

Solidarity in Responsible Resource Sharing and Environmental Care for a Synodal Church. .

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Theology

Introduction

In October 2015, marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops by Paul VI, Pope Francis underscored his commitment to enriching the Synod, a precious legacy of the Second Vatican Council. Emphasising synodality as a crucial path for the Church in the third millennium, Pope Francis announced that the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 would convene under the theme: For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission. It operates in solidarity¹ embracing diverse perspectives from different continents, races, countries, and religions. This paper examines how synodality is practised, discussed, and realised in the context of environmental stewardship.

To structure our exploration systematically, we shall conduct this study under the following prepositions. First the Christian vision and mission of a human person about the creation, second, the promotion of the common good in walking together with all humans guided by freedom and responsibility over the environment. Thirdly, the Spirituality of the divine economy is a communal participation in caring for the environment. The paper will culminate in offering practical suggestions to address the environmental crisis within the spirit of synodality.

1.0 A Christian Vision of Creation

In the creation story of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, we have the creation of the world and the creation of human beings. Creation of the world is the background for the creation of human beings. The creation narrative should be taken in the form of a story, which is told in order to communicate a profound religious truth about the human situation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church² gives a more specific account where there is a hierarchy of creatures which is expressed by the order of six days. Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of other creatures, (CCC, 342-343). The fact that man is created in the image and likeness of God is what makes him distinct from the rest of creation. Man in his own nature unites the spiritual and material worlds. Of all creatures, only man is able to know and love his creator. He is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity (CCC, 356).

1.1 Human Beings Created in the Image and Likeness of God

Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead (CCC, 357). The uniqueness and the privileged position human beings occupy in the universe becomes apparent in the mystery of the Incarnation. Being an image of God

means knowing and loving God. With the help of grace, God furnishes the natural capacities of knowing and loving, enabling human beings to freely embrace the divine offer of communion.³

Man was not created a solitary being - “in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons. Man is by nature a social being and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts.⁴ It is true that God entrusted his creation to man with the responsibility of continuing to co-create. In the same vein, Bernard Häring observes that we “see everything as a gift of God, a sign of the ongoing and a call to creative and responsible cooperation in it...The believer who sees nature still in the making feels himself called to faithfulness in cooperation.”⁵

From this observation, Samson Gitau advances this position by saying that, the Biblical approach to environmental issues interrogates: To whom does the earth belong? The first answer one can give is straightforward. It is given in Psalms 24:1, ‘To Yahweh belongs the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there.’ God is the creator, and so by right of creation is the owner. However, this is a partial answer⁶ because heaven belongs to Yahweh, but the earth He has given to the children of Adam.⁷ Gitau goes on to conclude that the earth belongs to both God and humankind – to God because He has made it and to humans because He has given it to them.⁸ This should clearly be noted that God has not handed over the earth to humanity to completely as to retain neither rights nor control over it. It should be emphasized that God has given humanity the earth to rule it on His behalf. Our possessions of the earth as human beings is ‘leasehold’ as opposed to ‘freehold’. We are, as human beings, only tenants as God remains in the most literal sense, the ‘Landlord’ – the Lord of all the land.⁹

1.2 Dominion Over the Rest of Creation

As the second part of Gen. 1:26 reads, human beings are to have “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” This idea of dominion over the rest of creation is repeated and re-emphasized in Gen. 1:28 where it is preceded by a blessing; ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ It is evidently clear from the text that this dominion extends to all the earth.

The main question is; what is this dominion and how is it to be exercised? To begin with, dominion is not oppression. Dominion is given by God and it is to be exercised in accord with God’s law and according to the nature of the beings entrusted to human beings. Man is not a creator in the strict sense of the term; He is only a co-operator with God, in God’s project of creation. He is not the Lord or Master of creation. A steward is simply a creative caretaker or one who manages another’s property. We find Bernard Häring’s most succinct argument who argues that God expects us to use this redemptive gift. Häring continues to express this responsibility. He concludes that;

whoever wastes, neglects or refuses his gift of creativity thereby impairs the work of redemption, and is culpable. This lack of creativity is the strikingly visible in a legalism that creates nothing new, that never brings forth the newness of Christian morality beyond the letter of law. It is a sin against the Lord of history who wants always to manifest his own creative love and liberty through our participation. Only in sin is man’s freedom – although still freedom – thoroughly uncreative. Whenever a person fails to do the good he could and should do, or the evil he could have avoided, he not only diminishes his own freedom but also impoverishes the whole of salvation history by the unproductive or destructive use of his freedom¹⁰

On another note, remember Jesus warned the disciples not to waste anything after he had fed the five thousand people. They gathered many baskets.¹¹ This dominion must be characterized by love, care, concern, wisdom and respect for the nature of beings entrusted to them. Dominion over creation must be carried out by God's law. Since everything was created good (Gen. 1:31), man's dominion is not and should not be used to disfigure the goodness in God's creation. It must be a responsible and accountable dominion. As a co-creator, man has a responsibility (or rather the ability to respond) to maintain, to enhance the goodness in creation and not to destroy it.

In addressing the issue of respect for the integrity of creation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present and future humanity. Use of minerals, vegetables and animals and other resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation (CCC, 2415).

On this note, we can say that man's freedom in exercising dominion over creation is limited. His dominion is limited since he is innately fragile and subject to the various limitations of the physical universe. He, therefore, needs the gift of wisdom to guide him, since he is a delegated dominion.

1.3 Creation and Human Resources as God's Gracious Gift

The universe is God's dwelling, while earth, a little uniquely blessed corner of that universe, is gifted with unique natural blessings, and is humanity's home. Humans are never so much at home as when God dwells with them in this creation. Creation is a gracious gift from God and the universe is both sacramental and sacred. God's creation is a reflection of the creator. Human beings occupy a unique place in creation as co-creators and stewards of God's creation. However, it is common knowledge that this gracious gift has been misused and mismanaged.

1.4 Human Beings as Unique Creatures of God

The concept of creation as a gracious gift is well illustrated in the creation story. God created humanity "and saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:12,18,21,25,). He created man in his own image to 'rule' his creation (Gen 1:26-28). Humanity, the last to be created, was given the gift of the other creation. God entrusted humanity with creation and was given stewardship over it. As a gift, nature and the environment is a mirror reflecting the covenant of all creation. With the help of grace, God furnishes the natural capacities of knowing and loving enabling human beings to freely embrace the divine offer of communion. Creation is a means by which God reveals himself to humanity.

Few privileged continue to accumulate excess resources at their disposal while the majority continue to live in misery and poverty. Greed and selfishness go contrary to the order of creation and God's gracious gift and diminish human dignity. This attitude undermines the claim that creation is a unique gift of God where humanity occupies a special place. The goods of this world are according to the divine plan of God and should be a common patrimony for the common good. Responding to environmental issues means defending the poor who often suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation, floods, scramble for grazing to mention but a few. There is an urgent necessity of an approach to the management of the earth's goods and gifts.

1.5 Human Beings in Participation and as Co-Creators

Today it is possible to scrutinize and modify the genetic inheritance of various species, creating more hardy and productive variants. We now have a lot of genetically modified foods both from plants and animals. The way we interfere with the physical environment has sometimes non reversible disastrous effects on the ecosystem. We end up with a polluted environment, polluted water supply, unbreathable air, and irregular rain patterns among others.

Co-creation entails being cooperative and therefore co-creator. This is well put by J. Scott, who alludes that “however, humanity’s dominion should be a co-operative dominion in which in exercising God-given dominion, they should not create the process of nature, but cooperate with them.”¹² Accordingly, it is clear from the book of Genesis chapter one, that the earth was made fruitful before humankind, then mankind was told to subdue it (Gen 1:28). Therefore, one can conclude that in all their activities, humans are merely co-opting and with the cooperative responsibility guided by the laws of faithfulness, which God has already established. Besides, people ought to humble themselves and acknowledge that their dominion over nature would be entirely fruitless if God had not made the earth beautiful and continuously increased it.¹³ What does this then imply? It means that, however much we think that we are custodians, and have developed an extraordinary expertise in taming, controlling and using nature, we are still children in our ultimate dependence on the fatherly providence of God who gives sunshine, rainfall and fruitful seasons.¹⁴ Scott continues to put this idea in a very explicit way when he argues that;

The earth ‘belongs’ to us not because we made it or own it but because the maker has entrusted it to us. This has significant implications. Firstly, if we think of earth as a kingdom, then we are not Kings ruling our own territory, but viceroys ruling it on the King’s behalf, since the King has not abdicated his throne. Secondly, and more importantly, if we think of the earth as a country estate, then we are not the landowners, but only as bailiffs who manage and farm it on the owner’s behalf. God made us, in the most literal sense, ‘caretakers’ of his property.¹⁵

Hence, human beings as co-creators have no freedom to do what they want in regard to environment. Humanity therefore cannot deem to treat as they are pleased. For Samson Gitau, this ‘dominion’ is not a synonym for ‘destruction’. This is precisely because human kind hold it in trust, they have to manage it responsibly and productively not only for their own sake but also for subsequent generations hence calling for greater responsibility.¹⁶ We can therefore conclusively say that human beings occupy a very useful place in being responsible co-creators with God.

Human beings practice freedom which indicates the power of creativity. God has given humanity freedom so that man in his vocation can continue to co-create. Through his creativity, man has brought new meaning in the environment. In the second creation story (Gen 2:4b-23), God empowered man to continue to co-create. The man was placed in the garden to ‘till and keep it’ (Gen 2:15). After animals and birds were created, the man was given the mandate by God to name them, “and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (Gen 2:19). God entrusted his creation to man with the responsibility of continuing to co-create.

Scientific discoveries have brought undeniable benefits. These discoveries show that humanity is still involved in the co-creation mission. Man has continued to co-create with knowledge of science and technology, medicine and agriculture. Man’s vocation in co-creation must be accompanied by a reorientation of values.

1.6 Humanity's Stewardship in Creation

Humanity has the responsibility to care for earth's goods as stewards and trustees. Stewardship implies that people must protect and be responsible with mother earth, the second womb. Stewardship reminds us that, all human possessions are not our own; rather we hold them in trust for others. All created reality hangs at every moment over the charism of nothingness; we and our world are created and sustained in being *ex nihilo* and thus we never have fully autonomous possession of either ourselves or our world. Stewardship requires responsibility and accountability on the way we use the earthly resources before God. Stewardship responds to the increasing human anxiety concerning the way we are exploiting the world resources and concomitant exploitation of other human beings. Thus our notion of stewardship embraces and responds with religious mission to two of the most profound and pressing problems of our age; namely how we deal with and manage nature, resources, energy, food, our possession, all within some ecological balance, and how we deal with other human beings especially the poor and the powerless who are the victims of our previous mismanagement.

Basically, stewardship is a key test for a person's position before God. Human beings are not 'conquerors' of the earth but responsible and respectful stewards. The concept of stewardship is well articulated by St. Francis of Assisi who called the birds as brothers, indicating that he saw himself as a steward as a man and not as a conqueror of the earth. Responsible stewardship brings harmony and mutuality to creation. Hence, humans are obliged to take care of the environment as stewards, just as they belong to God. Responsibility and stewardship are inseparable concepts when we talk about environmental issues. The parable of the wicked tenants (Mt. 21:33-41), and the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) are wonderful biblical resources to grasp the role of responsible stewardship and custodians. Unfortunately, due to sinful nature, greed, poverty and selfishness, we have come to take for granted that we humans own the earth, therefore misuse it, and reduce its importance to usefulness, and therefore use it as we feel fit. Humanity is to be accountable to God, because God, the owner of creation expects us to use what he has entrusted to us profitably. We therefore need to look at environmental steward very seriously. Basically,

environmental Stewardship is an approach to the earth and its resources that attends both to the demands of human freedom and flourishing and to the Biblical call for human beings to exercise caring 'dominion' over creation. Environmental stewardship affirms that freedom, human flourishing, and the integrity of creation are principles that are not only compatible but also dynamically related.¹⁷

According to Richard Rwiza, "the notion that human beings have been created in the image of God and given dominion over the earth does not justify absolute dominion over other creatures."¹⁸ The same ideas were actually echoed by Pope Francis who in *Laudato Si* says that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is a sin.¹⁹ In recent years a growing number of critiques have pointed out limitations and shortcomings in stewardship-based eco-theologies hence the critique.²⁰ The recent critique is Richard Rwiza's.²¹ Basically, there are a number of critiques of stewardship which include: the theological, methodological, and conceptual.

First, according to theological critique, this approach to Stewardship ecotheology targets the way that the schema represents God. "The concept of Stewardship seems to imply a distant, absentee God. The

landlord (God) has entrusted his property to his stewards (humans) and has vacated the premises. Such a model cannot incorporate the theological affirmation of God's creative immanence, which upholds the notion that every moment of existence is a gift from and dependent on God."²² Secondly, the methodological critique focuses on the way that Scriptures is used to develop the metaphor of Stewardship. While the biblical narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 contain basic commands as to how the first humans ought to relate to Creation, this critique insists that those commands need to be understood in context.

It is important to note here also that the terms "Steward" (*oikonomos*) and "Stewardship" (*oikonomia*) do not appear in the creation narratives themselves. The first humans are told to fill and subdue and rule the earth and its inhabitants. The idea of humans as Stewards is an external characterization of those commands, a clarification or qualification of what it means to have dominion in this arena.²³

As a way of offering an alternative to the above critique, is there any practical alternative? Here I would suggest another way of looking at environmental stewardship. This developing idea calls for a paradigm shift moves beyond stewardship towards an 'Agapeic environmental ethics'²⁴ geared towards common good. I would think this agapeic concept can be a womb of novelty in understanding theological stewardship. Echoing these sentiments, Christopher Vena develops the idea that what Christians need is a new model of human agency for environmental ethics that is both ecologically sensible and theologically faithful. He agrees with the notion that the human-nature relation is too complex to be pictured in a single model, in regard to the subject matter, he offers an alternative understanding of human persons and more specifically, an understanding of human agency (love). This amounts to an approach to modelling rather than a singular model or ethic itself²⁵ guided by love and the common good. Against this background, he rightly says that;

The nature of agapeic love as that which seeks the good of another, it was deemed worthy as a foundation for ethics in general and potentially for environmental ethics as well... The three principles are: 1) that we think not of how we relate to nature, but who we are within nature; 2) that we think of love as the optimal character of human rationality; and 3) that we develop an eco-relational practical wisdom to guide human behaviors with and in the natural world.²⁶

Hence, being God's creatures and created in His image calls for a responsible mission of stewardship full of love. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* reflects the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a 'culture of care' which permeates all of society.²⁷ This entails love for all and everyone. It is a mission of participating in love, walking together in promoting the common good.

2.0 Promotion of The Common Good

The promotion of the common good implies that this promotion is for all. This is a mission for the individual as well as the community, a mission for dialogue between religion and science since environmental issues are not limited to class, caste, religion or even country. We therefore need to move from the individual responsibility to the communal and vice versa. Jonathan Sacks puts this very clearly when he argues that;

I have called the move from 'We' to 'I' cultural climate change. But there is a difference between this and environmental climate change. For us to make a significant difference to environmental climate change, billions of people must change the ways they act. That is because the environment is global. But culture is more local, especially when it concerns the tone and tenor of our

relationships. To begin to make a difference, all we need to do is to change ourselves. To act morally. To be concerned with the welfare of others. To be someone people trust. To give. To volunteer. To listen. To smile. To be sensitive, generous, caring. To do any of these things is to make an immediate difference, not only to our own life but to those whose lives we touch.²⁸

This argument is based on the fact that morality is not limited to the individual but it is interactive and involves moral beings who interact and take moral responsibilities. It is for the common good of all.

2.1 We are Mission Walking Together

This moral, corrective responsibility highlights the fundamental idea of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, commonly referred to as the synod on synodality, which calls for a for a synodal Church which is all about communion, participation and mission. Solidarity and Synodality therefore means we all walk together despite our differences. Paul communicated to his churches in different ways, the most telling one is found in Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28). Already St Paul shows how synodality remains at the heart of being Church.

This also calls for the virtue of listening and discerning together for the common good. The synodal path is the formula and method of listening and discerning.²⁹ For the Synod Fathers as Pope Francis articulates “we ask the Holy Spirit first of all for the gift of listening: to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us.”³⁰

Solidarity, Communion and synodal participation entail that we are all equal Christians faithful hence the life of a church community led by the Holy Spirit and the many gifts and charisms flourish for the common good. The Church is not an end in itself but an instrument for the unity of the entire human family³¹ hence walking together. As *Evangelii Gaudium* gives a more specific account by reminding us that, “the principal aim of these participative processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspirations of reaching everyone”³² The mission of the Church in this challenging world should be identified and addressed in every particular context in caring for the environment. This solidarity which involves dialogue therefore means working and cooperating together to respond to the environmental crisis we are facing today as we care for the common home. Synodality, therefore, is one of the modern thoughts of the mission of the Church. Moreover, this synodal spirit involves the prophetic mission which can liberate us from the chains of environmental slavery. The ‘we’ and the ‘I’ idea does not erode the personal and communal responsibility in caring for the environment. But a majority consensus does not automatically mean submission to, and unity in the truth. Even a single dissenting voice needs to be heeded.³³ However, it remains that caring for the environment and promoting the common good, it is both a moral duty which is both a collaborative mission and a solidarity in mission which means walking together.

2.2 Human Freedom and Responsibility in Mission

Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility. By free will one shapes one’s own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed

towards God, our beatitude. As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of choosing between good and evil, and thus of growing in perfection or failing and sinning. The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to “the slavery of sin” (Rom. 6:17). Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue and knowledge of good enhance the mastery of the will over its acts (CCC, 1731-1734).

As a rational being, man is endowed with freedom in a way that he is a master over his acts by his free will. There can be no responsibility if there is no freedom at all. On the other hand, freedom without responsibility would be disastrous. In that case, there is an important symbiosis relationship between freedom and responsibility and the two must always be seen together. Even though human freedom is with human beings it is still related to matter and to the physical world; it is still linked to one’s past and future and it is determined by the society. It is finite and limited. Human freedom is therefore semi-autonomous. Since it is created by God, it is to be exercised according to God’s own plan and purpose.

Human freedom functions within the framework of the individual and social levels. At the individual level, there is always the experience of dichotomy and division in one’s life to the extent that a person feels powerless and is, in most cases, caught up against his primal intention. This structural condition enters intrinsically into human freedom to determine the direction of the commitment and decisions of the individual. At the societal level, it is obvious that the social tissue, or the second nature of human existence, contributes enormously to shaping and determining our freedom and decisions.

At another level, we can say that human freedom presents to us a contrast or duality. On the one hand, it appears to be a power of creativity that transcends the determination of matter and constructs new realities and meaning in history. This can be seen from the advances made in the fields of science and technology. On the other hand, human freedom appears in its shadow and dark side as the power of destruction and perversity because what ought to be is not, and what should be is negated at every turn. Human freedom is good when it is used properly and directed to the right things. Otherwise, it can be self-destructive. Freedom has to be used with responsibility in order to be directed towards the right things. Human freedom has to resist individual and social determinisms in order to fashion a new history of love, concern and service of fellow human beings and the whole creation at large. This is the responsibility of the human person as created free, after the image and likeness of God, the responsibility of a co-creator. Therefore, in environmental care human freedom is paramount.

2.3 Human Freedom in The Environment

Human freedom bears an essential relationship to the external world,³⁴ which includes the environment. Today “experience of freedom indicates a power of creativity... Freedom makes new reality come into being; it creates not in the theological sense ‘out of nothing,’ but out of the subjectivity of freedom itself and the raw material of the environment.”³⁵ Positively, human freedom fashions genuine novelty which constantly refashions, recreates the environment and the world. However, “human freedom consists in its power to destroy.”³⁶ Positively, human freedom is transcendent and creative and negatively, human freedom can have the power to destroy the environment.

Extreme environmental problems are connected to human freedom and ingenuity. Negatively, “it has emerged from the time of nuclear technology with more seriousness because of nuclear age has proven clearly that humanity has developed the capacity to destroy life itself. Humanity is dangerously capable of destroying the creation.”³⁷ All these factors have raised great concerns among environmentalists for instance the Kenyan Nobel Prize winner, Professor Wangari Maathai.³⁸ Humanity is called to explore the

created order, to examine it with due care and use of it while safeguarding its integrity. Misuse of human freedom even if carried out in the name of progress ultimately disadvantageous. “Man decides between being truly and personal by choosing love and good and letting himself be alienated by the law of nature through setting limits on love and practicing egotism and evil.”³⁹ Biological and scientific research and advancement in science and technology have already brought enormous destruction to human life and creation. With Roger Haight, one may rightly claim that “on the social level, enormous advances in science and technology have been turned into more effective instruments of human oppression and death”⁴⁰ Misuse of human freedom is leading humanity to the very threshold of self-destruction. However, “freedom under the influence of grace is the creation of graced social structures”⁴¹ whereas the opposite is evil against the environment.

2.4 Evil Against the Environment

Continued misuse of environment and creation is a major problem related to poverty, greed and other environmental threats. This is the greatest evil we can bring to ourselves. These threats include global warming, encroachment of land, degradation, deforestation, overgrazing and soil erosion. Flora and fauna in the world are in threat due to evil against environment, misuse of human freedom and irresponsibility.

Today, there is indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology due to industrialization. Many scientific discoveries and industrial and agricultural discoveries have produced harmful effects. Humanity has continued to misuse God’s creation to a high degree than ever before. This misuse may interfere in environment without paying due consideration both to the consequences of such hindrance in other areas and to the wellbeing of future generations. The damage done by humanity in some cases may not be reversible. Our planet is now threatened by the uncontrollable aggressiveness of the most complex and mysterious being on earth that is; the human. It is undeniable that humanity has so deeply wounded the planet the ‘lung’ of our life. We live in a wounded global society, injured and marked with too many signs of death. We must understand the threat of biocide or ecocide, to be the most important religious and spiritual question of our time. How can we collectively limit our desire to privately possess and accumulate? How can we develop a sense of self-limitation of fair measure and solidarity between present and future generations? We must safeguard the ecological conditions that will allow creation to regenerate, to continue being fruitful and creative, and to co evolve, reaching increasingly synergetic forms until bursting into the divine. The whole life system, and with its humanity, is under threat⁴² and the earth – the support system – can no longer breathe. In advancing the above argument, Boff sternly warns that, “(t)here is no Noah’s Arch waiting to save some while leaving the rest to perish. Either we are all saved together or we run the risk of an ongoing degradation of life ultimately leading to death.”⁴³ Respect for life, the dignity of the human person, and accountable use of human freedom are the decisive guiding norms for any sound economic, industrial and scientific progress which may help humanity to be responsible and care for the environment. Bernard Häring puts this disrespect and evil in and warns in these few illuminating words;

We can no longer ignore the fact that proper response to God and responsibility towards humankind must be manifested in our ecological consciousness that nature, which is the support system of all life must be respected. It cannot be ruthlessly exploited without sinning against the essential cosmic dimension of creation and redemption. It is undeniable fact that the unwise *homofaber*, lacking the wisdom of *homo sapiens*, has been not only a desert maker, but also a distributing factor in biological stability.⁴⁴

The obligation to care for creation in all its splendour and beauty is a remembrance that creation is for all, it is a mission yet it has its owner who is God the creator. “If the world does not belong to us, we better take that into consideration. We are never at liberty to do with the earth whatever we want. It has its owner, and we are required to utilize it”⁴⁵ as custodians without misusing our liberty in dealing with it. Doing otherwise is evil by itself.

3.0 Spirituality of Divine Economy a Common Participation

Spirituality⁴⁶ is the way human beings, (individuals and group) lead their lives in union with God.⁴⁷ Spirituality for caring and protecting creation calls us to reflect on the special place of humanity and salvation and union with God. This spirituality requires adopting a pragmatic approach to existential life itself aimed at solving the anthropological problem. It is a spirituality, which also calls for an understanding of social grace in protecting and caring of creation and implies commitment towards the environment.

3.1 Towards A Spirituality of Caring and Protecting Creation and Human Resources

In the scriptures, and mostly in the gospels, Jesus’s connection to the natural world is also readily evident. For example, Jesus almost always prays out of doors. He preached the beatitudes in the plains,⁴⁸ beside the sea of Galilee, surrounded by the beauty of creation. His teachings are full of references to animals (sheep, fish, birds), to growing things, and to the fruitfulness of the Earth.⁴⁹ Jesus thought and spoke in this idiom, His entire teaching presumes a cosmology where the earth is understood as living subject, not an object of exploitation.⁵⁰ Later, the Christian tradition continued to develop many of these ideas. Examples include first, St. Basil, the father of monasticism in the Eastern Church, taught the following prayer.

O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals to whom You gave the earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to You in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live not for us alone but for You and for all Your creatures who love the sweetness of life.⁵¹

The second example is St Francis of Assisi, who in his wisdom, taught us to praise God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, and Sister Water. Many Christian saints and mystics have experienced and celebrated God’s presence amid creation. It is true therefore, that the whole universe together participates in divine goodness more perfectly, and represent it better than any single creature whatever.

The third example is The Rhineland mystic Meister Eckhart develops this idea when he taught that, “every creature is full of God, and is a book about God. If I spend enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.”⁵²

The above rich examples clearly show that solidarity with other religious thoughts in caring for our common home is imminent. For instance, St Francis clearly embodies an authentic ecological spirituality, a spirituality characterized by its concern for communion, especially with both the poor, respect for diversity (including openness to other faiths), and deepening interiority.⁵³ We cannot forget the famous Benedictine spirituality of *ora et labora*, or rather prayer and work. This encourages us to walk together - a collaborative mission - with other religions and diverse ideas and spiritualities in the spirit of the synod.

3.2 Spirituality in Corroborative Mission

Apart from the many influential individuals, other religions also subscribe to the spirituality of care of the environment emphasizing the spirituality of shared and collaborative mission. Different religious and spiritual traditions carry unique insights and approaches. Many religions emphasize on the importance of caring and respecting ‘Mother Earth’ and seeing the relationship to all other creatures who share a common home. These include animals and plants, living creatures, water, air, stones, and soil to mention but a few.

Incidentally, Aboriginal spirituality teaches that you take care of what the Creature has given you and those things will look after you. Accordingly, it is a symbiotic relationship.⁵⁴ Moreover, in the Hindu tradition, the cosmos is the divine body of the Divine spirit. The galaxies, solar system, the plants, all life including humanity – all of these are sub-systems of the cosmos. The human is just a cell in the divine body. And the whole is greater than the aggregate of his parts.⁵⁵ So, humanity, the earth, and all the creatures form an interdependent web. Accordingly, each person, each object in the world, is not merely itself, but involves every other person and object and, in fact on one level is every other person and object.

Additionally, the teaching of Taoism wisdom lies in harmonizing ourselves with the Tao, including simply renouncing all forms of domination. Rather than using and exploiting nature, we must seek to observe and understand it. For Taoists, the wealth of the community is measured not by its accumulation of goods but rather by the diversity it supports. Other religions such as Buddhism also provides us with important insights about the nature of change through its understanding of reciprocal ‘dependent co-arising’. Accordingly, the way things work’ provides a complementary concept. Buddhists greatly value compassion and seek the liberation of all sentient beings from suffering,⁵⁶ just like other spiritual thoughts.

Another example which cannot be ignored is Islam religion. Accordingly, all creation is God’s family as its sustenance is from God. Therefore, the most beloved to God is the one who does good to God’s family. Therefore, in praying five times a day, Muslims prostrate themselves and in this gesture recall their connection to the four-legged creature of the earth. As well, they touch their heads to the living soil to remember that we are all formed of the Earth and to the Earth and it we shall return when we die.

Back home in Africa, as an example we could take an African model of credible environmental ethics. There is much wisdom in the words of Richard Rwiza who articulates that: “the African model takes into account the ethical dimension of community. In African vitality, everything evolves in harmony with the unified whole in the cycle of life. This vitality can very easily extend the boundaries of ethics from solely focusing on humans to including the non-human world”⁵⁷ and the environment.

Certainly, as Julius Gathogo affirms, there are African proverbs, riddles, taboos and sayings that prescribe how the African people, preserved the environment. For example, in Kenya, there is a proverb which says that: ‘The forest is our skin and if one removes the skin of a human being, the result is death.’⁵⁸ Traditionally, the local inhabitants had what they called sacred places, trees, caves and hills among others. These places were highly revered. In particular, sacred trees such as *Mugumo* also called *Ficus thonningii*, *Mukuyu* (fig tree also known as *Ficus sycomorus*), and *Muu* or *Markhamia hildebrandtii*, among others, could not be cut recklessly as they were ‘trees of God’ where sacrifices were conducted in times of need.⁵⁹ Even today this practice is prevalent among the Kikuyus of Kenya.

Moreover, trees even today are classified to show how Africans preserved the environment by first designating or classifying trees in their bid to show their respective importance. From his observation, Gathogo goes on to advance his position that, some trees were classified as building trees (refer to *Mukoigo* or *Bridelia micrantha*). We had also medicinal trees (refer to *Mukoigo* or *Bridelia micrantha*, *Muiri* or

Prunus Africana. There are also trees that mark the boundaries (refer to *Muu* or *Mankhaima lutea*, *Muigoya* or *Plectranthus barbatus*, *Kariaria* or *Euphorbia tirucalli* also called *Finger euphorbia*, *Mucimoro* or *Lantana camara*). There are also sacred trees (refer to *Mugumo* or *Ficus thoorningii*, *Mururi* or *Trichilia emetica Vahl*). However, under no circumstances could one use wood from the sacred trees for house building.⁶⁰

Another example is that of totem to show how the environment is fundamental in our lives. A totem is a plant animal or even insect species used by a clan or community as their symbol. Culturally, traditional people were not allowed to harm that particular plant or animal. They are very much symbolic idea of caring for the animals and the environment. The idea I am putting across here is that there is always a moral ecological consciousness and sustainability of every society to take care of the animals, and the environment in general. In African setting, there still exists some taboos and restrictions when using the environment. The following table⁶¹ gives a gist and summary of such to show how we should take moral responsibility and care of the environment.

Taboo	Sanctions if one broke environmental taboo
Sexual activities were not allowed in the sacred forest.	Cleansing rituals were done if it happened otherwise God would punish the society.
A baby who has not undergone the traditional ritual of the first shaving is not allowed to enter into this forest	In case it happened, cleansing and purification rituals were done urgently to avoid God's wrath.
Wood from sacred forest was never used for construction of houses.	In case it happened, cleansing and purification rituals were done urgently to avoid God's wrath.
No setting forests on fire.	A person who accidentally or deliberately set the forest on fire had to produce a sheep (<i>ndurume</i>) for cleansing and purification rituals.
No reckless collection of firewood in the forest.	Only at appointed times within a year was collection of firewood allowed; and even then, it was closely supervised by elders. It is only dry wood that can be collected, for one cannot cut a green tree.
One cannot fight or engage in other acts of violence within this forest.	Cleansing rituals were done if it happened otherwise God would punish the society.

From the above sampling, it is clear that each spiritual pathway offers unique insight that deepens our understanding of the environment. It must be noted that each religion offers different facets, and is infused with a way of taking care of the environment, the reality is that can never be fully understood as each enriches our understanding of the hidden purpose of the cosmos. In the spirit of the synod, we could also consider idea of communion and ecumenism which has offered wonderful learning experiences in

contemporary times as regards to caring for the environment. Vatican II itself was influenced by the vision of Protestant reformers and the Churches of Reformation and these Churches have been governed by synodality for the past many years the spirit of the synod. This ecumenical input, along with the light drawn by modernity on the agency of the subject, lead us to appreciate "the mystery of the Church as intrinsically synodal."⁶²

Therefore, we should see this vast diversity of teachings and insights not as a threat but as a strength in the spirit of the synod. An ecosystem is always stronger and more resilient when it is more diverse. Similarly, the many ways to perceive and approach the great Mystery are an immense wisdom that we can draw on at this time of crisis. Most spiritualities and religions seem to challenge us to look at the environment differently. There is still more to be done. These can be seen in these few illuminating words.

Yet, by and large, we have not yet seen religious leaders and faith communities truly recognize ecocide and the global dis/order as the central spiritual challenges of our time. We have not seen the full power of spiritual traditions focused on the pressing global problems we face. It is time, then, for each one of us to do our part in our own spiritual tradition to reorient its energies and concerns.... We have forgotten the ancient wisdom that taught us that we do not command nature, but rather are totally dependent on nature's bounty and good will. It is easier to send people to the moon and bring them back to Earth than to make humans respect the rhythms of nature and the limits of ecosystem. Because of this, we are now harvesting the poisoned fruits of the desacralization of life brought about by the power of techno-science at the service of the accumulation of the few.⁶³

The earth offers many treasures and therefore it is like a lung and heart which offers life. We should protect it from the diseases that have spread throughout hence creating a culture of death.

3.3 The Place of Humanity and the Divine Equitable Sharing of Resources

Humanity occupies a central place in creation. Environment is part of God's creation, in the material world. Creation was the first step towards the revelation of God and his people and manifests God's love to all. The purpose for which the world was created is the entry of creatures into perfect unity with God. Divine economy unfolds in the work of creation and the whole of salvation history. Creation "is the foundation of all God's saving plans, the beginning of salvation history culminates in Christ. In creation, God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakable faithfulness of God's covenant."⁶⁴ Creation is endowed with its goodness, for the use of humanity and the salvation of all and remains inseparable from the ongoing revelation of God to his people. If this revelation of God has to be revealed, humanity ought to adopt a spirituality which entails caring and protecting of the divinely endowed gifts of God. Therefore, every plant or animal evokes not just sympathy but also reverence and wonder in those who know it,⁶⁵ have a prophetic core for social grace.

3.4 Social Grace in Caring and Protecting Creation and Human Resources

Social grace is the liberation of humanity from sin, to love one another and cooperate with God. It is the "institutionalization and objectification of the dynamics of grace originating in personal-individual

freedom. It is concerned with human life and enhances the common good.⁶⁶ Some lifestyles, which lead to negative consequences of the careless habits of a few individuals, do not promote social grace. A serious effort aimed at the protection of the environment and at promoting development will not be possible without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty. Social grace is embodied in objective social institutions in sense that they objectively mediate God's grace when they impel self-transcending concerns for others and environment. To echo Wangari Maathai's sentiments, there is a "connection between the symptoms of environmental degradation and their causes"⁶⁷ Social grace calls for a serious obligation to care for the creation and environment. This "grace then is that which enables us to journey forward as human beings from the natural human condition to the creative liberty of the sons of God."⁶⁸ Environmental reflection calls all to explore, walk, work, deepen, and advance the insights of social grace. Grace entails a lot of creativity and responsibility. This ability to respond means there is a constant 'yes' guided by freedom. We see grace working because;

God has called us to share his creativity and freedom, but he has also endowed us with the kind of freedom that, while he calls for a "Yes", makes possible also a "No" before God. But whenever a person utters this "No", refusing himself to him who calls us to co-create with him in freedom, the whole structure of creation is ordered that the "No" receives a strong rebuke.⁶⁹

Responsibility for the environment belongs to all and should permeate all aspects of social life. This is what Richard Rwiza calls for sound, credible 'eco-social' networks for the common good.⁷⁰ Social grace is constantly calling for environmental justice and sacredness of the Mother Earth. This grace involves motivation to concrete action.

3.5 Commitment and Concrete Action Towards Environment

Commitment towards the environment requires constant campaigns for healthy use of the environment. An example could be a campaign to end the use of plastics and the launch of a program to discourage the dumping of plastics which cause harm to the environment. Another practical way is the via of planting trees. A time when we plant a tree becomes a time of replenishment, plentitude and gratitude. Therefore, we should all plant at least one tree. Planting trees is inevitable because they offer shade for humans and animals as well as protect watersheds and for fruit trees, provide food. This regenerates the vitality of the earth as well as the whole environment.

A well-organized introduction of environmental studies at all levels of schools would be a very good proposal and mission. The future of the planet, our 'lung' and the 'common home' concerns all of us, and all of us should do what we can to protect and care for the environment. Our duty and participation therefore to care for and protect our ecology and environment is inevitable. This commitment can best be expounded by the words of Wangari Maathai;

as women and men continue this work of clothing this naked Earth, we are in the company of many others throughout the world who care deeply for this blue planet. We have nowhere else to go. Those of us who witness the degraded state of the environment and suffering that comes with it cannot afford to be complacent. We continue to be restless if we really carry the burden, we are driven to action. We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk!⁷¹

It is common knowledge that we create the path by walking. This path can then be realized by consciously taking practical communal moral concepts by using the “see, judge and act” process of living a Christian life here and now. We should never forget that we have the moral obligation and duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them.⁷² Therefore, we need the grace of God to act and achieve our goals in caring for Mother Earth and the environment. This calls for radical, practical action on our side. We have the moral responsibility to act in this mission. Now it is the *Kairos* moment, an opportune moment to participate and act! This moment relational and it is interconnected with God, with other people and with the planet⁷³ and it is Catholic as it is both integral and intimate. In agreement with Richard Rwiza, *Laudato Si*, offers one of the recent models for this much-needed loving intimacy in caring for our common home.⁷⁴ We could also look and explore and discover other ways of caring for our ‘material lung’ – the earth.

Conclusion

Coming to a lengthy exposition, the aim of this paper was to look at how a Synodal Church in communion, participation has a moral and ethical mission in participation to make the common home, the earth a better place in caring for the environment. The misuse of the ‘common home’ fractures human stewardship towards God’s creation. Greed, bad governance, policies and poverty constitute the chief characteristics of the misuse of resources. The environment is entrusted to human responsibility. It needs to be used properly, protected, and responsibly cared for. Today there is a need to develop a spirituality of caring and protecting the common home which requires commitment towards resources. Responsible stewardship is a practical path to finding a lasting solution to these problems. An anthropological theological approach may offer a meaningful response to environmental problems. Today the Church needs the challenge of carrying her prophetic message of responsible stewardship at the service of human survival and continuity. Our theological argument promotes communion, participation, and human freedom under the influence of grace, which leads to the creation of graced social structures.

Through the virtue of solidarity, we discussed the vision of God’s creation to humanity. We discussed how we can promote the common good which can be achieved through solidarity, a common mission guided by freedom and moral responsibility and spirituality of caring for the environment. The culmination of this project was how to offer practical pragmatic commitment in the context of divine salvation of all humanity in the spirit of the synod in a synodal Church.

End Notes

¹ Solidarity is a fundamental aspect of the Catholic social tradition. Within *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council uses solidarity in three distinct ways. Firstly, solidarity relates to the fact of interdependence and a growing idea of interconnectedness within the universal community. Secondly, it provides the framework for identifying and clarifying our responsibilities for distant others and a desire to make the conditions of life more favorable to all. Finally, *Gaudium et Spes* also connects human relationship to Incarnation, stating, "God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship." Cf. "Pope Francis and the Christological Dimensions of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching," Meghan J. Clark, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040563918819818> (accessed on 20.1.2024).

² Catechism of the Catholic Church will henceforth be used as CCC in this paper.

³ J. Njoroge Wa Ngugi, Creation in "The Catechism of the Catholic Church": A Basis for Catechesis in Post-Colonial Africa (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000), 151.

⁴ Vatican Council II Pastoral Constitutions on the Church in the Modern World. *Gaudium et Spes*, nos 12. AAS (1965)

⁵ Benard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*. Vol. 1 (Westminster: St. Paul Publications, 1978), 177.

⁶ Samson Gitau, *The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 200), 144.

⁷ Psalms 115:16.

⁸ Samson Gitau, *The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity*, 144.

⁹ Samson Gitau, *The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity*, 144., Cf., Samson Gitau, "Environmental Crisis: A Challenge to the Church in Africa" in *AFER*, *Environmental Crisis*, *AFER* Vol 53., No. 2 June 2011, 319., Cf. John Scott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1994), 62-63.

¹⁰ Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ. Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*. Vol 1 (Westminster: St. Paul Publications), 1978. 69-70.

¹¹ Luke 9: 17, Matthew 14:21, Mark 6:44.

¹² Scott, J., *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1994), 112.

¹³ Scott, J., *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 112.

¹⁴ Scott, J., *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 112.

¹⁵ Scott, J., *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 112.

Cf. Scott, J. *Issues Facing Christian Today*, *AFER* 320-321.

¹⁶ Samson Gitau, *The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 200), 147., Cf. *AFER* 321.

¹⁷ Acton Org. <https://www.acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship> (accessed on 11.9.2023).

¹⁸ Richard Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics in the African Context* (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 175.

¹⁹ Pope Francis https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (Accessed on 11.5.2023). Cf, Richard N Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics in the African Context*, (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021) 175-176.

²⁰ Cf. Ernst Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005); Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics," 67-87; Anna Lisa Peterson, *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and our Place in the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²¹ Richard Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics in the African Context*, (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 175.

²² Cf. Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology*, (Cape Town: Sun Press, 2006) 214.

²³ Christopher J. Vena, *Beyond Stewardship: Toward an Environmental Ethic*, 114.

²⁴ Christopher J. Vena, *Beyond Stewardship: Toward an Environmental Ethic*, 114.

²⁵ Christopher J. Vena, *Beyond Stewardship: Toward an Environmental Ethic*, 242-243.

- ²⁶ Christopher J. Vena, *Beyond Stewardship: Toward an Environmental Ethic*, 243.
- ²⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* 231 https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (Accessed on 19. 2.2022) Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* (On Care for Our Common Home), 24th May 2015: AAS 107 (2015), 847-945.
- ²⁸ Jonathan Sacks, *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times*. (New York: Basic Books, 2020.)291
- ²⁹ Cf. Herve Legrand, 'Synodality is a Matter of Practice: A Plea for Learning', *Concilium* (2021), Issue 2, 119–129; Joseph Tobin, '2021 Cardinal Bernardin Common Cause Lecture' (Loyola College, Chicago, 2021) with the theme 'Synodality, the long game of Pope Francis', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Limeq5TyI (accessed 15 7 2023).
- ³⁰ Ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015) Francis', vatican.va (accessed 14.11.2023).
- ³¹ Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 1.
- ³² Cf. Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* 31 (The Joy of the Gospel), 13th December 2013: AAS 12 (2013), 1019-1172.
- ³³ Here were have two examples of point of reference to lone voice of reason and conscious. For instance, Reuben, who prevented the killing of his brother Joseph (Gen 37) and Daniel who saved Susanna (Dan 13) are individuals who dissented; they unveiled the truth of the situation.
- ³⁴ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace' in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*. Ed F.S. Fiorenza and J.P. Galvin, Fortress, (Minneapolis,1991), 81.
- ³⁵ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace' in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*, 81.
- ³⁶ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace' in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*. Ed F.S. Fiorenza and J.P. Galvin, Fortress, (Minneapolis,1991), 81.
- ³⁷ Mwombeki, Fidon. 'Ecology in New Testament.' 96.
- ³⁸ Maathai, Wangari (1940-2011) was the founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya which is concerned with environmental issues and the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. She is a renowned environmentalist and Human Rights campaigner.
- ³⁹ Segundo, Juan Luis. *Grace and the Human Condition*. (New York: Orbis, Maryknoll, 1973), 27.
- ⁴⁰ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace', 83.
- ⁴¹ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace', 131.
- ⁴² Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, 2009), 337-338.
- ⁴³ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. 337-338.
- ⁴⁴ Benard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*. Vol 1 (Westminster: St. Paul Publications, 1978), 167 -169.
- ⁴⁵ Mwombeki, Fidon. 'Ecology in New Testament.' ,107.
- ⁴⁶ Spirituality means cultivating one side of human beings – the spirit- via meditation and by looking inward, in order to find one's deepest self with God. Spirituality is viewed as a task. It is a way of being, a fundamental attitude to be lived in each moment and in all circumstances. Cf. Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, Books 2009), 314.
- ⁴⁷ Haight, Roger. 'Sin and Grace', 135.
- ⁴⁸ In the Beatitudes, Jesus teaches us that the humble – in Aramaic, those who have truly surrendered to God and softened all that is rigid within – shall receive the vigor and strength of the Earth itself (Matthew 5:5). Indeed, the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke is itself built on agricultural images related to the cultivation of living things.
- ⁴⁹ Luke 12:6.
- ⁵⁰ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, 2009), 320.
- ⁵¹ Daily Prayer - All Living Things, <https://columban.org/article/daily-prayer-all-living-things> (accessed on 20 11. 2023)
- ⁵² Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, 2009), 320-321.
- ⁵³ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, 2009), 235.
- ⁵⁴ Sanderson, Francis. 2004. "A Mutually Caring Relationship: An Aboriginal Perspective." *Scarboro Missions*, April, 12.
- ⁵⁵ Sharma Tulsi Ram, 2004, "Hinduism." *Scarboro Missions*, April, 13.

- ⁵⁶ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York Orbis Books, Marynoll, 2009), 320-321.
- ⁵⁷ Richard Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics: In The African Context*. (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 195.
- ⁵⁸ Julius Gathogo, *Environmental management and African indigenous resources: echoes from Mutira Mission, Kenya (1912-2012)*
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317451323_Environmental_management_and_African_indigenous_resources_echoes_from_Mutira_Mission_Kenya_1912-2012 (accessed on 2.1.2024)
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Julius Gathogo *Environmental management and African indigenous resources: Echoes from Mutira Mission, Kenya (1912-2012)*
- ⁶¹ This table is adopted from Julius Gathogo's article *Environmental management and African indigenous resources: echoes from Mutira Mission, Kenya (1912-2012)*
- ⁶² International Theological Commission on 'Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church' no. 38.
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html (accessed on 4 01 2024).
- ⁶³ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 342.
- ⁶⁴ Njoroge J. wa Ngugi, *Creation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 145.
- ⁶⁵ Cf., *The Question of the Environment, The Green Revolution: Peace and Humanity*, by Norman E. Borlaug, A Speech on the Occasion of the Awarding of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, on December 11, 1970.
- ⁶⁶ Haight, Roger, 'Sin and Grace', 130.
- ⁶⁷ Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*, (London: William Heinemann, 2006), 125.
- ⁶⁸ Segundo, Juan Luis. *Grace and the Human Condition*. 70. Cf. Romans 8:21.
- ⁶⁹ Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ*, (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1961), 72.
- ⁷⁰ Richard N. Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics: In The African Context*. (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 197.
- ⁷¹ Maathai, Wangari *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*, (London: William Heinemann, 2006), 125.
- ⁷² Mt. 16:1-3, *Gaudium et Spes* 4.
- ⁷³ Richard Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics: In The African Context*, (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 123.
See Christiana Zenner Peppard, "Commentary on Laudato Si (On Care for Our Common Home) in Kenneth R.Himes, (ed.) *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, 517.
- ⁷⁴ Richard Rwiza, *Environmental Ethics: In The African Context*. (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2021), 123.

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