



Pope Francis and Respect for Diversity: A Mapping Employing a Green Theo-Ecoethical Lens

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Abstract

This article maps a selection of Pope Francis' social teaching, which supports respect for diversity. It undertakes this task with the aid of a green theo-ecoethical lens. That hermeneutical lens is first introduced to the reader via an explanation of its constituent parts. It is then employed to help situate respect for diversity as a Christian ethical principle. With those foundations in place subsequent sections employ the lens to colligate Francis' teachings which, dialogically, both inform and come into focus through a green theo-ecoethical perspective concerned with respect for diversity. Here, three sections unfold the Pope's treatment of themes relevant to respect for diversity in a green theo-ecoethical light. Specifically, these sections focus on contributions emerging from (1) Francis' public ministry in general, (2) his first substantive piece of Catholic Social Teaching, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and (3) perhaps the most anticipated papal encyclical of all time, *Laudato Si'*. The article's conclusion helps situate the contextual cogency of insights emerging from this multi-dimensional mapping for what Francis names as our common home, a planet which encompasses an Earth community in a dire need of increased levels of socio-ecological flourishing.

Keywords

Pope Francis, Christian Ecoethics, Diversity, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*

Introduction

Diversity on this planet takes many forms, including gender, sexual, social, cultural, religious, and ecological. Christian ethical reflection on the implications of such diversity for faithful living in the world has a long genealogy, which can be traced back to debates and

decisions taken among the earliest followers of Jesus.¹ When a trans-cultural revelation interacts with a diverse world such tensions may be expected to come to the fore in spaces of the ‘in-between’.² The challenge, however, is to ensure that these are creative rather than destructive tensions.³ This article proposes that a green theo-ecoethical perspective on respect for diversity can help in the former regard. In this light, it seeks to add a particular focus to the discussion about respect for diversity as a Christian ethical principle, already begun both implicitly and explicitly in venues like *New Blackfriars*.⁴

More specifically, a principal focus of this article will be the social teachings of Pope Francis. He is certainly not the first Pope to treat subject matter relevant to forming an integrated ethic of respect for diversity. However, as will be unfolded below, in this case the person promulgating the teaching is significant. Relevant here are recent invocations of ‘the Francis effect’.⁵ Indeed, Francis is in many ways a Pope of the moment (in both the plain and metaphorical senses of that statement). The timeliness of the current papacy makes situating its contributions in support of an integrated ethic of respect for diversity with reference to a green theo-ecoethical lens a propos. To begin this process, this article now moves to explain its hermeneutical lens.

A number of persons concerned with planetary health have used the term ‘greenwashing’ to describe, in rough parallel with the more common use of ‘whitewashing’, a certain phenomenon of misdirection becoming increasingly evident in consumerist societies. The collaboratively edited activist website, Sourcewatch, defines greenwashing as ‘the unjustified appropriation of environmental virtue by a company, an industry, a government, a politician or even a non-government organization to create a pro-environmental image, sell a product or a policy, or to try and rehabilitate their standing with the public and decision-makers after being embroiled in controversy’.⁶ Notably,

¹ See Philip P. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

² For Starkloff's use of the term ‘in-between’, which is adapted here, see Carl Starkloff, *A Theology of the In-Between: The Value of Syncretic Process* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002), p. 53.

³ See Christopher Hrynokw, Sean Byrne, and Matthew Hendzel, ‘Ecotheology and Inculturation: Implications for Theory and Practice in Peace and Conflict Studies’, *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research* 35, no.2 (April 2010), pp. 295-327.

⁴ E.g., Celia Deane-Drummond, ‘Joining the Dance: Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology’, *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (March 2012), pp. 193-212; Keith Tester, ‘Multi-culturalism, Catholicism and Us’, *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1036 (November 2010), pp. 665-76; Chris Arthur, ‘Utility, Understanding and Creativity in the Study of Religions’, *New Blackfriars* 74, no. 867 (January 1993), pp. 14-20.

⁵ John Gehring, *The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the Catholic Church* (London, UK: Rowen & Littlefiled, 2015), p. xi.

⁶ The Center for Media and Democracy, ‘Greenwashing’, (9 March 2015), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Greenwashing>.

this definition highlights how greenwashing extends beyond corporate marketing to encompass socio-political realities. This phenomenon is so complete that the term ‘green’ has often been misappropriated to serve segmented interests and to justify ecologically destructive products, policies, and practices. As a result, unfolding what ‘green’ is meant to signify when coupling within a green theo-ecoethical framing can be considered important to Christians concerned with ecojustice.

In employing ‘green’, this article seeks to invoke the type of distinctions that can be raised by contrasting environmental and green politics in a certain light. While environmental politics can be constructed in a manner that serves segmented interests, green politics are meant to be more holistic, notably including a social justice component as part of an integral goal of fostering truly sustainable societies. In filling in the deep sustainability-nourishing content of ‘green’, it is helpful to reference the events in April 2001, when green party members, including activists and academics, from around the world came together in Canberra, Australia for the first Global Greens Congress. One of the key outcomes of the Canberra conference was the approval of the *Global Greens Charter*, which stipulated that greener politics ought to be based on the principles of ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability, and respect for diversity. These principles were selected based on a contextualization of academic research, a desired transformation of the negative impacts on marginalized people and the planet of current political practices, and insights emerging from the work of those committed to such transformation. They draw on the constitutions and charters of green parties from around the world as well as the *Earth Charter*, the *Millennium Declaration* made at Oaxaca in 1999, and the *Accord Between the Green Parties of the Americas and the Ecologist Parties of Africa*, along with statements and insights growing from the First Planetary Gathering of Greens held in advance of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. After a two year cross-cultural consultative process (much of which took place via e-mail, lowering the documents carbon footprint), a draft of the *Global Greens Charter* was compiled by Dr. Louise Crossley (1942-2015), a distinguished Australian Antarctic Research scientist who also held a PhD in the History and Philosophy of Science. That draft was then debated and modified until consensus was reached among representatives from green parties all over the world in Canberra in 2001. This consensus is all the more remarkable given that there were over 800 participants from 72 countries, including youth representatives.⁷ The principles were also re-affirmed at the 2012

⁷ See Global Greens, ‘Global Greens Congress 2001’, (April 2001), accessed 21 July 2016, <https://www.globalgreens.org/canberra2001>. Particularly helpful for sourcing the

Global Greens Congress in Dakar, Senegal. As the author experienced himself while campaigning for the Green Party during the 2008 Canadian general election, undoubtedly owing to their cross-cultural and dialogical origins, the green principles also provide a valuable communicative framework for unfolding green transformative politics and programming to people with varying levels of knowledge on socio-ecological issues.

It is in this green light, holding together in creative tension the aforementioned six principles of ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability, and respect for diversity, that this article employs a theo-ecoethical lens. The lens' nomenclature points to each of its constitutive parts— i.e., green, theological, ecological and ethical dimensions. Each of these constitutive parts initially was selected primarily for its potential to contribute contextual cogency to a hermeneutical lens.⁸ Yet, particularly when acting in combination, the four constitutive parts also add other significant characteristics that serve to give a green theo-ecoethical lens a robust set of abilities that extend beyond the hermeneutical to the synthetic and the possible. Furthermore, in synthesizing its four constitutive parts, this hermeneutical lens is notably religiously and spiritually literate, critically normative, capable of considering matters of contextual pertinence, and teleological with a goal of adding a measure of momentum to both visions and practices supportive of socio-ecological flourishing. These features combine to give the lens a certain epistemological wholeness,⁹ which is marked by an organically self-justifying character as both revealing and healing in multiple senses. For instance, in the former regard, it may be characterized as 'colligational' or as offering an 'unitive explanation'. The immediate source of this terminology is Alister McGrath's 2014 Boyle Lecture. Therein, building on the work of William Whewell (who employed the former term) and Margaret Morrison (who unfolds the latter), McGrath upholds the value of colligation to provide better refutations of the new atheism. In the process he tellingly explains, 'one of the points that emerge from Whewell's perceptive analysis is that a good theory is able to 'colligate' observations that might hitherto have been regarded as disconnected. One might think, for example, of Newton's theory of gravity as 'colligating' observations that

above was the *Spinifex* newsletters compiled at this link (thought these now have to be searched independently due to a website update). A literature search reveals citations of the *Global Greens Charter* in diverse academic fields from the study of politics to health research. Eg., Michael Bentley, 'An Ecological Public Health Approach to Understanding the Relationships Between Sustainable Urban Environments, Public Health and Social Equity', *Health Promotion International* 29, no. 3 (2014): 528-537.

⁸ Cf. Francis, '*Laudato Si'*': Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home' (Vatican City: VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 18 June 2015), §17.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, §138 and §141.

had up to that point been seen as unconnected—such as the falling of an apple to the ground, and the orbiting of planets around the sun'.¹⁰

Moving beyond McGrath's apologetic application, this article will employ colligation to signify a joining together of what otherwise may appear as disparate ideas into a coherent whole that reveals their relationality. In order to activate such dynamics, this article mobilizes an interpretive lens by grounding principles of ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability, and respect for diversity within Christian moral thought. These principles are conceived as dialogical and interrelated, with each informing the others in significant ways. It is proposed that such a green theo-ecoethical lens provides a contextually cogent hermeneutical perspective. Notably, this cogency can be located within the lens' feature of providing Christian ethics with a hermeneutical ability to effectively consider inter-related social and ecological crises, while simultaneously offering a vision of other possible worlds characterized by socio-ecological flourishing.

In principle, a green theo-ecoethical lens could be applied to a number of different case studies. In choosing the interlocking examples of Pope Francis' general ministry and principle social teaching documents as they relate to the area of respect for diversity for this mapping application, a foundational contention is that a green theo-ecoethical lens also helps generate a vital, integral, and dynamic understanding of socio-ecological flourishing. In a large measure, this might be expressed by a teleological goal of contributing to the incarnation of green theo-ecoethical principles in this world. Presumably, it is such an incarnation of ethical principles, inclusive of integrative action, that popes in the contemporary period are seeking to invoke and foster when they exercise their magisterial office and attempt to lead by example. Since the magisterial office principally works on what Heather Eaton calls 'the level of insight' (or it might be said, produces a crafted discourse),¹¹ the lens that this project constructs is well-poised to identify, be informed by,

¹⁰ Alister McGrath, 'New Atheism—New Apologetics: The Use of Science in Recent Christian Apologetic Writing', *Boyle Lecture* (22 January 2014), pp. 6-7, accessed 21 July 2016, https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/content.gresham.ac.uk/data/binary/585/22jan14alistermcgrath_newatheism.doc. Beyond this apologetic application, in the green theo-ecoethical case the aspiration here is to better foster socio-ecological flourishing.

¹¹ Eaton argues that the response to the current global climate crisis needs to work more out of insight and less from a mere data-based perspective. Heather Eaton, 'The Spirit of Climate Change', *Responding to Climate Change: Scientific Realities, Spiritual Imperatives*, the 11th Conference of the International Environment Forum Responding to Climate Change: Scientific Realities, Spiritual Imperatives, Ottawa, ON (17 October 2007), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://iefworld.org/deaton07.htm>. On the use of insight in a transformative manner cf. Kenneth R. Melchin and Cheryl A. Picard, *Transforming Conflict Through Insight* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

and duly praise Francis' lived example and his major documents of Catholic Social Teaching for their green theo-ecoethical content in the area of respect. Furthermore, it is suitably positioned to suggest instances where the Francis' lived and teaching example detracts from that moral project and might be moved in a direction that would better foster socio-ecological flourishing. In sum, this article demonstrates that a green theo-ecoethical hermeneutical lens is appropriately and fairly applied to assess Francis' lived example and social teaching in terms of their actual and potential contributions toward fostering socio-ecological flourishing at this crucial stage in planetary history.

Respect for Diversity as a Green Theo-Ecoethical Principle

Situating it as a green principle in a succinct manner, the *Global Greens Charter* offers the following multifaceted description of respect for diversity:

We honour cultural, linguistic, ethnic, sexual, religious and spiritual diversity within the context of individual responsibility toward all beings.

We defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to an environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being.

We promote the building of respectful, positive and responsible relationships across lines of division in the spirit of a multi-cultural society.

This requires:

- recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to the basic means of their survival, both economic and cultural, including rights to land and to self determination; and acknowledgment of their contribution to the common heritage of national and global culture
- recognition of the rights of ethnic minorities to develop their culture, religion and language without discrimination, and to full legal, social and cultural participation in the democratic process
- recognition of and respect for sexual minorities
- equality between women and men in all spheres of social, economic, political and cultural life
- significant involvement of youth culture as a valuable contribution to our Green vision, and recognition that young people have distinct needs and modes of expression.¹²

To begin this article's discussion of respect for diversity as a Christian principle with a praxis and faith-based example incarnating respect for diversity, consider the case of Christian

¹² Global Greens, 'Global Greens Charter'.

Peacemaker Teams (CPT). This activist group's members hold highly-differentiated theological views on violence and peace that support work undertaken within an invitational dynamic to plan effective nonviolent actions.¹³ As a result, it can be argued that, despite the ambiguous role of religions in conflict and systemic violence, CPTers, by practicing their version of the politics of peace, are participating in a 'dialogue of life', wherein people from diverse communities come together to work on joint projects of violence intervention and prevention. Furthermore, CPTers' participation in this dialogue of life is marked by a commitment to integral justice characterized by respect of social, cultural, and biological diversity.¹⁴

There are many ways to delineate support for approaches to diversity like those practiced by CPTers from wellsprings in Christian thought and practice. In the terms of this article, this mapping can be taken as evidence of respect for diversity's theo-ecoethical character. As an example, we can turn to the cultural historian and Catholic Priest of the Passionist order, Thomas Berry, who considered the possibility of biodiversity collapse as tantamount to a tragedy for the entire human race. Berry argues that this statement is true because, even if people somehow survive the collapse of a diverse life community, we will have lost an essential existential reference point in the biologically diverse natural world. Berry sees a diverse universe as sustaining and creating us. As he writes elsewhere in his more academic work, 'in our discussion of sacred community, we need to understand that in all our activities the Earth is primary, the human is derivative'.¹⁵ It is for this reason, among others, that Berry advocates recognizing a diverse and created world as 'a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects'.¹⁶ Many cultures, like the one represented by Chinese Confucian civilization and most of those connected to the Indigenous religions of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas held and/or hold this fact of connection with the natural world as paramount.¹⁷

¹³ See Kathleen Kern, *In Harm's Way: A History of Christian Peacemaker Teams* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

¹⁴ See Christopher Hrynkow, 'Christian Peacemaker Teams, Solidarist Nonviolent Activism and the Politics of Peace: Peace Witness that Challenges Militarism and Destructive Violence', *Journal of Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 40, no.1 (2009), p. 113.

¹⁵ Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 43.

¹⁶ See Thomas Berry, 'Ethics and Ecology: A Paper Delivered to the Harvard Seminar on Environmental Values', (9 April 1996), accessed 21 July 2016, <https://intuerifarm.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/ethics-and-ecology2.pdf>.

¹⁷ Thomas Berry, *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 189-90.

This notion of socio-ecological communion under conditions of diversity, which is so important when viewed through a green theo-ecoethical lens, is also vital to ecotheological reflection. Furthermore, such a concept of connectivity is being rediscovered, revitalized, recovered, and brought forward in the contemporary context to varying degrees in all the world religions.¹⁸ It asks people to recognise the intrinsic value of the natural world and our place in that world as interconnected members of the Earth community.¹⁹ With that realization in place, social and ecological crises become crises of relationship that need healing on multiple levels.²⁰ Dualist metaphysics, which separate humanity from the rest of the created community, fail to provide fertile soil to grow proper relationships between humans and other members of the Earth community.²¹ An integral worldview thus emerges as necessary to what Thomas Berry defines as our most urgent task for present generations and their children, from which no person is exempt:²² ‘The Great Work now, . . . [is] to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner’.²³ As a green theo-ecoethical perspective emphasizes, within the accompanying organic and solidarist worldview that ought to influence Christian life at this juncture in planetary history, if a member of the Earth community suffers injustice or degradation, then the health of the entire organism is negatively affected.²⁴

¹⁸ Evidence of this reconstitution or recovery of ecological resources across diverse religious contexts is found in the ‘Green Rule’ poster published by Faith and the Common Ground. This poster plays on the notion of the Golden Rule having universal manifestations by providing the Green Rule—‘Do unto the Earth as you would have it do unto you’, On this poster, quotes from the traditions of Christianity, Islam, Baha ‘i, Shintoism, Buddhism, Native Spirituality, Hinduism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Janism and Judaism are offered as a path towards inter-religious dialogue and joint action on ecological issues. A study guide is available supporting the poster and its ethos. See Faith and the Common Ground Staff, ‘Green Rule Study Guide: A Handbook to Discover the Sacredness of Creation within the World’s Faith Traditions’, accessed 21 July 2016, https://www.uri.org/files/resource_files/Green%20Rule%20Handbook.pdf.

¹⁹ E.g., Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, ‘Message of his Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 1 January 1990: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation’ (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 8 December 1989), §5; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1992).

²¹ Cf. Francisco J. Benzoni, *Ecological Ethics and the Human Soul: Aquinas, Whitehead, and the Metaphysics of Nature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. 178.

²² Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (New York, NY: Bell Tower, 1999), p. 10.

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴ Cf. Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Sustainability, Justice and Peace* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2006).

Respect for Diversity Informing a Green Theo-Ecoethical Lens

In addition, when viewed through a green theo-ecoethical lens, upholding the value of diversity in this organic manner leads toward the realization that humanity shares not only a common humanity, but also a common fate with the entire natural world.²⁵ Shared fate can then act to bridge diversities and build solidarity across the Earth community. Such insight encourages Christians, with further momentum from such theological concepts as the Trinity and the communion of the saints,²⁶ to think in the longer term about sustainability issues, inclusive of the impact that the actions of humanity have on the legacy which we have inherited and will leave to future generations.²⁷ Finally, following from a similar point made by Thomas Aquinas, that no one organism can reveal the splendour of God,²⁸ it fosters a plurality of expression by embracing complexity and diversity.

On a basic level, a green theo-ecoethical perspective thus upholds the value of the entire created world. Within such an integral worldview it follows that, creation is not a commodity to be disposed of or distributed according to human will. Rather, created matter is infused with spirit and is deserving of respect because of its quality as a window unto God, who is, according to an important strand of the biblical tradition, conceived of as being 'all that is in all'.²⁹ For Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,³⁰ who inspired Thomas Berry³¹ and is cited in *Laudato Si'*,³² the universe is heading toward a reality characterized by a situation of unity in relationship, where all things will be drawn to God in love. In Teilhard's language, this destination is the 'Omega Point',³³ the *telos* of all life, where God is not everything (the erasure of differentiation) but rather, is a

²⁵ On the latter point see Andrea Cohen-Kiener, *Claiming Earth as Common Ground: The Ecological Crisis Through the Lens of Faith* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2009), p. 1.

²⁶ E.g., Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart that Leads to a New Way of Living on Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), p. 122. Cf. Daniel Miller, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity and Environmental Action', *New Blackfriars* 94, no.1049 (January 2013), p. 31.

²⁷ Cf. Benzoni, p. 178.

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), III, §97.

²⁹ E.g., Jer 23: 24, Sir 43: 27 and Eph 4: 6.

³⁰ For an accessible social and intellectual biography of Teilhard see Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

³¹ E.g., *Thomas Berry: The Great Story*, VHS, produced by Nancy Stetson and Penny Morrell (Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films, 2002); Thomas Berry, 'Teilhard in the Ecological Age', *Teilhard Studies* 7 (Fall 1982), pp. 1-33.

³² Francis, *Laudato Si'*, §83.

³³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York, NY: Perennial, 2002), pp. 268-72.

sustaining and creative presence in all things; ‘God all *in everyone*’, a formulation which Teilhard names as ‘essentially orthodox and Christian’.³⁴ It is with this assurance of the Catholic Christian nature of his thought that Teilhard ends his landmark book, *The Human Phenomenon*.³⁵ In regards to establishing the orthodoxy of a Spirit-filled cosmos for Christians, with the advantage of avoiding the problems associated with heresy that dogged Teilhard during his lifetime,³⁶ it is helpful when speaking about the spirituality of all things to be reminded of the Eastern Christian concept known in the West as ‘pantheism’, which holds that God is in all things, as opposed to pantheism, which holds that God is all things.³⁷ In green theo-ecoethical terms, all things are Spirit-filled, created and sustained by God who, to simplify Aquinas as cited above in this section, cannot be adequately understood without diversity beyond the human. If the theo-ethical validity of these principles is accepted, then all things, inclusive of diverse cultures, other religious traditions, other members of the Earth community, and all people deserve respect as a matter of both Christian and green principle. It is with ‘emancipatory hope’³⁸ for such tangible integration that respect for diversity informs a green theo-ecoethical lens.

Pope Francis and Green Theo-Ecoethical Respect for Diversity

The previous section explored respect for diversity and situated it as a principle within Christian moral traditions. It also suggested ways in which such respect for diversity informs a green theo-ecoethical lens. At this point, the article has now completed its most intensive form of literature review, and now has a basis for a lens with which to read Pope Francis’ ministry, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Laudato Si’*. These are the tasks to which this article now turns. However, as will become evident to the reader, the act of applying a green theo-ecoethical lens in this manner continues to influence and inform its construction. Indeed, the citations of Pope Francis’ teachings

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 307-9. Emphasis in original.

³⁵ I.e., a better title for the book, *Le Phénomène Humain* (1955) commonly (or perhaps previously with an unfortunate lasting effect) translated as *The Phenomenon of Man* in English (see note 34 above).

³⁶ See Robert Nugent, *Silence Speaks: Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar, John Courtney Murray, and Thomas Merton* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011), pp. 13-32.

³⁷ For a liberationist application of ‘pantheism’ in light of ecojustice concerns see Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 152-54.

³⁸ Edmund O’Sullivan, “Emancipatory Hope: Transformative Learning and the Strange Attractors,” in *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground*, eds. John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, Diana Denton, Deborah Orr and Isabella Colalillo Kates (Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 2005), p. 71.

in the preceding sections demonstrates how colligating the lens' features is a continuous process presented over the course of this article.

For thinkers who might be labelled as theo-ecoethicists, respect for diversity is often centered on respect for the dignity of the human person and the integrity of creation.³⁹ St. Francis' close association with animals, people of different classes, diverse cultures, and non-Christian religions has been brought forward as personifying an embrace of diversity. Though without changing Roman Catholic doctrine on same sex relationships, Pope Francis in his person has been modeling respect for diversity, perhaps most famously stating, 'if someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge? ... The tendency [away from heterosexuality] is not the problem. ... They're our brothers'.⁴⁰ More recently, during an in air press conference, Francis said the church should ask forgiveness for the way it has treated gay people.⁴¹ Francis' unscripted remarks about judging LGBT++ people, whose origins lie in an admittedly gendered response to a reporter's question during an earlier impromptu press conference on the plane ride back from his trip to Brazil for World Youth Day (July 2013), are indicative of the noteworthy charisma of the present pope for a number of observers. For example, these comments tipped the balance in favor of Francis earning *Time* magazine's person of the year for 2013.⁴² The subtitle of the *Time* cover story named him the 'people's pope'.⁴³ Adding layers to such a description and invoking the symbolism of Jesus' model of servant-leadership,⁴⁴ the Pope has also washed the feet of young prisoners, including those of a Muslim girl,⁴⁵ and, in 2001,

³⁹ Cf. Ilia Delio, 'Is Creation Really Good? Bonaventure's Position,' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 83, no.1 (2009), pp. 3-22; Leonardo Boff, *Virtues for Another Possible World*, trans. Alexander Guilherm (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

⁴⁰ Pope Francis, 'Press Conference Remarks', quoted in John L. Allen, Jr, 'Pope on Homosexuals: 'Who am I to Judge?'' (29 July 2013), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-homosexuals-who-am-i-judge>.

⁴¹ See David Gilson, 'Call for Apology exposes hierarchical tensions', *Prairie Messenger: Catholic Journal* 94, no.8 (July 13, 2016), p. 11.

⁴² Nancy Gibbs, 'Pope Francis, The Choice', (11 December 2013), *Time*, accessed 21 July 2016, <http://poy.time.com/2013/12/11/pope-francis-the-choice/>.

⁴³ Howard Chua-Eoan and Elizabeth Dias, 'Pope Francis, The People's Pope', (11 December 2013), *Time*, accessed 21 July 2016, <http://poy.time.com/2013/12/11/person-of-the-year-pope-francis-the-peoples-pope/?iid=poy-main-lead>.

⁴⁴ Employing terminology relevant to a green theo-ecoethical lens, Efrain Agosto emphasizes: 'Jesus offers his disciples [and, by extension, the larger community] a servant leadership that is noble because it comes from the directive of the Divine Creator. It is not self-serving, but other-serving'. From Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), p. 49.

⁴⁵ See Harriet Alexander, 'Pope Washes Feet of Young Muslim Woman Prisoner in Unprecedented Twist on Maundy Thursday', (28 March 2013), accessed 21 July

of persons living with AIDS in both Italy and Argentina.⁴⁶ Ultimately, respect for diversity is at the heart of the pastoral charm of Francis.

In another noteworthy unscripted moment that emerges as significant when viewed through a green theo-ecoethical lens, in November, 2013, Francis spontaneously embraced Vinicio Riva, who is a person living with neurofibromatosis, during a general audience in St. Peter's Square.⁴⁷ This and other episodes from Francis' papal ministry demonstrate an emancipatory approach to diversity. In this regard, the Pope has written that peace, which deeply respects diversity, is an '*opus solidaritatis*' growing from our status as relational beings.⁴⁸ Ultimately, it is this vision of solidarity as permeating integral relationships, though not without its flaws, that underlies the premise that Francis offers resources for contributing to a diversity ethic suitable to the present time.

Green Theo-Ecoethical Respect for Diversity in *Evangelii Gaudium*

Francis' first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, contains a significant measure of support for the ethical premise that diversity ought to be respected. For example, before citing the Trinity as a location of diversity 'where all things find their unity', the Pope states clearly that 'when properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity'.⁴⁹ It follows that the subject matter of the apostolic exhortation, the joy of the Gospel, cannot be confined to a single culture or even a small group of cultures.⁵⁰ Moreover, in accord with a green theo-ecoethical perspective, diversity is associated with overcoming entropy and stagnation through resilience, strength, health, dynamism, creativity, and participation.⁵¹ Indeed, Francis

2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/the-pope/9960168/Pope-washes-feet-of-young-Muslim-woman-prisoner-in-unprecedented-twist-on-Maundy-Thursday.html>.

⁴⁶ See CBS News Staff, 'Pope Francis's Sympathy to AIDS Victims, Drug Addicts', (13 March 2013), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pope-francis-sympathy-to-drug-addicts-aids-victims/>.

⁴⁷ See Carol Kuruvilla, 'Disfigured Man Speaks out about Pope's Loving Embrace: I felt like I was in Paradise', (26 November 2013), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/disfigured-man-speaks-pope-loving-embrace-article-1.1529537>.

⁴⁸ Francis, 'Message of His Holiness Francis for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 1 January 2014: Fraternity, The Foundation and Pathway to Peace' (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 8 December 2013), §4.

⁴⁹ Francis, '*Evangelii Gaudium*: Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithfull on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World' (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 24 November 2013), §117.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §118; §117.

⁵¹ *Cf. ibid.*, §129.

supports this position with reference to the very heart of the Christian faith tradition: 'We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous'.⁵² Francis further connects solidarity with a peacebuilding concord: 'Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity'.⁵³

Returning to the titular subject of the apostolic exhortation, Francis asserts that one reason cultural diversity deserves respect is because it ensures the vitality of the Gospel. This is a cyclical process; when the Gospel and particular cultures meet in the context of faith communities, evangelization becomes so closely coupled to diverse cultures that they become integral to each other's processes of meaning-making:

Once the Gospel has been inculturated in a people, in their process of transmitting their culture they also transmit the faith in ever new forms; hence the importance of understanding evangelization as inculturation. Each portion of the people of God, by translating the gift of God into its own life and in accordance with its own genius, bears witness to the faith it has received and enriches it with new and eloquent expressions.⁵⁴

Tying this process back to social justice supportive of respect for diversity in the proclamation of the Gospel, Francis defines one of the challenges of 'inculturated preaching' as strengthening the 'bond of charity', understood to be infused with the covenantal love between 'God and his people'.⁵⁵ Herein, in accord with a common feature in the field of theo-ecoethical ethics,⁵⁶ *Evangelii Gaudium* invokes an image of diversity from the natural sciences. In proposing an appropriate integral model Francis writes,

the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather in this polyhedron the best of each. There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within

⁵² Ibid., §117.

⁵³ Ibid., §228.

⁵⁴ Ibid., §122.

⁵⁵ Ibid., §143.

⁵⁶ E.g., Michael S. Hogue, *The Tangled Bank: Toward an Ecotheological Ethics of Responsible Participation* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2010).

a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.⁵⁷

In rough parallel with the evolutionary consciousness that is connected to a green theo-ecoethical lens, Francis also extends the imperative associated with respecting cultural diversity to the embrace of multiple charisms, emphasizing the importance of including those who renew and build up the Church through a creative tension, ‘in communion, even when this proves painful.’⁵⁸ Within this endeavour the third person of the Trinity is held up as binding force: ‘Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity’.⁵⁹ If the Christian community can incarnate what Francis shades as a proper life-giving and nonviolent response to this challenge of diversity, then ‘the Church can be a model of peace in our world’.⁶⁰ This imperative for ‘social justice and peace’ extends to work with people of all faiths.⁶¹ In the case of people who do not identify with a faith tradition, an imperative for a state of being-in-the-world supportive of socio-ecological flourishing is cited by Francis through his upholding of ‘the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation’.⁶² This general framing is carried forward into Francis’ first social encyclical.

Green Theo-Ethical Respect for Diversity in *Laudato Si'*

Considering the present pope is the spiritual and temporal head of a church that in the first half of the last century did not even allow its members to attend passage of life ceremonies like weddings and funerals in another Christian denomination’s buildings,⁶³ Francis’ approach to religious diversity in *Laudato Si'* is remarkable when viewed through a green theo-ecoethical lens. In ecumenical terms, the invocation of the thought and example of the Patriarch Bartholomew is a case in point here.⁶⁴ In the citations of Bartholomew, and perhaps organically given the subject matter of the encyclical, this respect for diversity also extends to the ecological world. One poignant example of a confluence of support for

⁵⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §236.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §130.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, §131.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, §130.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, §259.

⁶² *Ibid.*, §257.

⁶³ Chester Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 92.

⁶⁴ See Francis, *Laudato Si'*, §§7-9.

religious and ecological diversity occurs when Francis quotes a Sufi mystic, Ali-al Khawas, during his first social encyclical's affirmation of a sacramental universe: 'The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face'.⁶⁵ Here, appreciation for diversity flows in multiple directions.

Drawing upon Teilhard, Iliia Delio asserts the need for a deeper integration of an evolutionary and cosmic Christian worldview from *Laudato Si'*.⁶⁶ Were he still alive, Thomas Berry might agree.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding a regrettable lack of consistency in this regard, the preceding citation from the encyclical can be read through a green theo-ecoethical lens as generating support for Berry's sentiment even beyond the developments of Vatican II, Catholicism needs to see more than mere rays of truth in other religious traditions.⁶⁸ Instead, growing from his work in the history of religions program at Fordham University, the cultural historian preferred the integration of the insight that diversity is systemically advantageous when it is held in creative and not destructive tension with what surrounds it.⁶⁹ For Berry, it follows that Ecozoic Christianity would not crave unity on what he labels the 'quantitative level' by seeking to make everyone Christian—a quest justified by the assumed possession of complete truth. Rather, community would be recognized as a fact of the universe on a 'qualitative level' that allows for the 'law of diversity' to be lived out as part of an integral Christianity, located within the primordial sacred community of the universe.⁷⁰

Poignantly marking a deep cross-cultural, multi-denominational and inter-religious solidarity common to both a green theo-ecoethical

⁶⁵ Ibid., §233.

⁶⁶ Iliia Delio, 'Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi: A Response to *Laudato Si'*' (30 June 2015), accessed 21 July 2016, <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/speaking-god/spirituality/lex-credendi-lex-vivendi-response-laudato-si%E2%80%99-27446>.

⁶⁷ Cf. Thomas Berry, 'An Historical Moment', (2001), *Earth Light Library*, accessed 21 July 2016, <http://ecozeitimes.com/thomas-berry-1914-2009-rip/articles-by-thomas-berry/an-historical-moment-by-thomas-berry/>.

⁶⁸ Through *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II famously expressed the sentiment that 'other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing 'ways', comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men'. Second Vatican Council, 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions—*Nostra Aetate*' (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 28 October 1965), §2.

⁶⁹ Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), p. 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 21; p. 18; p. 25.

lens and ecological Christian thinkers,⁷¹ Berry argues that this shift necessarily involves something far beyond concluding that other religions have access to forms of natural reason.⁷² Indeed, he posits that it is only through substantive dialogue with other spiritual traditions, a dialogue in which the ‘floods of light’ of other revelatory experiences are mutually recognized, that Christians will ever approach a fuller understanding of the inspiration for human religious life.⁷³ Francis moves toward supporting this proposition, and like Berry, specifically notes the need for an embrace of cross-cultural diversity in concert with a green theo-ecoethical perspective: ‘Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality’.⁷⁴ Berry, for his part, bases his conclusions here on a recasting of the Thomistic idea that God is both the creator and sustainer of diversity.⁷⁵ Similarly skirting Aquinas’ anthropocentrism, *Laudato Si’* employs the Angelic Doctor’s example to support the premise that the ‘universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God’.⁷⁶ When this insight is viewed through a green theo-ecoethical lens, it follows that diversity is necessary so that we can begin to better understand the universe, spirituality, divinity, humanity, and indeed, ourselves. In this sense, we move toward understanding what is lacking in one aspect of creation, inclusive of ourselves, when such deficiencies are brought into focus by other forms of existence on the planetary level.⁷⁷

Insomuch as such respect for diversity is an antidote to egoistic individualism, in the chapter of the encyclical addressing education, Francis may be read as reaching into his Jesuit heritage to give socio-ecological expression to Pedro Arrupe’s influential, justice-infused position that ‘today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others’.⁷⁸

⁷¹ E.g., Paul F. Knitter, ‘Deep Ecumenicity versus Incommensurability: Finding Common Ground on a Common Earth’, in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds. *Christianity & Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 366.

⁷² Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*, p. 19.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §62.

⁷⁵ Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*, p. 107.

⁷⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §86.

⁷⁷ Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*, p. 17.

⁷⁸ Pedro Arrupe, ‘Men and Women for Others’, (1973), accessed 14 July 2015, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html>.

We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognized for their true worth; we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.⁷⁹

Providing foundations for this other-oriented process of identity formation, *Laudato Si'* connects the green principles of ecological wisdom and respect for diversity in an integral and biospiritual sense. As Francis writes in his characteristic pastoral style, 'because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another. Each area is responsible for the care of this family'.⁸⁰ This actively interlacing ethic of care and its concomitant respect for diversity is the basis for the transformative vision of faith developed in *Laudato Si'*, inclusive of 'the awareness that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us, and the security that Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light'.⁸¹

In further contrast to a fragmentary approach to difference, Pope Francis affirms the importance of diversity in the service of the common good, invoking a renewing form of solidarity that is so helpful for fostering the incarnation of green theo-ecoethical values: 'We require a new and universal solidarity... All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents'.⁸² *Laudato Si'* also links the value of diversity to an ethical imperative not to displace ecological harms to marginalized people and future generations: 'Where certain species are destroyed or seriously harmed, the values involved are incalculable. We can be silent witnesses to terrible injustices if we think that we can obtain significant benefits by making the rest of humanity, present and future, pay the extremely high costs of environmental deterioration'.⁸³ Indeed, the encyclical

⁷⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, §204.

⁸⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, §43.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, §221.

⁸² *Ibid.*, §14.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, §36.

presents such degradation as representative of a fracture in our most essential spiritual and social relationships, because ‘the human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures’.⁸⁴ For Francis, further expounding upon the tragedy of anthropogenic loss of biodiversity as overstepping the bounds of what is permitted, that solidarity extends to valuing diverse species within creation in an intrinsic manner, not merely as sources of cures or genes, to the benefit of our relationships with neighbour and God:

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential ‘resources’ to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.⁸⁵

In line with his concern for biodiversity, when considering the present and potential negative effects of the internationalization of biodiversity hotspots like the Amazon rainforest, as overseen by transnational corporations, Francis decries monocultures as being introduced without thought for the ecological integrity of specific bioregions.⁸⁶ Applying such concern for countering tendencies toward monoculture to global political economy and anthropology, *Laudato Si’* delineates a major source of diversity-destroying momentum: ‘A consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today’s globalized economy, has a levelling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity’.⁸⁷ Extending this sentiment in a more biocentric direction,⁸⁸ *Laudato Si’* decries as shallow any worldview or system that quantifies all things in a calculative manner, measuring ‘resources’ merely for their potential as objects of exploitation. Under such lamentable conditions, Francis continues, ‘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’.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid., §240.

⁸⁵ Ibid., §33.

⁸⁶ Ibid., §§38-39.

⁸⁷ Ibid., §144.

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, §118.

⁸⁹ Ibid., §190.

It follows that, for Francis, respect for cultural and local human diversity is also ecological. ‘There is a need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place, thus preserving its original identity. Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. More specifically, it calls for greater attention to local cultures when studying environmental problems’.⁹⁰ Indeed, solidifying respect for diversity across social, political, and ecological categories that inform green theo-ecoethical values, Francis cites ‘the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world’ as fostering the wisdom that not one, among the diversity of creatures, is forgotten by God.⁹¹ He then makes a pastoral plea for substantive conversion, inclusive of an image of a duty to foster socio-ecological flourishing:

Then too, there is the recognition that God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. . . . How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them [creatures] harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.⁹²

Here, Francis leaves us with a telling image for Christians in terms of a duty to respect diversity; namely, that human relationships with all creatures ought to bear tangible evidence of their grace-filled nature. From a green theo-ecoethical perspective this is a timely challenge, that when taken up, does not only represent a ‘faith-full’ path to respond to contemporary social, political, and ecology crises, but also a vital challenge to both support and actively contribute to movements toward fuller socio-ecological flourishing. Hence, it is not surprising that the closing section of *Laudato Si’* states that the document was ‘given in Rome at Saint Peter’s on 24 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost’.⁹³ Though the encyclical was officially released almost a month later, this stated date, marking the gift of the Holy Spirit to the community of Jesus-followers,⁹⁴ dovetails well with the renewing spirit of *Laudato Si’* as mapped in this article, one inherently respectful of a green theo-ecoethical diversity.

⁹⁰ Ibid., §143.

⁹¹ Ibid., §100.

⁹² Ibid., §221.

⁹³ Ibid., closing of postscript.

⁹⁴ Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 45-7.

Conclusion

Arguably, as part of the human condition, there is often a gap between transformative insight and action. In the case of Catholic Social Teaching, that gap may be expressed as a failure of those who promulgate that corpus to apply their insights to the life of the institutional church in which they hold hierarchical power. Nonetheless, it remains significant to note a remarkable confluence on the level of insight between Pope Francis' social teaching and a diverse selection of the other sources mapped in this article. Action also forms part of this confluence in terms of embracing gender, sexual, ecological, cultural, and social diversity. Indeed, in the area of gender diversity, Francis has asked for the question of ordaining women deacons to be investigated by an official commission.⁹⁵ He has also earned a certain amount of ire from others in the hierarchy for expressing his view that that the Catholic Church ought to apologize to gay people.⁹⁶ Seeing these initiatives through to their completion would build on other recent popes' actions in terms of respect for diversity. To cite two prime examples, consider Saint John Paul II's (1) remarkable prayer at the Western wall in 2000 via which he asked forgiveness for the suffering endured by Jews as a result of Catholic anti-Semitism, and (2) his organizing of the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi in 1986, which included participation by representatives from diverse faith traditions.⁹⁷ Benedict XVI, the Pope Emeritus, also employed the infrastructure of the Vatican to model the tenability of green energy in support of ecological diversity.⁹⁸

A green theo-ecoethical perspective, however, would crave more from those who occupy the chair of St. Peter in terms of respect for diversity. This is especially the case in terms of how a green theo-ecoethical praxis is informed by its green and ecumenical theo-ethical streams, inclusive of a number of radical voices coming from those who identify with the Catholic Christian tradition. The prospects here are tantalizing in relation to an institutional church, with a presence in virtually every bioregion on the planet, becoming a mimetic model to emulate in embodying integral respect for diversity. As a result

⁹⁵ See Joshua J. McElwee, 'Francis to Create Commission to Study Female Deacons in Catholic Church', (12 May 2016), accessed 21 July 2016, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-create-commission-study-female-deacons-catholic-church>.

⁹⁶ Glison, p. 11.

⁹⁷ For more on John Paul II's contributions in support of religious diversity see Gerald O'Collins and Micheal A. Hayes, eds, *The Legacy of John Paul II* (New York: Burns & Oats, 2008).

⁹⁸ For more on Benedict XVI's contributions in support of ecological diversity see Jame Schafer and Tobia Winright, eds., *Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Assessing Pope Benedict's Ecological Vision for The Catholic Church in the United States* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2013).

and due the green principle's connectivity, this modeling would correspondingly increase the prospects for socio-ecological flourishing within an Earth community whose vital diversity is in peril. It follows that, in a cogent sense, diverse members of the planetary community are eager to see if the 'Francis effect', through a sort of positive green contagion, can extend its green theo-ecoethical influence to motivating global change in support of socio-ecological flourishing.

As this article has begun to demonstrate, there is much in Francis' social teaching to foster grounded hope that such transformation is not only necessary but possible when driven by a deep respect for diversity. Moreover, the Pope helps to establish the requisite integral respect for diversity as an orthodox expression of faithful living in the world in accord with 'C/catholic tradition' in both the universal and particular senses of that term. This prospect, of more fully incarnating a Christian principle also named in the *Global Greens Charter*, represents a contextually cogent possibility that comes into view when instances of the confluence between Francis' teaching and integral respect for diversity are mapped and colligated through a green theo-ecoethical lens.

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