

4. The human roots of the ecological crisis

Pope Francis highlights the human causes of the current ecological crisis in *Laudato Si'*. It is our choices, our economic system, our ignorance of the impact of our lifestyles on the planet that have caused the current crisis.

Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor. [§190]

READING

The amount of greenhouse gases we humans are emitting into the atmosphere, and the changes that is causing in our climate's behaviour, are without historical precedent. The terms "greenhouse effect" and "global climate change" do not adequately describe what is happening. Human activity is disturbing our climate and the integrity of the planetary life support system. Thus, we are facing what should be called human-caused global climate disruption. Even though climate change is a global phenomenon, most of the impacts will vary in different location, frustrating efforts to predict them. Highly destructive storms, fuelled by increased energy, will harm more areas of the world. If all glaciers on the Himalayan Mountains melt, the critical snowpack, which provides water for 40 percent of the human population, will be lost. (Delio, 1999, p. 118)

Where are there opportunities for our ministry to reverse its footprint on the earth? What does your own footprint look like?

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
Isaiah 43:19

As we consider human impact on our Earth, we pray together

Confront us Creator God with the results of our treatment of the Earth.
Disturb us with the science.
Unsettle us with the global impact statistics.
Enable us to change and walk gently on our common home.
Assure us that every action counts.
Amen.