped that new communities will join the initiative every year

= In fact, to allow for an exponential growth, the intention is to at least double the number of participants every year

= That would lead to the growth of a Laudato si inspired network of communities

= in order to reach quickly a critical mass for radical transformation. That is necessary for systemic change. In fact, social scientists tell us that when 21-25% of a population embraces change, then the social system will change.

**SLIDE 10 – THE 7 SECTORS**

**SLIDE 11 – THE PROCESS: THREE COMPONENTS**

In consideration of the diversity of situations, charisms, and contexts, we feel that communion and a common plan are possible at the level of a broad, essential, shared process able to accommodate different ways, styles and plans to implement it.

For example, there are Congregations that start with the community level; others at the Provincial or Institute level. Others organize themselves at the level of charismatic family, that is, modelling the journey for various Institutes that partake in the same charism.

And again, there are some who have started with a systematic assessment of their situation in relations to integral ecology; others that preferred to start with a formation programme at community level; others again saw it convenient to start with a training of trainers who would then animate the local communities.

The common commitment of Religious communities to integral ecology, therefore, envisages 3 shared components, which can apply to all the various approaches:

- **A public commitment**: This has to do with the commitment of the religious community to complete the transition to Integral Ecology within 7 years: this could be done through a public declaration, such as a Manifesto or a Covenant, as various communities have already done. Such a declaration would be personalised, but some basic models could be used as examples. In general, the Manifesto could refer to the 7 OLS, the mission and charism of the community, the context in which it is embedded, etc.

- **The path to complete the transition to integral ecology**: This is the core of the community's journey. A journey that must be measurable if it is to be truly credible. Therefore, at the beginning of the journey a community should define specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound objectives and assess its situation in relation to them.

Secondly, the community could be expected *to* ***incorporate the plan for its transition into her community project***. All religious communities have their own way of implementing an annual project involving both community life and ministries. We suggest that the plan for the transition to integral ecology should not be another additional commitment to the ordinary community project. Rather, the ordinary community project could consider the annual goals for ecological transition.

- **Journeying together**: This aspect of the process is crucial for having a social impact and contributing to systemic change. For example, communities can participate in global campaigns for Integral Ecology, such as divesting from fossil fuels, or banning plastic packaging, as well as the basic idea of voting with your wallet, putting pressure as consumers on companies that do not meet standards of human and social rights, and environmental protection. All of which are very effective if done collectively.

**SLIDE 12 – CUSTOMIZED APPROACHES, GOALS AND PLANS**

As Congregations join the LSAP, they find themselves at different points along the journey. Some have actually already started some years ago, others may be starting right now. There are local, small size Institutes and international, large ones.

= They are experiencing different situations and challenges. That may lead them to focus on different issues and to choose different approaches.

= They also have different charisms and their practices can vary a lot.

All that may lead Religious communities and Congregation to develop customised objectives and plans.

= But…

= whatever their approach and practices, there is a level that they can all share, namely the **process**. And, as we have seen, the process is simple and revolves around three elements: making a public commitment; making the transition to integral ecology; and journeying together.

**SLIDE 13 -** **TRANSITION TO INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**

1. The nature of the transition is not so much about changing goals, plans or activities of the Congregation; it rather requires a move towards a systematic approach and an alignment to the shared process.

2. LSAP basically provides a vision of INTEGRAL ECOLOGY, a process, and an accountability system.

= A vision: this is found in the 7 LSGs

= A process: this is given at overall level by the framework provided by the Dicastery; and at the level of the Religious sector, by the three pillars: public commitment; transition to integral ecology; and journeying together.

= An accountability system: there is an invitation to set objectives that can be verified and implement activities whose impact can be measured.

**SLIDE 14 – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO JOIN LSAP?**

3. What does it mean, then, to join the LSAP? Basically, you need to look at 3 aspects:

1. That their **vision of the future** – the scenario they feel called to contribute to bring about – is aligned with the LSGs.
2. That they **set up a process** to develop their own way to:
3. make a public commitment;
4. make the transition to integral ecology (attain the LSGs),
5. network and participate in advocacy campaigns and collective action.

c. That they **qualify their strategies** **and action planning** with SMART[[1]](#footnote-1) **objectives and evidence based monitoring and evaluation**.

**SLIDE 15 – WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CONTINENT?**

First of all we would like to congratulate the Continent for the important progress already made. We see that the *Pacto comboniano para la casa comùn* is already a statement of a public commitment. In other words, you have already started the journey into the LSAP.

Secondly, your participation into ecclesial networks and campaings, such as REPAM and *Iglesia y mineria* for instance, are already a significant progress on the path of the third pillar.

You may consider building on these realities as you discern what your response to the invation of the Dicastery can be. The challenge seems to be about discerning and organizing a systematic, participatory response to that invitation. We would like to submit a few considerations about that, with reference to the Pacto comboniano para la casa comùn and to the

**SLIDE 16 - – PUBLIC COMMITMENT**

**This has to do with committing your community to complete the transition to Integral Ecology within 7 years**: this could be done through a public statement, like a Manifesto or a Covenant, like various communities have already done. Such a statement would be personalised, but some basic templates could be availed as examples. Typically, the Manifesto could make reference to the 7 LSGs, the mission and charism of the community, the context in which it is inserted, etc.

= **Communicate the commitment to the public**: as public commitment, the Manifesto should be published, for example by posting it at the entrance of the community, or on the community’s website, or in the Newsletter or other communication with the territory.

= **Be accountable to the public**: having made a public declaration, it would be necessary to be accountable for the commitment made. For example, communities could produce a sort of end of the year report communicating to the public their accomplishments and results in their effort towards integral ecology.

= **Celebrate accomplishments**: it is very important to celebrate and give thanks for the life that has emerged or has been regenerated over the reporting period. Prayer, liturgy and celebration are very much part of the process towards integral ecology!

**SLIDE 17 – TRANSITION TO INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**

This is the kernel of the journey of the community. A journey that needs to be measurable, if it is to be truly accountable. Therefore, at the beginning of the journey a community would need to define specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound goals and assess her situation in relation to them.

= Secondly, we could envisage that **the community embeds the plan for her transition into her community project cycle**. All Religious communities have their own way of making a yearly project that involves both commuity living and ministries. We suggest that the plan for the transition to integral ecology be not another, added commitment on top of the ordinary community project. Rather, the ordinary community project could take into consideration yearly targets for making the transition.

= **Evaluate your yearly journey and track your progress against set targets**: as every Religious community evaluates the implementation of her yearly project, she would also keep track of her progress towards integral ecology.

**= Certify your level of accomplishment: a practical tool for facilitating evidence based assessment of the level of integral ecology attained could be availed. Communities could make use of it to give evidence of their level of accomplishment. Major superiors could also use it to animate communities and support them.**

**SLIDE 18 – APPROACHES TO THE TRANSITION**

The following observations are based on the presentation shared by the JPIC coordinators of various Religious Congregations. By and large, it appears that there are two broad approach to facilitate the transition to Integral Ecology, namely: a strategic approach and an animation approach.

= At times the difference between “strategic plan” and “animation” approach is subtle. These approaches constitute more of a continuum rather than an opposition.

= Generally, the strategic plan approach appears more structured and integrated across the Congregation. Often it is accompanied with a baseline survey, which provides a point of reference for organizing efforts and measuring progress. Above all, it requires an organizational structure to facilitate coordinated participation of the whole Congregation.

= The animation approach, instead, seems to be less structured from an organizational point of view. Rather than organizing from a central level, animation aims at encouraging initiatives organised from the local level, from the periphery.

= However, in both cases, there is an effort in connecting the two levels. A centralised planning aims at giving birth to local commitments. When starting from the local level, instead, often there is a space for sharing and networking in order to build communion and a shared journey.

= In any case, there is a tendency to combine different strategies that end up engaging various – if not all seven – Laudato Si’ Goals.

**SLIDE 19 – STRATEGIC PLAN APPROACH**

This is rather structured, it is a kind of institutional **strategic plan**, and generally tends to include the following aspects:

= A ***baseline survey***, meant to document what is already being done and to have a reference for measuring change

= A ***formation program***, to prepare personnel at all levels for a transition process (awareness, motivation, spirituality, know-how, possible options).

= ***Alignment to LSGs***, that is, connecting lifestyle and apostolates to LSGs, through a shared vision and an overall process / plan

= Setting up a dedicated ***organizational structure***, that is, a system for rolling out the plan (committees / coordinators, formation programs, planning processes at various levels)

= A process of ***accompaniment***, which may include animation, monitoring, evaluation, networking

**SLIDE 20 – ANIMATION CAMPAIGN APPROACH**

This differs from the strategic planning approach in that it looks less structured and binding. It looks like a sort of **campaign**to promote LS vision, commitments and practices in the life and ministry of the Congregation. Generally it tends to include:

= ***Elaboration of a vision***: this is often based on the reading of LS in relation to the charism and mission of the Congregation

= ***Awareness raising***: the vision and good practices are then shared and promoted within the Congregation, using various means, such as Congregational statements / documents, webinars and publications, short formation programs, etc.

= ***Rolling out activities***: out of the work of animation, communities are encouraged to roll out LS inspired activities and initiatives.

= ***Documentation and sharing***: the sense of communion and sinodality is nurtured by sharing experiences and initiatives. For this to happen, there is a need to create a forum or a space for communication and sharing.

= ***Networking***: communication and sharing open up possibilities for networking and scaling up the activities, or joining *advocacy campaigns*.

**SLIDE 21 – FREQUENT STRATEGIES**

These often fall within the following initiatives:

“***Green community***”: this is about promoting the transition to integral ecology in relation to the lifestyle of communities and it often includes

**.** A *formation program* on LS vision, spirituality and good practices

**.** Adoption and adaptation of *good practices* at community level (e.g. taking care of garden and environment; separating trash; saving energy and water; more public transport and walking; eco-spirituality and liturgical celebrations; organic farming and poultry; herbal medicine; 4 Rs; afforestation, etc.)

**.** Leading by example and *influencing others* (neighbourhood, communities, apostolate)

“***Green projects***”: these are thematic projects undertaken at different levels (community, provincial, Congregational level), e.g. renewable energy project. They are deeply connected with LS and integral ecology, but not necessarily part of the Congregational main ministry

**SLIDE 22 – FREQUENT STRATEGIES**

***“Green apostolate***”: this is about making an ecological transition in relation to the main apostolate / ministries of the Congregation.

Often we find

**.** A formation program (as for the “green community” initiatives)

**.** Mainstreaming LS /integral ecology in congregational priority ministries

**.** Networking

**.** Animation (Parishes, faith based groups, etc.)

**SLIDE 23 – CASE STUDY: FMA**

The Salesian Sisters have adopted a strategic approach to align their Institute to LS and Integral Ecology. They are starting with a baseline survey, to assess to what extent they are already living LS both in terms of lifestyle and of ministry. They are going to build on those practices and develop them further.

= Then they are constructing their Institute’s vision of integral ecology, taking into account their Chapter Acts, LS and the relationship between their charism, spirituality and integral ecology.

= On the basis of this vision, they are going to develop specific guidelines to make integal ecology emerge within the educative mission of the Institute.

= Then they are going to form the coordinators and to support circumscriptions in rolling out practical plans to make a transition to integral ecology both in lifestyle and in ministries.

**SLIDE 24 – URSULINES OF JESUS**

They have developed Integral Ecology Guidelines for the Institute at general, community and personal levels

They started with reading Laudato si’ and reflecting on its various dimensions: environmental, economic, social, cultural, spiritual and lifestyle

= Then they set up a process, which included:

- Monthly messages to communities on LS and consequential actions

- These found very good reception and good practices suggested were adopted by local communities

- They also made room for sharing within the Congregation about the local experiences, creating the conditions for accompanying them along a common journey

**-** Finally, having taken stock of what works well for them, they have come up with guidelines.

**SLIDE 25 – IN CONCLUSION…**

Time is running out to fix economy, protect the Earth, help the poor. As Pope Francis said (10/10/20):

- “As the term ‘countdown’ suggests, we must act urgently,”

- “Each one of us can play a valuable role if we all set out today. Not tomorrow, today”

1. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound [↑](#footnote-ref-1)