

The Poor in *Laudato Si*

Notes, Excerpts & Reflection Questions

Under the Following Themes:

- 1. Rapidification, Pollution and the Throwaway Culture**
- 2. Climate, Water, Social Debt to the Poor**
- 3. Urban Development & Social Breakdown**
- 4. Global Inequality: Ecological & Social Approach, Ecological Debt**
- 5. Techno-Economic Paradigm, Restoration and Hope**
- 6. Faith and Biblical Foundations**
- 7. Christ Gives Meaning to All, Universal Destination of Goods**
- 8. Universal Communion With Tenderness, Compassion**
- 9. The Technocratic Paradigm**
- 10. Healing our Misguided Modern Anthropocentrism**
- 11. Relativism and Employment**
- 12. Biotechnology**

Appendices:

Catholic Social Teaching - Key Principles

Ten Guiding Principles for the Environment

from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

Note: It is recommended that users read through the two appendices (*CST Key Principles and Ten Guiding Principles*) before engaging the individual sections of this reflection resource.

Anthony Cosentino

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

February, 2016

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

1. Rapidification, Pollution and the Throwaway Culture

- **Rapidification:** “acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet” with “**intensified pace of life.**” Goals “not necessarily geared toward common good or to integral and sustainable development.” A form of change which is “a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity.” **Contrasts with slow pace of “biological evolution.”** (18)
- “A more critical approach” to the “irrational confidence in progress and human abilities” is emerging. (19)

People’s daily experience:
 - “Exposure to atmospheric pollutants” producing “health hazards, especially for the poor, and causes millions of premature deaths.” E.g., inhaled smoke cooking/heating fuels, pollution from “transport, industrial fumes, substances which contribute to the acidification of soil and water, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and agrottoxins in general.” “Technology... linked to business interests is presented as the only way of solving these problems...incapable of seeing ... relations between things...sometimes solves one problem only to create others.” (20)
 - “...pollution produced by residue” “The earth, our home is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” Bioaccumulation: “frequently no measures are taken until after people’s health has been irreversibly affected.” (21)
 - “**throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish.**” We have not yet adopted “circular model of production (that absorbs and reuses waste by products at the end of consumption) capable of preserving resources for present and future generations.” Only limited progress made counteracting throwaway culture through limiting use of non-renewable resources, moderating consumption, maximizing efficient use, reuse and recycling. (22)

Questions:

1. What is “rapidification”, and which problems are associated with it?
2. Who are the main victims of pollution and *throwaway culture*?
3. How do we as Catholic educators help students to find peace and work for justice amid the North America’s fast-paced (*rapidified*) throwaway culture?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses.

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

2. Climate, Water, Social Debt to the Poor

- **“The Climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.”** (23)
- “Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn **affects the livelihood of the poor**, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a **tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation.**” “Widespread indifference” to their suffering. Our “lack of response” points to “the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.” (25)
- Present level of water consumption in developed countries, wealthier sectors of society non sustainable. Here “habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. **The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty.**”(27)
- **“Quality of water available to the poor” one “particularly serious problem.”** Many daily deaths, spread of water related diseases from microorganisms, chemical substances due to unsafe water. Dysentery and cholera, suffering, infant deaths, polluted underground water sources due to farming, industrial waste, lack of regulation/controls, all poured into lakes and seas. (29)
- “[G]rowing tendency” toward water privatization despite basic human right of access to safe, drinkable water. **“Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. But water continues to be wasted... in the developed world ...also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality.”** (30)
- Scarcity of water drives up prices of food. Some studies show acute water shortage within a few decades unless urgent action taken; “also conceivable that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century.” (31)

Questions:

1. **Who are most affected by changes in climate and lack of access to clean water, and how are they affected?**
2. **What is the basis of our “social debt” toward the poor? (2nd last parag)**
3. **How can we as Catholic educators help students recognize and help repay society’s social debt to the poor?**

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

3. Urban Development & Social Breakdown

- **“Human beings** too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and **endowed with unique dignity**. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people’s lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture.” (43)
- “Disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities ... have become unhealthy to live in.. ...because of pollution, ...urban chaos, poor transportation, visual pollution and noise. Many cities are huge inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water.” “Congested, chaotic” neighbourhoods (“even those recently built”) “lacking in sufficient greenspace. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.” (44)
- **Frequently, we find beautiful and carefully manicured green spaces in so-called ‘safer’ areas of cities, but not in the more hidden areas where the disposable of society live.**” (45)
- Social dimensions of global change include...
 - o Effects of technological innovations on employment
 - o Social exclusion
 - o Inequitable and distribution and consumption of energy, services
 - o Social breakdown
 - o Increased violence
 - o Rise in new forms of social aggression
 - o Drug trafficking
 - o Growing drug use by young people
 - o Loss of identity

“These are signs that the growth of the past two centuries has not always led to an integral development and an improvement in the quality of life. Some of these signs are symptomatic of real social decline, the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion.” (46)

Questions:

1. Who are the “disposable of society” and what do they suffer in overcrowded cities?
2. What do you think “integral development” (last parag) means for the way we plan cities, and how might it support the needs of poor people in large urban centres?
3. Which key principle from Catholic Social Teaching (1st sentence) needs to inform our teaching about development in the social sciences in our Catholic schools?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

4. Global Inequality: Ecological & Social Approach, Ecological Debt

- **“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: ‘Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.’”** (Bolivian Bishops’ Conf, 2012). E.g., depletion of fishing reserves hurting small fishing communities, water pollution affecting poor who cannot buy bottled water, rises in sea level affecting coastal peoples with nowhere to go, conflicts over shortages of resources resulting in premature death of many of the poor “and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas.” (48)
- **Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”** (49)
- **Instead of resolving the problems of the poor and thinking of how the world can be different, some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate.”** E.g., international pressure of aid tied to ‘reproductive health’. . But “demographic growth is fully compatible with an integral and shared development. Blaming population growth instead of “extreme and selective consumerism... is one way of refusing to face the issues. ...an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution [and unequal consumption]...” **One third of all produce discarded and ‘whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor.’”** Imbalances in population density need attention nationally and globally due to pollution, transport, waste treatment, resource loss, quality of life. (50)
- **Inequality between countries necessitates “an ethic of international relations.”** **“Ecological debt”**, “particularly between the global north and south, connected to **commercial imbalances** with effects on the environment and the **disproportionate use of natural resources.**” Raw material **export**, local mercury **pollution** due to gold **mining**, sulphur dioxide pollution from copper mining. Warming due to 2 centuries of gas accumulation by rich countries’ “huge consumption” “has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, esp Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought has proved devastating for farming.” Damage of **solid waste and toxic liquid export to developing countries. Multinational companies polluting environment “in ways they never could at home.” “They leave behind great human and environmental liabilities such as unemployment, abandoned towns, the depletion of natural reserves, deforestation, the impoverishment of agriculture and local stock breeding, open pits, riven hills, polluted rivers and a handful of social works which are no longer sustainable.”** (51)
- Developing countries are controlled by foreign debt; **developed countries bear ecological debt to south - “land of the southern poor”** rich and mostly unpolluted; local access to riches inhibited by “structurally perverse” system of commercial relations and ownership. Developed countries “ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy and by **assisting poorer countries to support policies and programmes of sustainable development.”** **We are one global family without frontiers or barriers, no room to hide from “globalization of indifference.”** (52)

Questions:

1. Why does an “ecological approach” also have to be a “social approach”? (2nd parag. & following)
2. How must the North repay its “ecological debt” to the South? (4th parag.)
3. What are some of the ways we, as Catholic educators, teach students that we are in fact, “one global family”, to counteract the “globalization of indifference”?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

5. Techno-Economic Paradigm, Restoration and Hope

- We are called to be God's instruments to see that God's designs for peace, beauty and fullness for our planet are fulfilled. **We lack "the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership" and indispensable legal framework to prevent "new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm"** (alliance between technology and purely profit-driven economics) from overwhelming our politics, freedom and justice. (53)
- International political responses have been weak. **Economic and special interests "end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected."** **"Alliance between economy and technology" sidelines "anything unrelated to its immediate interests."** Results in empty superficial rhetoric and attempts at change viewed as nuisance, "obstacles to be circumvented." (54)
- **"Deified market" becomes its own rule before a defenseless environment.** Shows how **"environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked."** (56)
- **Foreseeable new wars over depleted resources**, further harming environment, cultures. Destructive bacteriological warfare research continues. Politics must address potential causes of such conflicts; "powerful financial interests prove most resistant to this effort." (57)
- **Examples of environmental restoration** (lakes, rivers, woodlands, beautified landscapes, beautiful and environmentally conscious buildings, transportation) show that we can still intervene positively. **We were made for love; and "gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us."** (58)
- Rise of **"false or superficial ecology** which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness. Looking superficially at things and belief "things do not look that serious" gives license to carry on "with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption." This is our human way of feeding our own "self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, not to acknowledge them..." (59)
- Varying opinions: One extreme – myth of progress believes that ecological problems will solve themselves through new technologies "without any need for ethical considerations or deep change." Other extreme is those who view interventions and those who propose them as a threat to economic system. Viable solutions will have to be generated between these extremes. No one solution for all; **dialogue** a necessity for coming to solutions. (60)
- **Church's role is to encourage honest debate among experts.** While "our common home is falling into serious disrepair", **there is hope** for a way out, though "things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation...evident in large-scale natural disasters ...social and even financial crises .. the world's problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation. ...the present world system is certainly unsustainable ... for we have stopped thinking about the goals of human activity. '...humanity has disappointed God's expectations.'"(61)

Questions:

1. What are "God's designs for the planet", and how do we fit into them (1st line)?
2. How does the "alliance between economy and technology" (the techno-economic paradigm) stand in the way of the common good? (2nd parag)
3. What are some ways that we as Catholic educators foster environmental restoration and hope for the future of our planet and its peoples, among our students?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

6. Faith and Biblical Foundations

- The present document, while welcoming dialogue with all, also seeks to show Christians and “some other believers as well” how **faith convictions can “offer ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.”** (64)
- **Genesis’ first creation account** – God’s plan includes creating humanity; **after creating man and woman, God saw that it was “very good.”** (Gen 1:31) Man and woman created out of love in divine image and likeness shows us **“immense dignity of each person, ‘who is not just something but someone...’”** St. John Paul II: the Creator’s special love confers upon each person “an infinite dignity.” *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you* (Jer 1:5) **“We were conceived in the heart of God...’the result of a thought of God... willed...loved...necessary.”**(65)
- **Human life grounded in relationships with God, neighbour, earth** as seen in Genesis – relationships broken within and without by sin. **Harmony between God, humanity, creation disrupted by “our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.” Distorted “our mandate to have dominion over the earth.”** (Gen 1:28), “till it and keep it.” (Gen 2:15). Harmonious relations between humanity and creation thus become “conflictual.” (cf Gen 3:17-19) St. Francis’ experience of harmony with all creatures a healing of that rupture, a return to state of original innocence. **Today, “sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable and attacks on nature.”** (66)
- Our call to “have dominion” (Gen 1:28) over creation and “till and keep” the garden of the world (Gen 2:15) not a license to exploit creation, rather a call for communities to take what they need for subsistence, and duty to protect earth and ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. The earth is the Lord’s (Ps 24:1; Dt 10:14; Lev 25:23)
- Nature has laws that must be respected; relationships between persons and creatures must be respected. (68)
- **“These ancient stories, full of symbolism bear witness to a conviction ...that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.”** (70)
- Renewal in Biblical tradition entails “recovering and respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the Creator.” E.g., law of the Sabbath, sabbatical year (sowing forbidden, reaping only what necessary to live), jubilee year (7 wks of yrs) – forgiveness and freedom of all land’s inhabitants. **Jubilee year law “was an acknowledgement that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone. Those who tilled and kept the land were obliged to share its fruits, especially with the poor, with widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst.”** – Leaving borders of fields, not gleaning after harvest, not gathering fallen grapes in vineyards or beating olive trees a second time. (Lev 19)(71)
- “The God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible.” (74)

Questions:

1. When and why did God pronounce creation “very good”? (2nd parag)
2. How did sin rupture our relationships with creation and one another, and how did the Jubilee Year seek to restore that rupture? (3rd and last parags)
3. How do we as Catholic educators help students understand that our struggle for justice not a lost cause (last sentence)? Who is the source of hope we proclaim to our students?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

7. Christ Gives Meaning to All, Universal Destination of Goods

- “The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see **each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object.**” (81)
- **Harmony, justice, fraternity and peace are the ideals proposed by Jesus for how we are to treat all living beings. “Arbitrary human domination” – “‘might is right’ has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all.”** (82)
- **The ultimate purpose of creation not found in us, but rather in the risen Christ, “the measure of the maturity of all things”; “[t]he ultimate destiny of the universe is the fullness of God.** All creatures and creation being drawn to fullness in God in Christ; through love, we are being drawn back to our Creator. (83)
- Creation was fashioned by God for everyone’s benefit. “Hence **every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.**” The principle of private property is subordinated “to the **universal destination of goods.**” – “...a golden rule of social conduct and the ‘first principle of the whole ethical and social order.’” This was reaffirmed in Pope John Paul II’s note that ‘a type of development which did not respect and promote **human rights**... personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – would not be really worthy of man.[sic.]’ The Church defends legitimate rights to private property, with a “**social mortgage**” to the **common good.** “This calls into serious question the unjust habits of a part of humanity. (93)
- **“The rich and the poor have equal dignity” (Prov 22:2; Wis 6:7; Mt 5:45). Rural people** have a natural right to possess a “reasonable allotment of land” to sustain a family and livelihood. This right must be guaranteed, and include access to “means of technical education, credit, insurance and markets.” (94)
- “The natural environment is a collective good, the [inheritance] of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others. That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment ‘Thou shall not kill’ means when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive”. (95)

Questions:

1. What effects has “arbitrary human domination” (2nd parag) had on the peace Jesus came to bring?
2. Is authentic communion with God and nature possible without caring for the poor and vulnerable? (4th parag)
3. How do we in our Catholic schools promote an “ecological approach” that promotes human dignity and the universal destination of the earth’s goods?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

8. Universal Communion With Tenderness, Compassion

- “At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure.” “...But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others. We fail to see that some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions... leaving behind them so much waste which, if it were the case everywhere, would destroy the planet. In practice, we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights.” (90)
- “A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about **the poor**, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted.” ...Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.” (91)
- If we treat creation cruelly, we will mete out the same cruelty to others. Such cruelty is contrary to our human dignity. All persons and creation are interconnected, “woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures...” (92)

Questions:

1. What are some of the “enormous inequalities” you see in your own local community?
2. Why do we as a society tolerate these inequalities?
3. How do we as Catholic educators help students imagine a world in which we all can live in true communion with God, each other and creation?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

9. The Technocratic Paradigm

- The technocratic paradigm is a model of life that promotes the human person as a user of technology to gain control “over an external object” – to possess, master and transform it as they see fit. It sees nature not as a gift, but rather in a “confrontational” way. This paradigm (model of life) “has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology.” This idea is based on the lie about the earth’s goods being in infinite supply, leading to “the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit” with the idea that infinite resources are available, quickly renewable, and exploitation’s negative effects ‘can be easily absorbed.’ (106)
- **Wasteful consumerist “sort of ‘superdevelopment’ [based on technocratic paradigm] ...forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation, while we are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth.” (109)**
- **Problems regarding the environment and the poor cannot be dealt with by technological paradigm.** They require “data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and social ethics.” Without ethical horizons, life becomes “a surrender to situations conditioned by technology, viewed as the principal key to the meaning of existence.” Environmental degradation, anxiety, a loss of the purpose of life and of community living are concrete “symptoms which point to what is wrong.” (110)
- A “distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality” are needed “to generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Without this distinctive way, technology’s globalized logic and its technical remedies does not address the interconnectedness and deepest problems of the global system. (111)
- **“Ecological culture”** not just about responses to environmental issues. It can only **resist the technocratic paradigm** as a “distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality...” Individual technical remedies to interconnected environmental problems can leave our best initiatives “caught up in the same globalized logic.” (111)
- We have the freedom **to liberate ourselves from the technocratic paradigm**, to “limit and direct”, “**put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral.**” Examples: **cooperatives of small producers who “adopt less polluting means of production, and opt for a non-consumerist model of life, recreation and community. Or when technology is directed primarily to resolving people’s concrete problems, truly helping them live with more dignity and less suffering.”** “An authentic humanity calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door.” (112)

Questions:

1. **The technocratic paradigm is about using technology to subjugate nature, to serve selfish human needs. How does it affect the poor?**
2. **How are some people are liberating themselves from the technocratic paradigm (last parag)?**
3. **How can we as Catholic educators help students see their place in the world in a way that is different from the way promoted by technocratic paradigm?**

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

10. Healing our Misguided Modern Anthropocentrism

- “An inadequate presentation of Christian **anthropology [understanding of the human person]** gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world.” Our “dominion” over the world is not about uncaring mastery, but rather, “responsible stewardship.” (116)
- **“When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities .. it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.”** (117)
- **Misguided anthropology has two extremes:**
 - o one “sees **no intrinsic value in lesser beings**” (“misguided anthropocentrism”) and
 - o other “sees **no special value in human beings**.” (“biocentrism”) (118)
- **There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology [understanding of human person – ie., as image/likeness of God].** “Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued.” (118)
- **“If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships.”** Our openness to others as ‘thou’ capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue” and openness to God as “Thou” the source of our nobility. “Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.” (119)
- **“Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion.** How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties. ‘If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away.’” (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 28.) (120)
- **New synthesis “capable of overcoming the false arguments of recent centuries” needed.**

Questions:

1. A misguided anthropology has: a) a narrow human focus and tends to *abuse nature* OR, b) gives humanity no special importance, and tends to *abuse people*. What are some examples of these extremes?
2. What is the source of our nobility that is key to a proper relationship between ourselves and creation (2nd last parag, last line, No. 119)?
3. How do we as Catholic educators promote students’ correct understanding of the human person in relationship with God, neighbour and creation?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

11. Relativism and Employment

- “[P]ractical relativism,” places first human beings’ desire for immediate convenience and “sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests”. (122)
- **The culture of relativism** “drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts... leads to sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests ... also the mindset of those who” say the market’s invisible forces will regulate the economy, “and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage.” Without “objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs, what limits can be placed on human trafficking, organized crime, the drug trade, commerce in blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species? Is it not the same relativistic logic which justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation, or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted?” “This same ‘use and throw away logic’ generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary.” Political efforts, force of law will not be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment, because when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided.” (123)
- Integral ecology “does not exclude human beings”. It upholds the value of labour as our cooperation with God’s plans for the world. (124)
- “We were created with a **vocation to work.**” “Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth human development and personal fulfillment. **Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work.**” “Yet the orientation of the economy has favoured a kind of technological progress in which the costs of production are reduced by laying off workers and replacing them with machines. This is yet another way in which we can end up working against ourselves.” “[E]conomic dysfunctions always involve human costs. **To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society.**” (128)
- **Solution (to economic dysfunction)** is promoting “an economy which favours productive diversity and business creativity” versus economies of scale, which “end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops.” They cannot link with regional and global markets geared to large businesses. Right and duty of civil authorities to adopt measures supporting “small producers and differentiated production” with occasional restraints on “those possessing greater resources and financial power.” “Business is a noble vocation... [I]t can be a fruitful source of prosperity ... especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.” (129)

Questions:

1. A culture of relativism treats others as an object to satisfy people’s immediate interests. Which vulnerable persons feel its effect most acutely?
2. How can civic authorities ensure that persons’ vocation to work isn’t squashed by the drive for profit?
3. How do we as Catholic educators uphold the dignity and vocations of young people in our schools?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

The Poor in *Laudato Si'*:

12. Biotechnology

- There are significant difficulties with productive lands becoming concentrated in hands of few following introduction of GM crops, 'progressive disappearance of small producers, who, as a consequence of the loss of the exploited lands, are obliged to withdraw from direct production.' **The most vulnerable of these become temporary labourers, and many rural workers end up moving to poverty-stricken urban areas.** Expansion of these crops destroys complex ecosystems, diminishes production diversity, affects regional economies, now and in the future. Oligopolies for cereal production expanding in various countries, forcing farmers to buy their seeds – further aggravated with production of infertile seeds. (134)
- Greater honest and open “social and scientific debate” needs to take place around environmental issues; it must involve independent interdisciplinary research and involve all parties directly or indirectly affected in the discussion of this complex issue. (135)
- Defenders of the environment must apply their principles to defense of human life at all stages. “There is a tendency to justify transgressing all boundaries when experimentation is carried out on living human embryos. We forget that the inalienable worth of a human being transcends his or her degree of development. In the same way, when technology disregards the great ethical principles, it ends up considering any practice whatsoever as licit. ... a technology severed from ethics will not easily be able to limit its own power.” (136)

Questions:

1. How can honest and open “social and scientific debate” help ensure that technologies are not used in ways that destroy people’s way of life.
2. How must the “great ethical principles” (last parag) guide our use of biotechnology in defense of human life at all stages? What is the most alarming example of disregard for these principles with biotechnology?
3. What kinds of guiding principles can we give our young people to use technology justly and wisely?

1 or 2 sentence summary of your responses:

Catholic Social Teaching - Key Principles

Justice

Living in right relationship with God and neighbour.

Dignity of the Human Person

All human persons – from conception until natural death...

- *have a supreme and sacred dignity among God's creatures;*
- *are created in the image and likeness of God.*

The Common Good

Everyone's right to what is necessary for a human fulfillment.

Solidarity

Commitment to the good of my neighbour.

Subsidiarity

Freedom and duty to make responsible decisions at the lowest appropriate level.

Preferential Option for the Poor

Putting the needs of the poor first.

Dignity of the Worker

Sharers (co-creators) in God's creative plan for the world.

Peace

The tranquility of order, the work of justice, the effect of charity.

The Right to Private Property

Freedom to invest wages in land and possessions (subordinated to common good)

Universal Destination of Goods (Distribution)

The goods of the earth were made by God for all to share.

Environmental Stewardship

Responsible care for God's creation to sustain present and future generations everywhere.

Participation

All people have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives.



10 Guiding Principles for the Environment

From the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

1. *The human person is superior to all other creatures on earth.*
 - all creatures must be dealt with responsibly.
 - nature is part of God's plan of creation and redemption in Christ
 - this plan is revealed by Jesus' humanity and Gospel message.
2. *We must not ... i) misuse nature OR ii) make nature more important than people (i.e., human dignity).*
 - these are two fundamental points from Catholic Social Teaching.
3. *The "environment" means the whole planet, shared by all peoples.*
 - ecological responsibility concerns the good of present and future generations.
4. *Science and technology must be used in ways that respect human dignity.*
 - human persons must also treat other creatures with respect.
5. *Nature is God's gift to use wisely – it is not divine itself.*
 - human persons are free to use or modify creation – in intelligent and morally responsible ways.
6. *Economic development must respect creation.*
 - creation's integrity, rhythms and limited resources must be respected.
 - the cost of economic development must include protecting the environment.
7. *Concern for the environment means helping the world's poorest regions develop.*
 - this is the principle of the Universal Destination of Goods:
 - the goods of the earth are God's gift for all to share and use wisely.
8. *Worldwide agreements and laws are needed to protect the environment.*
 - these agreements and laws must be guided by the principle of the Common Good:
 - everyone has a right to all they need to live a fully human life (e.g., food, safety, work, shelter, clean water, education, free association, religious liberty).
9. *Production and lifestyles should be guided by sobriety, temperance and self discipline (not consumerism).*
 - production must satisfy everyone's basic needs and protect the created order.
 - more awareness of our human interdependence will help us escape the consumerist lifestyle.
10. *Environmental questions need a spiritual response.*
 - creation is God's gift to use responsibly, with loving care.
 - thankfulness should be our first attitude toward God for the gift of creation
 - our truest, deepest meaning lies in God, Who made and sustains creation & humanity.
 - nature's elements can be rich symbols pointing us to God, their Creator.

Summarized from a presentation by Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, Secretary Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
(See Zenit, *Ten Commandments for the Environment. A Christian View of Man and Nature*)

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church can be accessed at: <http://www.vatican.va>

Tony Cosentino, Renfrew County CDSB, 2011