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LASALLIAN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY: FORMING LASALLIANS TOWARDS THE RESTORATION OF THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Present Ecological Crisis and its Consequences to the Planet

We are at a critical point in human history. Among the many upheavals the human community is facing today, without uncertainty and doubt, it is the ecological crisis that demands our utmost attention and urgent response. The earth – our home – is in peril because of the worsening ecological crisis that is global in its scope but mostly and directly distressing the developing nations such as the Philippines and its other Southeast Asian neighbors and other countries in the Pacific - Oceania regions. The observed increase in the average temperature of the atmosphere of our planet in recent decades, which is more popularly known as Global Warming, is now widely accepted as the root cause of many other ecological problems today. The upsurge of the greenhouse gases concentrations caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil; land clearing for industrial, residential, and other purposes; decomposition of wastes in landfills, abusive soil cultivation practices, especially the use of commercial and organic fertilizers, fossil fuel combustion, nitric acid production, and biomass burning, etc., is the main reason for the increase in the average temperature.¹ The following graphical representation shows the significant increase in the average surface temperature on earth from the 1900's up to the present (Figure 1).

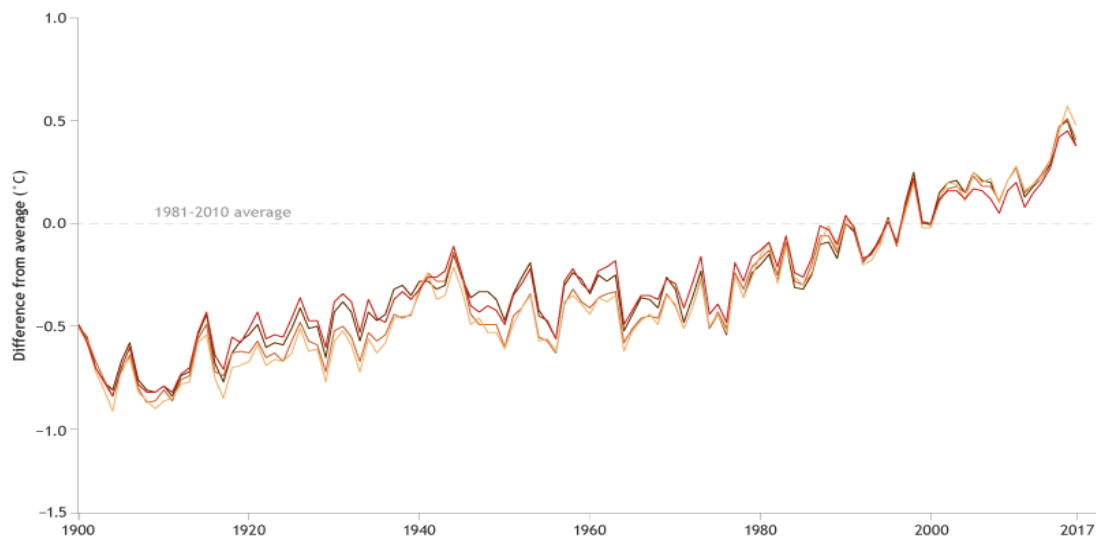


Figure 1.1
Global Surface Temperature: Annual Average²

¹ Cf. Sean McDonagh, *Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us*. (Manila: Claretian Publications, 2007), 30.

² “Global Surface Temperature: Annual Average.” NOAA Climate.gov Website. <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-temperature>. Accessed on 30 January 2019. Available in <http://www.nasa.gov>. Yearly global surface temperature from 1900–2017 compared to the 1981–2010 average (dashed line). The different colors represent different research groups' analysis of the historical temperature record. NOAA Climate.gov graph adapted from *State of the Climate in 2017*.

In many ways, the phenomenon of Global Warming has deeply affected the human race and all the other creatures that dwell in this planet. The rising sea levels in Europe and North America which was a result of the melting ice-caps; the scarcity of fresh water in Australia as well as in Africa, Central Europe and Central America due to the significant drop in the amount of rainfall in their respective regions; the issue of desertification and drought that is happening in countries such as China, Pakistan, Argentina and some nations in the Middle East; the increase in various debilitating health problems the world over as pronounced by the World Health Organization (WHO); the extinction of many animal and plant species in many parts of the globe; the hunger and famine, the stronger storms and typhoons which have resulted to a lot of deaths in many countries of Asia particularly in the South East Asian region³ -- all of these are manifestations of an ecological crises we, the inhabitants of the earth, are all facing.

Furthermore, geologists today observe the intensification, in many parts of the globe, of extreme weather conditions like drought, heat waves, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, flash floods, the El Nino and La Nina phenomena and other irregular and unprecedented weather patterns.⁴ These disturbances in the earth's climate have brought about the extinction of some animal and plant species and have similarly sternly affected the life cycles and natural patterns of many life forms in this planet of ours.

Scientists have affirmed the conviction that Global Warming is human-induced and/ or aggravated by human culpability. The United Nations-led Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, already in its Fifth Assessment Report for Policy Makers in 2014, determined that “there’s a 95 percent certainty that human activities are responsible for Global Warming.”⁵ It adds: “Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history Emphasis is given to the glaring fact that Carbon Dioxide is at an “unprecedented” level not seen for at least the last 800,000 years.⁶ This increase in the carbon emission is further aggravated by the lack of sensitivity and urgency on the part of industry leaders and government officials by continuously tolerating activities such as mining and deforestation which, according to studies, have a double-effect in contributing to the problem of Global Warming. Moreover, despite the presence of a treaty involving more than a hundred leaders of nations that gathered in Copenhagen in 2009 that aims to reduce further emission of Carbon Dioxide, the figures remain unchanged. With this realities at hand, IPCC notes that “poor countries are likely to continue bearing the brunt of climate change.”⁷ Figure 2 gives us an overview of the carbon dioxide emissions over the past 400 years.

³ Sean McDonagh, *Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us*, 36. Columban missionary Sean McDonagh has identified the abovementioned phenomena as the main consequences of climate change. He believes that climate change is the most serious issue facing the human community today. For an in-depth study of this global crisis and for a detailed explanation of its effects, it is worthwhile to read his work.

⁴Prisco A. Cajés, OFM, Th.D., “The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis”. Hapag 8, No. 1 (2011), 83.

⁵ *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp. Available at www.ipcc.ch. The report is the work of 209 lead authors and 50 review editors from 39 countries, and over 600 contributing authors from 32 countries.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

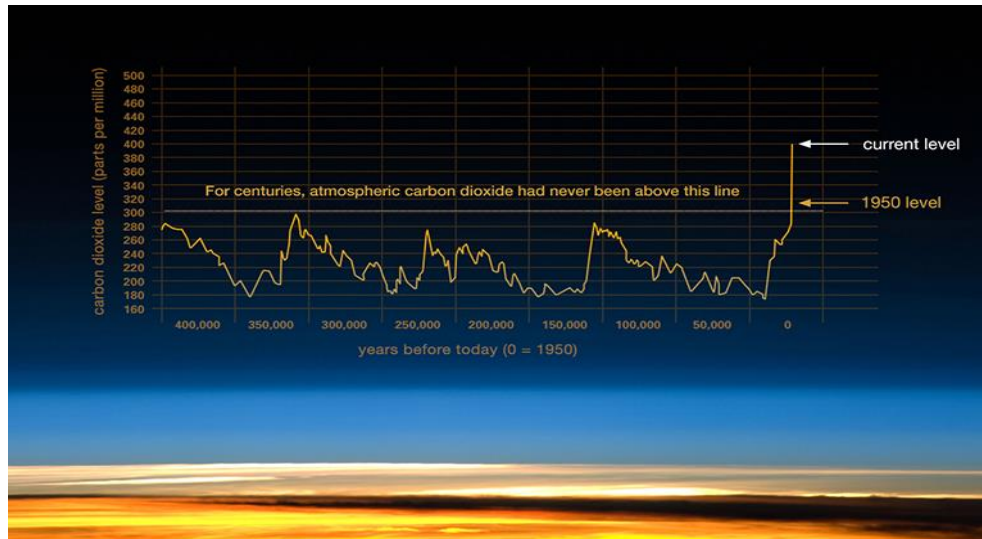


Figure 1.2 - Carbon dioxide (CO₂) Levels in the past 400,000 years⁸

In 2018, another study was released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, this time centering on “the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C.”⁹ This research was conducted in response to the invitation of the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to provide a report on the impact of a 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This study seems to sustain IPCC’s findings in their past reports, stating clearly that “human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C.”¹⁰ It then continues with a glaring proposition that appears as a note of caution: “Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.”¹¹

An earlier World Bank-commissioned study on Climate Change reports that no nation on earth will be immune to the effects of climate change brought about by Global Warming, however, it also asserts that “the distribution of impacts is likely to be inherently unequal and tilted against many of the poorest regions, which have the least economic, institutional, scientific, and technical capacity to cope and adapt.”¹² The said study listed some phenomena that may happen in the next

⁸ “The relentless rise of carbon dioxide”. NASA Website. Accessed on 30 January 2019. Available in https://climate.nasa.gov/climate_resources/24/graphic-the-relentless-rise-of-carbon-dioxide/.

⁹ IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, H. O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P. R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J. B. R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M. I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, T. Waterfield (eds.)]. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 32 pp

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “The World Bank, 4°C Turn down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided.” The World Bank. Last Updated November 2012. Accessed on 20 February 2016. Available in

few years to developing countries as a result of Global Warming, such as the projected surfacing of unprecedented high-temperature extremes in the tropics will consequently lead to significantly larger impacts on agriculture and ecosystems. The study says further: “Even though absolute warming will be largest in high latitudes, the warming that will occur in the tropics is larger when compared to the historical range of temperature and extremes to which human and natural ecosystems have adapted and coped.”¹³ Moreover, the study shows that sea-level rise is likely to be 15 to 20 percent larger in the tropics than the global mean.¹⁴ Aside from these occurrences, we are to expect increases in tropical cyclone intensity and which are likely to be felt disproportionately in low-latitude regions; as well as an increasing aridity and drought are likely to increase substantially in many developing country regions located in tropical and subtropical areas.¹⁵

Global Warming clearly brings about changes in climate patterns and these drastic changes in climate condition certainly impacts almost all aspects of life on earth such as water supply, agriculture, health and wellness of human beings and other life forms, forest and biodiversity, jobs and development, etc. While some sectors argue that these climate changes may result in a favorable condition, one cannot discount that its ill effects outdo all possible benefits to the planet.¹⁶ The infographic below illustrates how climate change has significantly permeated our planet and how drastically it may introduce shifts to how we live as individuals or as a community.

The Impact of Climate Change in the Philippines

The Philippines has been listed as the fifth most affected country in the world by climate change from the period 1997 to 2016 and the 16th country most vulnerable to its effects according to the Global Climate Risk Index of 2018 using 2016 data¹⁷. According to climate scientists, the catastrophes in great magnitudes that have visited the country in the last ten to fifteen years are just a foretaste of greater ones that are yet to come. The country started to experience the impact of the ecological crisis with the onslaught of typhoon *Milenyo* which devastated a lot of families in the Greater Manila Area in 2006, and which is believed to be strongest typhoon to hit the metropolis directly in 11 years. It brought down trees and billboards, caused flash floods and landslides, closed offices and the financial markets, and caused a Luzon-wide power outage. Almost 30 people were confirmed dead in the National Capital Region as well as in the *Calabarzon* area, not to mention the many more lives that were lost in the Bicol region.¹⁸ Likewise, who would

http://climatechange.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/Turn_Down_the_heat_Why_a_4_degree_centrigrade_warmer_world_must_be_avoided.pdf.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ In the United States of America, for instance, those in the agricultural sector see the warming temperature as beneficial as it will result to a longer growing season for crops, and thus, longer ice-free season for the Great Lakes. See “Impacts on Society” GlobalChange.gov. Accessed on 31 January 2019. Available at <https://www.globalchange.gov/climate-change/impacts-society>.

¹⁷ David Eckstein, Vera Künzel and Laura Schäfer. Global Climate Risk Index 2018. German Watch. Accessed on 31 January 2019. Available at <https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/publication/20432.pdf>.

¹⁸ “Milenyo Typhoon Hits Metro Manila and Bicol”, Philippine Country Website 29 September 2006. Accessed on February 12, 2016. http://www.philippinecountry.com/philippine_news/year2006/milenyo_09-29-06.html.

ever forget that fateful Saturday morning in September 2009 when tropical cyclone *Ondoy* began to bring a stormy weather to Metro Manila? The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said that this unexpected flooding in Metro Manila as a result of almost 24 hours of literally non-stop rainfall was the worst one ever recorded in the country's history. The City of Marikina¹⁹ was ravaged the most by this killer cyclone. Ranging from knee-deep floods to over the ground floor of their houses, the residents of Provident Subdivision (Marikina) literally had to climb to the trees for survival. In 2011, twenty-two barangays in *Calumpit, Bulacan* were reportedly submerged by massive floods affecting almost 26,000 families, one day after typhoon *Pedring* left the country. Still vivid in the local's memories are the images of people trapped in their own homes, families spending days and nights in their rooftops, workers having to rely on rubber boats as the only means of transportation available. Before the close of the year 2011, tropical depression *Sendong* has brought havoc to Northern Mindanao leaving the residents of Cagayan de Oro and *Iligan* in a state of deep shock as they experience what they regard as the worst ever natural disaster that has passed through their place. According to a news report, death toll has risen to almost 1,300 based on the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) with countless individuals still missing.²⁰ Not too long after this incident and not too far from the places mentioned above, another disaster happened – this time a result of small scale mining activities in the *Compostela* Valley. As of January 9, 2012, the death toll in the *Pantukan, Compostela* Valley landslide climbed to 32 as continuous heavy rains for the past few days hampered the search and retrieval operations for 45 people confirmed missing.²¹

It is not only tropical cyclones and storms that frequently visit the country bring mayhem to Filipinos and their properties. Even a mere *Habagat* (southwest monsoon rains), caused terrible flooding in some localities in the country. In 2013, several instances of *Habagat* hit Metropolitan Manila and other neighboring provinces such as Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, and Rizal that put to risk the lives of thousands of our fellow Filipinos.

On November 8, 2013, another unprecedented weather disturbance occurred, this time, in the Eastern *Visayas*, particularly in the province of Leyte and Samar. Believed to be the most powerful typhoon ever in the world in five decades, Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) truly became extremely catastrophic with its maximum sustained winds of 235km/h (147mph), with gusts of 275 km/h (170 mph) and waves as high as 15m (45ft). A foreign media agency reports that more than nine million people have been affected, many of whom struggled to survive without food, shelter or clean drinking water.²² It is said that more than 10,000 were killed in not less than five provinces in the *Visayas* and the Southern Luzon region. The said news agency also reveals the glaring aftermath of typhoon Haiyan such as the large destruction of the exposed easterly town of *Guiuan*, Samar province with the population of 40,000. Moreover, the death of three-hundred

¹⁹ Marikina City is one of the cities that comprise Metropolitan Manila. Approximately, 21 kilometers east of Manila, Marikina is a lush valley bounded by mountain ranges of the province of Rizal and sliced by Marikina River.

²⁰ "Sendong! Death Toll Rises to 1,257", Philippine Star Online. Accessed on 17 January 2017
<http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=762877&publicationSubCategoryId=200>.

²¹ "Compostela Landslide Death Toll Tallied at 32", Manila Times. Accessed on 17 January 2012.
<http://www.manilatimes.net/index.php/news/regions/14689-compostela-landslide-death-toll-tallied-at-32>.

²² "Typhoon Haiyan: Philippines declares state of calamity", BBC News. November 10, 2013. Accessed 20 November 2013. Available in <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24901993>.

people in the town of *Basey*, also in Samar, confirmed by the provincial disaster office. And lastly, the vastly flattened *Tacloban*, Leyte province, by a massive storm surge with the scores of corpses piled by the roadside, leaving a stench in the air as they rot. Furthermore, hundreds of people gathered at the airport desperate for food and water, others trying to get a flight.²³

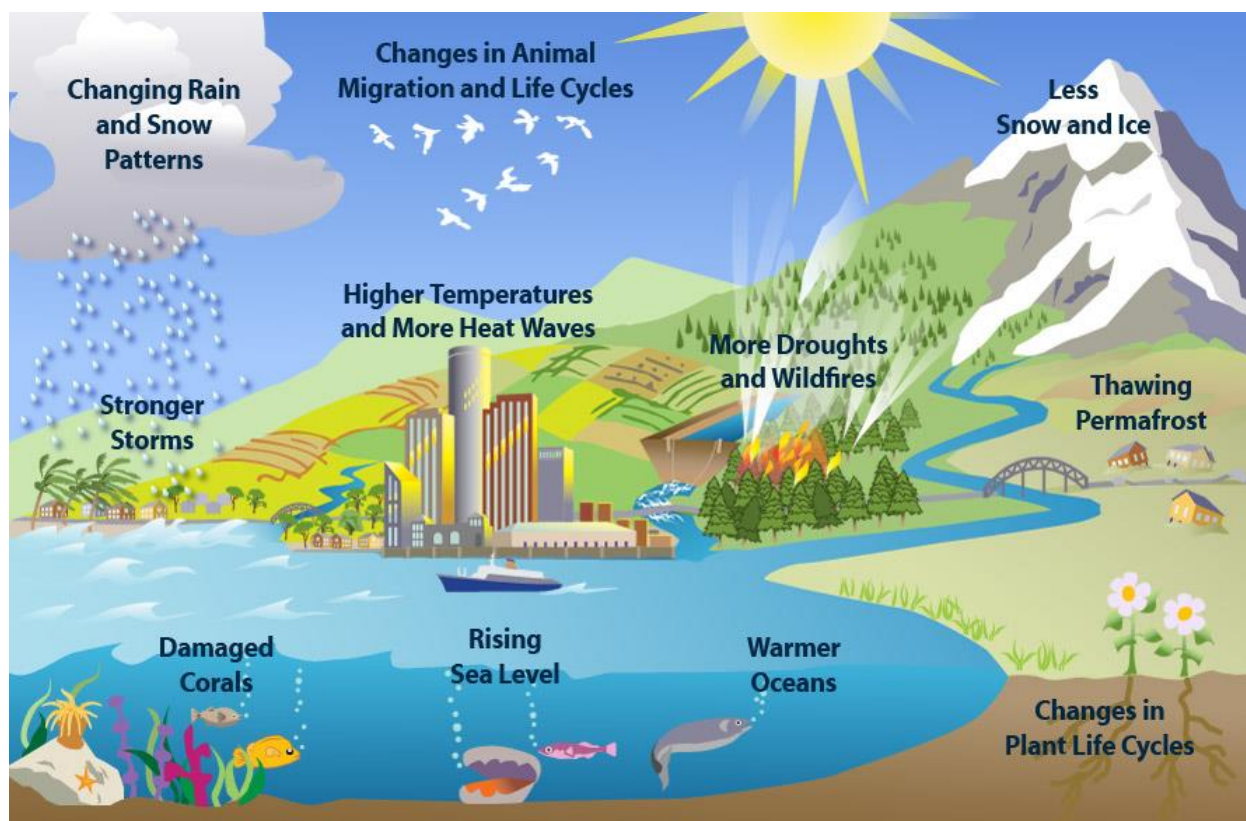


Figure 1.3
The Impacts of Climate Change²⁴

More recently, in particular in 2017, ‘Typhoon Vinta’ (international codename Tembin) left more than 240 casualties before it left the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) on the eve of Christmas while PhP 543, 220, 000 worth of damage was inflicted by ‘Typhoon Urduja’, which hit the Bicolandia and most parts of the Visayas region a few days before ‘Vinta’ hit the country.²⁵ In 2018, Typhoon “Ompong” (international name: Mangkhut) slammed into Luzon bringing over

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “Climate Change, the Environment, and You”. World Affairs Council, Harrisburg, PA. Accessed on 3 January 2019. Available at <http://www.wacharrisburg.org/archives/climate-change-the-environment-and-your-impact/>.

²⁵ “Damage from Urduja reaches 1 billion”. Manila Bulletin. Accessed on 31 January 2019. <https://news.mb.com.ph/2017/12/21/damage-from-urduja-reaches-p1b/>

800,00 people affected by the recent Typhoon Ompong according to the latest National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) report.²⁶

The Climate Change Commission of the Philippines reminds all Filipinos to be ready for more weather disturbances of the same magnitude. Philippine Star reports that then Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ramon Paje said that powerful typhoons like Yolanda is the "new normal" phenomenon as observed in weather disturbances that previously smashed the country.²⁷ The chart below shows that typhoons with greater intensity have visited the country in recent years.

Another manifestation of a changing climate in the country is the abnormally longer dry season that have affected most parts of the country and this caused alarm among those who are in the agricultural sectors. The availability of water continues to be a pressing issue even if there is an observed increase in annual average of rainfall. This increase in rainfall, however, is seen by climate scientists as a cause for increased sedimentation of rivers and soil erosion, especially in areas denuded of trees and plants. The 2017 Philippine Climate Change Assessment presents another disturbing scenario that may happen to our ecosystem should the government and the people fail to act to the problem accordingly:

It is likely that the increase in total rainfall and extremely excessive rainfall events could induce more surface soil erosion and increase siltation of rivers, lakes, and coastal and marine ecosystems. This will be particularly possible in river basins with low forest cover especially in deforested areas that were converted to agricultural areas and grasslands, and deforested areas with no vegetation cover.²⁸

With this happening right under our nose, we realize that a concern for our planet is not only an appropriate theme but also a necessary advocacy that each and every individual in this planet must espouse. United States Former Vice President Al Gore as early as 1992 has recognized the gravity of the ecological situation of our planet. In a book he published in 2006 entitled "Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It," he said: *"Global Warming, along with the cutting and burning of forests and other critical habitats, is causing the loss of living species at a level comparable to the extinction event that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. That event was believed to have been caused by a giant asteroid. This time it is not an asteroid colliding with the Earth and wreaking havoc: it is us."*²⁹ Eventually, most leaders of nations in the world have followed suit and have articulated their pro-active stance

²⁶ "Number of people in Philippines affected by Typhoon Ompong reaches over 800,000". *The Asian Journal*. Accessed on 31 January 2019. Available at <https://www.asianjournal.com/philippines/across-the-islands/number-of-people-in-philippines-affected-by-typhoon-ompong-reaches-over-800000/>

²⁷ "Yolanda is the new norm". Philippine Star. November 13, 2013.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/11/13/1256237/yolanda-new-norm>.

²⁸ Philippine Climate Change Assessment. Working Group 2 - Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Adaptation. (Pasig: The Oscar M. Lopez Center for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Foundation, Inc. and Climate Change Commission, 2017), 45.

²⁹ Al Gore, *Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*. (Emmaus, Pennsylvania, USA: Rodale Press, 2006), 12.

as regards this alarming concern. In our country, the national government has formed a commission that will serve as the sole policy-making body of the government which shall be tasked to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government relating to climate change.³⁰ The said government agency has been placed under the direct supervision of the Office of the President. Local governments are creating task force groups in order to respond to the ill-effects of climate change.

STRONGEST TYPHOONS IN THE PHILIPPINES (BY VARIOUS WEATHER STATIONS)

NAME	PERIOD OF OCCURENCE	HIGHEST WIND SPEED	REMARKS
YOLANDA (<i>Haiyan</i>)	November 2-11, 2013	315 kph (sustained)** 380 kph (gusts)** 280 kph (est.)*** 195 kph (Guiuan) 200 kph (Tacloban) 205 kph (Roxas)	**Estimate by satellite and radar imagery (JTWC). ***Barometric equivalent at PAGASA Guiuan Station. Guiuan Radar and Tacloban Synoptic Stations were destroyed before the typhoon made its closest approach <i>Bold in Italics are the actual readings taken.</i>
JUAN (<i>Megi</i>)	October 15-21, 2010	305 kph	Measured by reconnaissance aircraft (Philippine Sea east of Isabela)
INING (<i>Louise</i>)	November 15-20, 1964	296 kph	Measured by reconnaissance aircraft (Philippine Sea east of Surigao del Norte)
FERDIE (Meranti)	September 8 – 17, 2016	288 kph	Barometric equivalent at PAGASA Itbayat Station
PABLO (<i>Bopha</i>)	December 2-10, 2012	259 kph	Estimate by satellite and radar imagery (NOAA/JTWC)*

*- As PABLO enters the coast of Baganga and Cateel Bay (Davao Oriental) past midnight to dawn of December 4, 2012; No PAGASA synoptic, automated or mobile weather station exists along PABLO's core track in Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley and Agusan del Sur, where the typhoon was at its strongest.

** YOLANDA went into world attention when it rapidly developed from a tropical depression to a 240 kph typhoon in less than 72 hours. With just 8 hours away from Guiuan, Eastern Samar, the typhoon intensified further as plumes of "hot towers" appeared in radar and satellite giving it an estimated maximum sustained wind velocity of 315 kph and estimated wind gusts of 380 kph. But no weather instrument survived to measure the actual wind speed of the typhoon at landfall. The PAGASA Radar Station at Guiuan was destroyed after recording a gust of 195 kph with sustained velocity of 160 kph at past 4:00AM, November 8, 2013. With a barometric reading of 910 hPa, it was estimated to be around 240 kph (sustained) to 280 kph (gusts) at Guiuan by 5:00 AM. The PAGASA Station in Tacloban also conked out after registering winds of 200 kph and barometric reading of 910 Hpa (6:00AM November 8) as the station was decimated by the winds and swept by the 6-meter storm surge killing a weather personnel on-duty. At the Leyte Provincial Capitol in Tacloban, the **Automated Weather Station (AWS) of Weather Philippines Foundation (WPF)** recorded a wind gust of **150 kph** blowing from **North-Northeast**, 7:00AM PhT before it went off-line as it was brought down from the capitol's roof deck by the typhoon's fierce winds and swept away by the storm surge as well.

Figure 1.4 - Strongest Typhoons in the Philippines³¹

³⁰ "The Climate Change Commission" Climate Change Commission of the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines website. Accessed on 18 January 2012.

³¹ "Strongest Typhoons in the Philippines". Weather Philippines. Accessed on 31 January 2019. Available <https://weatherph.org/strongest-typhoons-philippines/>.

However, in spite of the Global Warming being a proven scientific fact, some individuals and groups would not simply accept the reality due to political, economic, and other vested interests as in the case of the Bush II administration that has prospered in thwarting all efforts to address the ecological crisis during his presidency.³² Industries that have been adversely affected by the calls for environmental preservation have hired scientists to contest that climate change is not real and is just a creation of some alarmist groups. Most developed nations have acted slowly and appears naïve to the ecological crisis despite their participation in climate change conferences. Recently, representatives of 133 countries, majority of who are from developing nations, as well as other environmental groups walked out of the 2013 UN Climate Change Conference in Warsaw, Poland. Laura Murillo laments the governments' lack of commitment and concrete action against the effects of climate change such as the mitigation, adaptation or compensation to affected communities. She explains that their action was done to denounce the hypocrisy on the part of the leaders of most developed nations. Murillo clarifies: "To witness such indifference following the tragedy which followed Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines; to witness the way in which this COP had become a showcase for companies which are amongst the biggest pollutants in the world; to witness prior pledges rejected by the same governments which made them just years later, forced us to finally say 'enough is enough.'"³³ Worth citing here is her challenge to leaders of nations, as well as to members of environmental groups and to all people of goodwill:

We know that in order for things to really change we have to increase the mobilization of the willing.... We need to come back stronger, with more people, with more ideas and with a more mobilized society that is ready to combat climate change and ensure a 'just transition'... The diversity of the coalition that formed the walk-out was beautiful both in its breadth and its deep sense of solidarity... The fact that some of the people most committed to the UN process were outside of the plenaries of COP19 will undoubtedly send a strong warning to the world's governments... No more collective hypocrisy and no more disaffection. This process matters and we have to make it count.³⁴

The Catholic Church's Response to the Ecological Crisis

As part of the wider earth-community, Christians are thus invited to read the signs of the times, reflect on them in the light of faith, and identify concrete plans of action so that together and as a Church, guided by the spirit of Jesus Christ, they can create a society that is truly a community that is in solidarity with all of God's creation. We are aware that several individuals and groups in the Philippines and in many parts of the world have already initiated what they call "circles of discernment" and have been studying the current ecological situation from different perspectives.

³² Piotr Krakowczyk, CMF. *"The World seems to be Falling Apart: Violence, Injustice, and Ecological Degradation."* Religious Life Asia, Vol X. No. 1 January-March 2008, 25-43.

³³ Laura Martín Murillo. *"Why We Walked out of the UN Climate Change Talks"*. Equal Times. November 25, 2013. Accessed on 23 November 2014. Available in <http://www.equaltimes.org/opinion/why-we-walked-out-of-the-un-climate-change-talks>.

³⁴ Ibid.

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) has created a Climate Change desk in 2011 to promote a collective Asian Church response to Global Warming and Climate Change and to assist the local episcopal conferences in Asia to establish their own Climate Change desks. As of this writing, two major Asia-wide Climate Change seminars have been convened - the first one in 2011, and the second in 2015. The output of these seminars is an FABC Climate Change Desk Strategic Action Plan, a blueprint for action to help mitigate the effects of this global ecological crisis.

In the Philippines, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) in coordination with other faith-based movements gathered 170 religious women and men educators, environmentalists, and Climate action advocates to discuss various ways of responding to climate change and its implications to human rights advocacy. They have arrived at a conclusion that our environment is truly in danger, therefore far-reaching and radical measures must be taken up by all in order to preserve and conserve what is left as well as to restore what was taken away from it by humanity's insensitivity, selfishness, and greed.

It is a welcome development that the Catholic Church now is vocal regarding issues that affect our environment. Strongly criticized as being slow to recognize the gravity of the ecological problems facing the earth, there are signs, at last, that Catholic Church is beginning to wake up to what is at stake.³⁵ It is also praiseworthy that the Church and its leaders are beginning to open their doors to new scientific discoveries and insights. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church has identified "Caring for Creation" as one of the key themes of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. In his message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in 1990 entitled "*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation*," Pope John Paul II pointed out that:

Even men and women without any particular religious conviction, but with an acute sense of their responsibilities for the common good, recognize their obligation to contribute to the restoration of a healthy environment. All the more should men and women who believe in God the Creator, and who are thus convinced that there is a well-defined unity and order in the world, feel called to address the problem. Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith. As a result, they are conscious of a vast field of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation opening up before them.³⁶

Also in a message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in 2010, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI emphasizes the need for a "greater sense of intergenerational solidarity."³⁷ The "green pope,"

³⁵ Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*. (Quezon City: Claretian Publication, 1990), 175.

³⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation*, 1 January 1990. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html accessed in 17 January, 2012.

³⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*. 1 January 2010. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html. (Accessed on 17 January 2012).

as many advocates of the integrity of creation call him, has brought the issue of climate change as one of the most important concerns of the Church today. He said:

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*The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction.*³⁸

Realizing the gravity of the ecological problem, the bishops of the Philippines have also expressed their grave concern on the plight of ecology in the country in 1988 when they came up with a pastoral exhortation which they aptly entitled “*What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?*” In that letter, the bishops painfully called our attention to the indiscriminate destruction of our natural resources:

One does not need to be an expert to see what is happening and to be profoundly troubled by it. Within a few short years brown, eroded hills have replaced luxuriant forests in many parts of the country. We see dried up river beds where, not so long ago, streams flowed throughout the year. Farmers tell us that, because of erosion and chemical poisoning, the yield from the croplands has fallen substantially. Fishermen and experts on marine life have a similar message. Their fish catches are shrinking in the wake of the extensive destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. The picture which is emerging in every province of the country is clear and bleak. The attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations.³⁹

Indeed, considering the immensity of the responsibility that all of humanity must take up as part of their harmonious relationship with the rest of the inhabitants of this planet earth – the common home of all its inhabitants, serious efforts must be done by all sectors of our society – the Catholic Church included. It is incumbent upon all human beings to restore the intimate relationship that was originally planned by God and to heal the wounds we have inflicted upon nature because we are the ones primarily responsible for its destruction. The institutional church has a vital role to play in this regard. Sean McDonagh articulates in his book, *The Greening of the Church*, it is beginning to dawn gradually on many people that among others, healing nature and preserving the stability of the biosphere is the central task of those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus in today’s world.⁴⁰ As we take on the challenge of being followers of Jesus in today’s world given the overall situation of life and the enormity of the ecological crisis, much would be expected from us. The answer to the problem is in our hands but it would require conversion on our part – it would require such radical and dramatic changes in the values, concerns, thought-patterns, and standards of living of so many people.⁴¹ Eco-spirituality, then, should not just be considered as some sort of an

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. “*What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?*”.

⁴⁰ Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990), 164.

⁴¹ Albert Nolan. *Jesus Before Christianity* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2008), 8.

emerging form of spirituality in our day and age but also an important dimension of our being Christians today.

There is now an evident shift in the attitude of the institutional Church compared to the not-so-distant past when it suppressed the new thinking of great Christian writers in the likes of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, and Thomas Berry, among others. One could now sense openness and willingness to dialogue on the part of the institutional Church. However, it has been observed that the foundation of the Catholic Church's contemporary environmental ethic is anthropocentric in nature – that creation is God's gift to humanity and that God had appointed man to "have dominion" (Gen. 1:26) over the earth and "subdue it." This pattern of thought, which stemmed from a distorted understanding of Genesis (1:26),⁴² in effect gives an impression that there is "disharmony between the human beings and the cosmos."⁴³ Hence, the motivation for the environmental advocacies is still clearly and consciously human-centered or anthropocentric.⁴⁴ For instance, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church asserts that nature is the Lord's gift to humanity: "Nature is not a sacred or divine reality that man must leave alone. Rather, it is a gift offered by the Creator to humanity..."⁴⁵ Furthermore, Cardinal Renato Martino, then President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at a conference on climate change and development said: "Nature is for the human person and the human person is for God." These pronouncements present to us a theology that is rooted in the belief that everything God created was for the consumption and disposition of human beings. A Catholic journalist explains the reason why some members of the Church choose to not to depart from the anthropocentric mentality to totally embrace a creation-centered theology.

Guardians of orthodoxy warn that such arguments (for creation-centered theology) inevitably lead to one of two outcomes: first, the Vatican is afraid that many might espouse the position of utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer, who denies a special status to human beings and asserts that views to the contrary amount to "speciesism;"⁴⁶ secondly, a cosmic-centered theology may also deify nature, thus, "ascribing divinity to nature, meaning pantheism or one of its variants – 'panentheism,' 'immanentism,'"⁴⁷ and so on.

⁴² To understand "dominion" (from *radah*, "to tread down"), remember that Israel's king had covenantal responsibilities to care for those over whom he ruled. "Dominion, therefore, does not mean to exploit or destroy," Butkus suggests, "but to exercise care and responsibility for God's domain particularly in the interest of those who are poor and marginalized." See <http://www.baylor.edu/christianethics/CreationStudyGuide2.pdf>.

⁴³ Lode Wostyn, *In Search of a Human Jesus and a Human Church* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 2010), 154.

⁴⁴ An anthropocentric ethic does not logically give intrinsic value to the earth or to other creatures. Nature has only the instrumental value of being used for and by humanity. (cf. J. Milburn Thompson, "Making the Church Greener" in *The North Country Catholic*, Diocese of Ogdensburg Official Website. Available in http://northcountrycatholic.org/Articles/2011/12_14making%20the%20church%20greener.html)

⁴⁵ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* no. 473 (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 2005).

⁴⁶ John L. Allen, Jr. *Catholic Environmentalism: Green teachings, Initiatives take hold among Catholics Worldwide*. Accessed on 10 February 2014. Available in <http://ncronline.org/node/1503>

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Even the pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines in 1988 titled “What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?” which is the first pastoral letter on ecology written by a conference of bishops, seems to have as its basis some anthropocentric motivations. The exhortation centers on the theme “caring for the environment” but always with the intention of ensuring a better future for human beings, in this case, the Filipinos having enough resources for their daily living. The concern therefore is triggered not because they have come to realize that humanity must be in solidarity with the “suffering” creation but because they are alarmed that one day, it will no longer be fit for human beings to dwell on this planet and that the human species is being threatened by the impending ecological crisis. This was an overarching theme in the pastoral letter and was even made clearer when they said: “Because the living world is interconnected, the poison is absorbed by marine organisms. We in turn are gradually being poisoned when we eat seafood.”⁴⁸

What is more saddening is the fact that even if the Universal Church has recognized the importance of the ecological engagement, some of its leaders still has yet to be convinced of the connection of our advocacy on the environment with our Christian faith. For instance, despite the pronouncement of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that “The Church has a responsibility towards creation,”⁴⁹ Cardinal George Pell of Sydney’s indifference to the environmental advocacies of the Church is based on what he says the “lack of theological basis” for it and he made waves with a newspaper column in which he acidly observed that Jesus had nothing to say about Global Warming.⁵⁰

The Need to Have a Renewed Eco-Spirituality

As advocated by contemporary eco-theologians like Sean McDonagh, religion, in particular, the Catholic Church must begin to accept that it has to deal with the realm of science especially as it takes upon itself the role of being a “steward of God’s creation. If the Church deems itself to be an agent of transformation of society, it must truly be open to dialogue with other fields and be willing to work with them to save the planet. As Henlee H. Barnette puts it, “in the face of the ecological crisis the church must redefine its theology to embrace a sacramental view of the universe and to see love in terms of willing the welfare of all God’s creatures and things.”⁵¹ A number of groups have emphasized the need for the Church to really be involved in caring for the earth for they see it as a potent agent of renewal of the lifestyles of people. It will sound ironic but scientists themselves are now saying that the church is one of our last best hopes of the survival of this planet.⁵²

⁴⁸ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, “*What is Happening to our Beautiful Land*”. 1988.

⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 51.

⁵⁰ John L. Allen, Jr. Catholic Environmentalism: Green Teachings, Initiatives take hold among Catholics Worldwide. Available in <http://ncronline.org/node/1503>. Accessed in 10 February 2012.

⁵¹Henlee H. Barnette, *The Church and the Ecological Crisis*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 83.

⁵²Ibid., 83.

In 1988, Pope John Paul II in his address for the 50th Anniversary of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences already said: “The Church esteems science, and even recognizes a certain centrality with those who dedicate their endeavors to science, as to all who seek to open up the human family to the noblest values of the true, the good, and beautiful, to the understanding of the things that have universal value.”⁵³ On the other hand, the late pontiff challenged the scientists to look also at the importance of the “other” dimension of things: “Science... needs to be in harmony with wisdom and with ethics, in order to satisfy the deepest requirements of man’s spirit and heart, so that this dignity may be safeguarded.”⁵⁴ In the same speech, the pope expressed elation over the close of a rift between scientific culture and Christianity. This means that the Church enters into a new period in history where science and religion must mutually shed light to each other. Taking the cue from John Paul II, the Church and its leaders today establish a harmonious relationship with science and must not be suspicious about the recent scientific discoveries. As humanity grapples with Global Warming, it is but necessary to engage science with its recent findings as we discern concrete steps of actions as a Church. As the Church embarks on the era of the ‘new evangelization’ the recent popes have opened the way for a new ways of being church and has motivated the faithful and their leaders to use new expressions in proclaiming the message of the kingdom. These popes too have recognized the need to fulfill every Christian’s vocation to be stewards of creation in today’s era of new evangelization. The Catholic Church must be a humble and listening Church according to its leaders. One beautiful expression of a humble Church is by lending a listening ear to what other realms such as science purports to teach about the environment.

One of the ways in which a possibility of integration between science and religion can be explored, as we confront the issue of Global Warming, is through the “New Cosmology.” The New Cosmology is grounded on the belief that all life emerges from the same cosmic source, an initial creative event that continues to unfold moment by moment.⁵⁵ Judy Cannato, one of the spiritual writers appropriating this idea, suggests that since we all emerge from the same source, all creatures are part of a single community of life. Contrary to the ‘old cosmology’ that originated in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, which holds the belief that the universe operates in a mechanistic way like a machine, the New Cosmology puts forward the idea that all creation was brought about by one spectacular cosmic event which we call the “Big Bang.” Cannato, in explaining what New Cosmology is all about states: “Creation is not static, fixed event, but a cosmogenesis, an ongoing act of creation and creativity. Because all life is part of this single cosmic event, all life is connected at its most basic level.”⁵⁶ In her own reading of the works of eco-theologians, she has learned that the discoveries of science and the new telling of the universe story provide fitting images and metaphors for a construction the new paradigm. “While the discoveries may be new, the truths that we will reflect upon here are timeless, found in the depths

⁵³ Pope John Paul II, Address for the 50th Anniversary of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Accessed 20 November 2013.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2010), 27.

⁵⁶ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe*, 33.

of Christian tradition and its spiritual practice.”⁵⁷ This will eventually yield to a new way of looking at things, a new theology of creation, and a new set of attitudes and behavior as we relate with others, including non-human creatures. 15

The Lasallian Response to Global Warming

There have been a lot of noteworthy ecological efforts initiated and carried out by the various sectors of the Lasallian community. To name a few, there is the “Green for Life: One Million Trees and Beyond” program which began a few years before the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Lasallian Presence in the Philippines. The foremost objective of this program is to provide a venue for more proactive responses to environmental issues through tree-planting activities and reforestation programs that promote the propagation and caring for indigenous species.⁵⁸ To date, the program has yet to achieve its primary objective of planting one million trees in various sites identified by the committee in close collaboration and coordination with the local governments.⁵⁹ Lasallians in the 16 La Salle schools and other La Salle-supervised schools in the Philippines are continuously conducting tree-planting activities as part of their immersion program and community engagement efforts.

Aside from the tree-planting activities, the DLSU Student Council in 2008 made a move to convince the administrators to adapt a “No Styro” policy, an idea which was picked up by the university, and until now being implemented not only in De La Salle University but in many Lasallian institutions in the country. This significant step in responding to the call to protect the environment by promoting recycling of resources somehow forced many establishments within and outside the De La Salle University and other La Salle schools to use recyclable and/ or eco-friendly materials for the packaging of their products instead of Styrofoam which, according to studies, will take hundreds of years to decompose.

While the efforts of the Lasallian community in the country in general are indeed laudable and will eventually make a significant and lasting impact to society, noticeable however, is the absence of a clear link between the current ecological practices and our Christian faith, which is one of the core values of the institution. It is evident that the ecological practices are borne out of a concern for the earth and as response to the ecological crisis, but the only clear basis for action that is easily perceptible to majority of the members of the community are the scientific facts provided by the experts in the said field.

While we do not undermine the importance of reading the data provided by science, there is also a need, as Christians and as Lasallians, to emphasize the faith motivation, i.e., to “look upon everything with the eyes of faith,” as what our Founder would always remind the first Christian Brothers. By this, Saint John Baptist de la Salle means that every endeavor, every action of the

⁵⁷Ibid., 15.

⁵⁸ “Green for Life: One Million Tress and Beyond”, Lasallian Institute for the Environment. Accessed on 04 November 2013.

⁵⁹ The areas and sites identified include Mt. Palaypalay in Cavite, Mt. Kanlaon Buffer Zone in Negros, San Pablo City Water Shed in Laguna, Calatagan Mangrove in Batangas, Salikneta Farm in Bulacan, Brgy. Pta. Taytay in Bacolod City, USLS Ecopark Granada Park and in Bago City, both are likewise located in Negros.

members of the community must be guided by the spirit of faith. Moreover, in the Lasallian tradition, it is believed that it is only through the gift of faith that we are able to see the true dimension of things.

The proponent of this study believes that if all the ecological advocacies of the Philippine Lasallian Family are connected to the Christian understanding of creation, it will provide a possible answer to the question: “Why do Lasallians care for God’s creation?” Furthermore, if a linkage between the ecological practices of the Lasallian community and the Christian understanding of creation is clearly identified, their faith experiences will lead them to a deeper relationship with God and with all of creation.

Towards a Lasallian Eco-Spirituality

Brother Alvaro Rodriguez FSC, the immediate past superior general of the Brothers of Christian Schools, in his 2009 Pastoral Letter to the Brothers, already saw that the relationship with others which is built on compassion and love can be and must be extended to all of creation. Citing Rom. 8:20-22, the head of the Institute realizes that the care of creation must be an integrated part of the educational ministry of the Lasallian community and he sees this as a way of building the kingdom of God today – “that the entire creation is made manifest in eager longing.” Reflecting on Rom. 8:20-22, the head of the Lasallian family worldwide furthers: “Without a doubt the concern for climate change and its consequences should be part of the educational curriculum of our schools, as the interiorization of attitudes of respect, gratitude, love, solicitude for our mother earth.”⁶⁰ This means that the superior general of the Christian Brothers would like to articulate a Lasallian spirituality that will ground all our actions in a sound Christian doctrine of creation. Brother Echeverria does not simply want Lasallians to respond to climate change but he envisions a concrete response which is a fruit of a faith reflection of individuals and Lasallian communities.

Also in the same year, the Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family, which is now considered as the “magna carta” of Lasallian mission in the country, was promulgated. The document states that in the Lasallian tradition, the spirit of faith is a spirit that allows one “to discover God’s active presence in his Word, in men and women, in the poor, in *nature*, in history, and in ourselves.”⁶¹ Hence, the document challenges Lasallians to care for creation as part of our faith-response to God’s unconditional offer of life and love. Moreover, in another section of the same document, Lasallians are invited to “develop among its members greater cognition of the realities of human suffering and the stewardship role that each shares in preserving the integrity of God’s creation.”⁶² I hold the conviction that this present work is a humble yet concrete response to the aforementioned invitation. In our time, we see a clear connection between the realities of human suffering and the present ecological crisis. A Lasallian eco-spirituality may provide a framework of a faith-response to these “signs of the times.” It may likewise enable Lasallians, as

⁶⁰ Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría FSC. *Consecrated by God the Trinity as a Community of Brothers: Messengers and Apostles sent by the Church to make present the Kingdom of God*. Pastoral Letter to the Brothers. (Rome: Brothers of Christian Schools 2009), 25.

⁶¹ De La Salle Philippines, *Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family*. Second Edition. (Mandaluyong: Brothers of Christian Schools, 2009), 16.

⁶² Ibid. Emphasis mine.

active missionary disciples in today's era of the 'new evangelization' to embody a holistic regard for God's creation.

In presenting the Christian understanding of creation, this work focuses on Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:18-23) as the foundational biblical text. Here is the full text of Rom. 8: 18-23:

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. ¹⁹ For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; ²⁰ for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; ²³ and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

This main goal of this study is to help the Philippine Lasallian Family develop a more holistic ecological sustainability program by evaluating its current ecological initiatives by correlating it with a Christian Theology of Creation based on a re-reading of Rom. 8:18-23 in the light of the 'new cosmology', using the Method of Correlation developed by Paul Tillich and was enriched by David Tracy and Roger Haight.

It will look into the ecological initiatives and programs that are being supervised or are being implemented or facilitated by the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE) and De La Salle Philippines, a network of Lasallian educational institutions in the country composed of sixteen schools, colleges, and universities. These initiatives and programs are being carried out by all sixteen La Salle schools. Also included are some of the initiatives and programs specific to individual academic institutions. This study also makes use of the Modern Conduct of Schools, a manual for leading and administering of Lasallian academic institutions in the country which was developed by De La Salle Philippines in 2015. It takes its inspiration from Saint John Baptist de la Salle's Conduct of Christian Schools, a rule written for the Brothers but also includes techniques for class teaching, including regulations for maintaining discipline, steps for teaching reading, and even for student assessment and discipline.

In the discussion of the Christian Theology of Creation, it has as its primary basis the Sacred Scriptures. It pays a particular attention on Paul's view of "Integral Redemption" in Rom. 8:18-23, however, it does not endeavor in an intensive exegetical analysis of the text, although presented in this study are literary and redaction analyses, form and narrative criticism. The exegetical and hermeneutical works of Claus Westermann, David Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, Leo G. Perdue, Karl Loning, Eric Zenger, Bernardita Dianzon, etc., are employed and integrate these into the theology of creation. The focus, however, of this study is on the *World of the Reader* or the *World Before the Text*, which is the concern of modern hermeneutics. Other bases for the Theology of Creation are the teachings of the Fathers of the Church as well as the recent pronouncements of the magisterium.

As earlier mentioned, in order that the presentation of the Christian Theology of Creation will be intelligible and one that is in tune with the realities of the 21st century, it involves a glimpse at the recent scientific discoveries about the origins of the life and the universe, which we call “New Cosmology.” The primary source of this relatively new concept is Judy Cannato’s book, “Field of Compassion,” where she puts together the brilliant and practical ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, and Thomas Berry and many other experts in eco-theology. She calls on Christians to embrace the way in which an understanding of religion and the spiritual path is informed and illumined by cutting-edge science. She asserts that the new cosmology and the Christian story are not really in conflict with each other but rather complement each other. Fully aware that science is always developing, the concept of the New Cosmology, as used in the works mentioned above, is an estimate of what the picture of the universe (cosmos) and brings us to its beginnings (cosmogenesis). Moreover, some scientists may have different versions of the New Cosmology and may even refute this present study’s vision of the New Cosmology. Nevertheless, the New Cosmology that will be utilized in the study is what is acceptable to majority of the experts in the realm of science.

Following the line of thought of Sandra Schneiders, who considers spirituality as the future of theology and that the goal of biblical hermeneutics is not pure erudition but the experience of the transformative potential of the text, this study hopes to make a modest contribution to the enhancement of the ecological initiatives and programs of the Philippine Lasallian Family today by linking the Christian faith and the current culture of Lasallians. Thus, this paper will make the articulation of this eco-spirituality that will promote an “interiorization of attitudes of respect, gratitude, love, solicitude for our mother earth” as goaded by the former Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. An eco-spirituality is deemed to be most needed today as it does not only promote a particular theology or set of religious beliefs, but a change in lifestyles, one thing that Pope Francis and other eco-theologians are asking of all men and women of good will today.

Moreover, since the Brothers of Christian Schools (FSC), is a worldwide congregation of consecrated men dedicated to the education of the youth, especially the poor, and that De La Salle Philippines, as a network of sixteen schools in the country, together with its supervised academic institutions, is seen as a potent agent of renewal of Church and nation, this study is envisioned to encourage school administrations, educators, catechists, support staff, students, alumni, and other sectors of the Lasallian family to take the task of the “new world order” very seriously. Working for the upholding of the Integrity of Creation is not just an option for a Christian but an imperative because this study will show that it is a new form of discipleship today. The understanding that this world will be transformed, renewed, cleansed, and made new will become a reality through us.

Inspired by the spirit of Saint John Baptist de la Salle, this study will hopefully encourage the members of the Lasallian community to be actively engaged in not only proactively mitigating the effects of Global Warming and Climate Change but in re-establishing a bond of communion with the Creator and with all of creation that is continuously groaning in pain.

Definition of Terms

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Animism	An indigenous Filipino system of belief that evolves around religious ideas and practices concerning the anito/ anitu; a worldview, practice of superstition, and a form of relationship between the living and the spirit world. ⁶³
Anthropocentrism	Refers to human-centered perspective. It encourages a worldview that upholds the belief that human beings are the most significant being in the universe. Anthropocentric value systems perceive nature in terms of its value to humans.
Carbon Footprint	The total amount of greenhouse gas emissions caused by an either any individual, institution, a product, or an activity.
Climate Change	A change in patterns of temperature, precipitation (rain or snow), humidity, wind and seasons brought about by Global Warming. It has affected many related aspects of where and how people, plants, and animals live, such as food production, availability and use of water, and health risks.
Conduct of Schools	(French, “Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes”) A guidebook written by John Baptist de la Salle for the first Brothers in their management of Christian schools. The <i>Conduite</i> originally appeared in manuscript form in 1706, and De La Salle revised it constantly, in consultation with the Brothers. The first printed edition was published posthumously in 1720. It outlines rules and techniques for class teaching, including regulations for maintaining discipline, steps for teaching students how to read and write, and even for student assessment and discipline.
District Synod	A gathering of Brothers and lay partners to discuss essential issues and to set directions for the district. The First District Synod was convened to establish partnership with the Brothers’ lay educators.
Evolution	The development of one life form to another. The term is associated with the views of Charles Darwin (1809-82) regarding the ways by which animal and human life came into existence and through which they become progressively complex life forms.

⁶³ Prisco A. Cajés, OFM, *Anitism and Perichoresis: Towards a Filipino Christian Eco-theology of Nature* (Quezon City: OFM Province of San Pedro Bautista, 2002), 193.

Global Warming	The observed increase in the average temperature of the atmosphere of our planet in recent decades. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2014 that scientists were more than 95% certain that global warming is mostly being caused by human (anthropogenic) activities, mainly increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO ₂).	20
Immanentism	A perspective that God or the Divine is permanently pervading and sustaining the universe. It is often contrasted with transcendent.	
Integrity of Creation	Means firstly, that all of creation has its own intrinsic value, dignity and reason for being; and secondly, that all of creation is closely linked and interdependent. Humans must broaden their horizons and begin to see themselves within the larger context of the earth, as an integral community of all living and non-living components. Thomas Berry contends that if we are to have a proper ethical framework adequate for the present task of stopping the destruction of our planet and rebuilding it according to God's plan, we must recognize that: The human community is subordinate to the ecological community. The ecological imperative is not derivative from human ethics. Human ethics is derivative from the ecological imperative. The basic ethical norm is the wellbeing of the comprehensive community, not the well-being of the human community. The earth is a single ethical system, as the universe itself is a single ethical system. ⁶⁴	
Intrinsic Value	Refers to the value a creature possesses in its own right, as an end-in-itself, in contrast with the 'instrumental value' or a perspective that non-human creatures are subordinate to humanity's needs and interests.	
Lasallian East Asia District	A district in the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools in the Pacific-Asia Regional Conference. The district is comprised of the following countries: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Japan, and Indonesia.	
Modern Conduct of Schools	The Modern Conduct of Schools: Guiding Principles in the Stewardship of Resources in Lasallian Institutions provides a framework by which Lasallian institutions will plan, organize, and manage its operations. The principles and standards on key	

⁶⁴ Thomas Berry, "Ethics and Ecology" (Unpublished Paper, 1994) in *The Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family*. Second Edition (Mandaluyong: La Salle Provincialate, 2009), 25.

institutional processes contained in the manuals will serve as the bases for the policies and procedures of all Lasallian Institutions.⁶⁵

Mystic	A person whose experience of the presence of God is intense, direct, and transforming, but not necessarily accompanied by extraordinary phenomena. Mystics experience a deep communion of love and of knowledge with God and, in God, with other people and reality. Today, the mystical potential of all Christians is increasingly emphasized.
New Cosmology	An important theological strand that weaves together great scientific discoveries of recent decades with the wisdom of mystics throughout the ages. The late Thomas Berry was perhaps the first to use this phrase in its theological context, and it has since been further developed by many others, including mathematician Brian Swimme and Sister Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm. The new cosmology confirms for our current day what Jesus and prophets from all religious traditions have long said — all living beings are sacred, we are all interconnected and creation is our home and our very being.
Nurture	(Latin <i>nutrire</i> , “to nurse, nourish”). To care for or foster. Used in feminist writings as using one’s power as nurturer to heal and create a relationship that is mutual and reciprocal. ⁶⁶
Panentheism	(Greek <i>pan</i> , “all”, <i>en</i> “in”, and <i>theos</i> , “God”). The view that God is in all things or creatures. It sees the world and God as naturally dependent for their fulfillment. ⁶⁷
Pantheism	A view that God as all and all as God
Speciesism	A form of discrimination or prejudice against non-human species; this concept is based on the superiority of human beings over other species.
Spirituality	A conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives. Spirituality is not a doctrine or simply a set of practices but an ongoing experience of life project. Its purpose is life integration. ⁶⁸

⁶⁵ De La Salle University Official Website. Available at http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/offices/compliance/_pdf/modern-conduct-of-schools-faq.pdf. Accessed on 14 July 2016.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Lode Wostyn, ed. *I Believe: A Workbook for Theology* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2003), 188.

⁶⁸ Sandra M. Schneiders, ‘Christian Spirituality: Definitions, Methods and Types’, in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (ed. Philip Sheldrake; Louisville, KY:2005).

CHAPTER ONE

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

The Call for a ‘New Evangelization’

The XXIII General Assembly of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome convoked by then Pope Benedict XVI with the theme “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” had been a remarkable meeting of various ecclesiastical leaders with other invited experts from the world over. For several weeks, they, together with representatives from the laity conversed on how to make evangelization or the proclamation of the gospel more meaningful and relevant to the people of the 21st century, especially to the youth. Following the thought of Pope Benedict XVI who, in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, already signified that “the Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance,”⁶⁹ the Synod Fathers are strongly convinced that the “new evangelization” is not at all new—it is not a matter of starting again, but of entering into the long path of proclaiming the Gospel with the apostolic courage of Paul who would go so far as to say “*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!*” (1 Corinthians 9:16)⁷⁰ To become an authentic disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ, one must have, first and foremost, a deep and personal encounter with the living Christ. Only in Jesus Christ does life in its fullness can be given to us.

Why, then, is the “new evangelization” called new? Borrowing the words of Pope John Paul II, the synod fathers clarify that what the people of the 21st century need is an evangelization that is “*new in its ardor, in its methods, in its expressions.*”⁷¹ Benedict XVI and the bishops are fully aware that the overall situation of the global citizens today requires from the Church a renewed sense of being and becoming a community of disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. The Church – comprised of both the ordained and the laity, is a *communio in missio*, and is called and sent for the life of the world. Hence, all the members are tasked with the evangelizing mission of making the presence of Christ in the world experienced by all peoples.

⁶⁹ XXIII Ordinary Synod of Bishops, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith. *Instrumentum Laboris*. Available in:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html. (Accessed on 01 February 2012).

⁷⁰ XXIII Ordinary Synod of Bishops, Message to the People of God. Available in

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20121026_message-synod_en.html. (Accessed on 01 February 2012).

⁷¹ John Paul II *Discourse to the XIX Assembly of CELAM*, Port-au-Prince, 9 March 1983, no. 3 in XXIII Ordinary Synod of Bishops, Message to the People of God. Available in

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20121026_message-synod_en.html. (Accessed on 01 February 2012).

Moreover, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines the “New Evangelization” as “the call to all followers of Christ to be formed in the faith, celebrate the faith, and be witnesses to the ends of the earth, proclaiming the Good News to all people everywhere, starting with those in our own Church.”⁷² In order to accomplish this seemingly daunting task, the Church and its members must be sensitive to the “signs of the times” and must be able to read them in the light of faith. This truth about the need to reawaken the Church has already been affirmed by the Second Vatican Council fifty years ago and in this day and age, it is good to for Christians to be reminded of this ever-pressing need to be mindful of the situations of the people. Indeed, good evangelization must always respond to the “signs of the times.”⁷³ Hence, the plea for a more “humble and listening church” has become the clarion call during the synod.

Taking the cue from the Universal Church, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) in their recently concluded General Assembly that coincided with the federation’s fortieth anniversary of establishment, said that in their longing to be more responsive to the need of the people of God, they discerned the paths of mission to which the Spirit of God is beckoning them.⁷⁴ After carefully reading the signs of the times, the social mega-trends in Asia and Asia’s unique ecclesial realities; and after analyzing the unfolding challenges and opportunities, the bishops of Asia realized that they need to foster among the follower of Jesus Christ in this part of the world “a more Christ-experiencing and Christ-witnessing community.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, they recognized that the same Spirit who animated Vatican II now summons them to become renewed evangelizers for a ‘New Evangelization.’ According to the Asian bishops, “It is the Spirit who can fashion this newness in our Church and in each one of us. It is the Spirit who enables us to respond credibly and effectively to the social mega-trends and ecclesial realities that our Assembly has discerned.”⁷⁶

The Global Phenomenon of Climate Change and Its Impact to the Biosphere

One of the megatrends that have been identified by the bishops of Asia is ecology. Natural disasters in many parts of the Asian soil have prompted the bishops to consider care for creation as one of its priority areas in this day and age. They note: “Even now hundreds of thousands are ecological refugees as they search for safer places away from floods and rising sea levels. Climate change is wreaking havoc on agricultural production and on sources of livelihood.”⁷⁷ Indeed, not only for the people of Asia but for the global citizens of today, what other pressing issues on earth could be grimmer and pervasive other than the global phenomenon of climate change? It is a reality that

⁷² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The New Evangelization and Social Justice*. Accessed on 31 January 2013. Available in <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/new-evangelization-social-justice.cfm>.

⁷³ Seán McDonagh, SSC, *The Synod: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*. Accessed on 29 January 2013. Available in <http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie/2012/10/the-synod-the-new-evangelization-for-the-transmission-of-the-christian-faith-october-7-22-2012>.

⁷⁴ Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, *Renewed Evangelizers for New Evangelization in Asia. Message of X FABC Plenary Assembly*, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ FABC, “Final Document: FABC at Forty Years- Responding to the Challenges of Asia – A New Evangelization, FABC Papers no. 138, 22.

has wrought havoc to many lives the world over but most especially to the people in developing nations that have been affected most by the natural disasters that have happened and are continuously occurring. Truly, the earth – our home is in danger. And the Church, as one of the most influential voices must speak up and join hands with other groups in calling for a stop to abuses inflicted upon the environment.

Recent scientific studies show that the average temperature of the earth's surface has risen significantly and is predicted to continue to rise for years to come, basically due to carbon emissions produced by human activities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports: "Taken as a whole, the range of published evidence indicates that the net damage costs of climate change are likely to be significant and to increase over time."⁷⁸

In the 21st United Nations Climate Change Conference or more popularly known as "COP 21" (Conference of Parties involving 55 nation-states and other organizations) that was held in Paris, France from 30 November to 12 December 2015, realizing the seriousness of the effects of global warming upon humans and non-human living species such as crops and scarcity of water, representatives of 195 countries signed the first-ever universal and legally-binding global climate deal but will only be enforced in the year 2020. Among other mitigating measures that were agreed upon, the most important action governments have avowed is the a long-term goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels as well as to aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C, since this would significantly reduce risks and the impacts of climate change.⁷⁹

Climate Change: A Moral and Spiritual Issue in the Era of the 'New Evangelization'

Prior to the summit, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) signed a petition for the COP 21 delegates to keep in mind not only the technical aspects of the climate change but also look at its moral and ethical dimensions. Moreover, part of their appeal is to "adopt a fair, transformational, and legally binding agreement based on our vision of the world that recognizes the need to live in harmony with nature, and to guarantee the fulfilment of human rights for all, including those of indigenous peoples, women, and youth workers."⁸⁰ The Church in Asia, being a primary witness to the damaging effects of climate change in recent years, cannot help but regard as its moral responsibility to advocate for the respect and care for God's creation. In 2013, in the final statement after the Second FABC Climate Change Seminar, bishops and priests of Asia declared:

As Church, we are challenged by this grave situation since climate change is an ethical, moral and religious issue. The Church in Asia, although representing a small

⁷⁸ "The consequences of climate change", NASA. Accessed on 03 April 2016. Available in <http://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>.

⁷⁹ "Paris Agreement", European Commission. Accessed on 03 April 2016. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris/index_en.htm.

⁸⁰ "Appeal to COP 21 Negotiating Parties". Written in coordination with Catholic networks CIDSE and Caritas Internationalis with the sponsorship of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. <http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/CLIMATE%20CHANGE%20CONTINENTAL%20APPEAL%202015.pdf>

percentage (3 per cent) of the total population, is not deterred from issuing a clarion call. We cannot but raise our voice on behalf of those people most impacted by climate change. Our voice must be matched by choices both at personal level as Christians as well as at ecclesial level as communities.⁸¹

Moreover, the statement strongly advocates that each and every Christian in Asia, especially in the age of the ‘new evangelization’ must be proactive in promoting critical reflection among all Christian communities on the development policies and programs of governments that adversely affect the poor and the environment. The bishops of Asia, expressing the urgency to act based on ‘signs of the times,’ remarks: “The need of the hour is to live an eco-spirituality in tune with the Word of God, a spirituality marked by action on behalf of the exploited poor and the exploited nature.”⁸²

Not too long after the bishops of Asia have collectively voiced their concern for the environment, Pope Francis picking up from the suggestions of the synod Fathers promulgated his post-synodal exhortation on the ‘new evangelization’ titled “*Evangelii Gaudium*” in which he wrote the following, which he believes must be an integral part of evangelization today:

There are other weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations. Here I would make my own the touching and prophetic lament voiced some years ago by the bishops of the Philippines: “An incredible variety of insects lived in the forest and were busy with all kinds of tasks... Birds flew through the air, their bright plumes and varying calls adding color and song to the green of the forests... God intended this land for us, his special creatures, but not so that we might destroy it and turn it into a wasteland... After a single night’s rain, look at the chocolate brown rivers in your locality and remember that they are carrying the life blood of the land into the sea... How can fish swim in sewers like the Pasig and so many more rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonder world of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?”⁸³

⁸¹ FABC, “Climate Change, Asia Impacts and Response”.

<http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/II%20FABC%20Climate%20Change%20Final%20Final%20Statement%202014%20with%20list%20of%20participants.pdf>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 215.

The Church's Teaching on the Environment Through the Years

It was mentioned in the earlier part of this book that the Catholic Church has been quite silent about ecology and care for the environment for many centuries and it has been blamed for being instrumental in violating the inherent rights of non-human creatures because of its antiquated theology that is rooted in a distorted understanding of the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. The Catholic Church's teaching in this area is in its infancy as evidenced by the absence of teachings that deal with environment and the natural world in church councils prior to Vatican II. Today, however, the Church's apparent openness to dialogue with science in order to effectively address the issue of climate change has become a breakthrough insofar as the relationship between science and religion is concerned. Columban Priest and well-known ecologist Sean McDonagh believes that it is beginning to dawn on many people that healing nature and preserving the stability of the biosphere is the central task of those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus in today's world.⁸⁴ He had noticed that the consequences for human beings and the wider earth-community of not addressing climate change was spelt out graphically in a recent document from the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences entitled "Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene in April 2011."⁸⁵ In that document, the Vatican presages the faithful that 'warming and associated effects on the Earth System caused by the cumulative CO2 emissions that remain in the atmosphere for millennia may soon become unmanageable.'

Perhaps unknown to most Catholic Christians, some ecclesial documents written immediately after Vatican II have already dealt with the issue of respecting the integrity of creation. To mention a few – Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* underlined that respect for the universal purpose of creation is needed for authentic development to happen⁸⁶. These words were prompted by an increasing cases of suffering and poverty heightened by a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The World Synod of Bishops in 1971 in its final document *Justicia in Mundo* similarly voiced their concern that the earth's resources are not infinite and that they must be preserved. The bishops declared: "Concern for the environment is expressed in the context of discussions of development. Richer nations are using too much energy and resources, to the detriment of nature. Conservation of natural resources is needed."⁸⁷

Pope John Paul II, the pope who paved the way for the ecological awareness and conversion to take its rightful place in the Social Teachings of the Church. Even if already in 1971, through the Social Encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens*,⁸⁸ Pope Paul VI identified environmental issues as an urgent and wide-ranging social issue that concerns the whole human family and thereby urged all Christians to take responsibility for the future, it was Pope John Paul II who persistently called upon Catholics to consider ecological issues as part of the social responsibilities of human beings.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁸⁵ Sean McDonagh, SSC, "The Synod: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith." Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland. Accessed on 12 December 2015. <http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie/2012/10/the-synod-the-new-evangelization-for-the-transmission-of-the-christian-faith-october-7-22-2012/>

⁸⁶ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*.

⁸⁷ World Synod of Bishops, *Justicia in Mundo*, 11.

⁸⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 21.

Earlier in his pontificate, Pope John Paul II had already brought to the consciousness of the bishops, priests, and laity the task of caring for creation. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II, in his discourse on development, underscores that the moral character of development cannot exclude “respect for the beings which constitute the natural world.” This respect for the cosmos, Pope John Paul II writes, is grounded on a threefold consideration. The first consideration is call against anthropocentrism. The pope explains that there must be a “growing awareness of the fact that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate - animals, plants, the natural elements - simply as one wishes, according to one’s own economic needs... On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos.”⁸⁹

The second consideration is based on the realization – which, according to the late pontiff “is perhaps more urgent - that natural resources are limited; some are not, as it is said, renewable. Using them as if they were inexhaustible, with absolute dominion, seriously endangers their availability not only for the present generation but above all for generations to come.”⁹⁰ The third and last consideration, the encyclical notes: “refers directly to the consequences of a certain type of development on the quality of life in the industrialized zones. We all know that the direct or indirect result of industrialization is, ever more frequently, the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population.”⁹¹

Pope John Paul II’s message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in 1990 has been regarded by many as the foundational document of the Church’s doctrine on the Integrity of Creation. Entitled “Peace with God the Creator; Peace with all of Creation,” the message of the late pontiff exhorts all Christians to treat all living species on earth with utmost respect for they, too, possess the same dignity that we have as “children of God.”⁹² Furthermore, the pope laments the reality that in today’s world, “the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness - both individual and collective - are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence.”⁹³

While awakening the entire Church to the present realities that affect the earth, Pope John Paul II offers an alternative to the prevailing lifestyle of the people. It is a way of life that is not death-dealing but life-giving; one that recognizes that human beings are not “masters” of creation but stewards of all that is on earth. He thinks that the solution to the urgent ecological problem is a *metanoia*, a conversion. The pope expresses this in the following words:

...the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis.
If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking,

⁸⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 34.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Pope John Paul II. “*Peace with God the Creator; Peace with all of Creation*”. Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1992., 4.

⁹³ Ibid., 8.

we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. *Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.*⁹⁴

Moreover, in 1991, Pope John Paul II follows up his earlier calls for a greater consciousness among believers to have a concern for the created order. Instilling in the minds and hearts of the people that selfishness and greed have no place in a rightful Christian living in today's world and emphasizing that man ought to carry out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, he writes in *Centesimus Annus*:

At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray.⁹⁵

Finally, in *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II reminds Christians of today that God has entrusted the responsibility of caring for the natural world to human beings. The pope says: "As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity, of his life, not only for the present but also for future generations."⁹⁶

It was also during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II that the Catholic Church signed a joint statement with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I accepting the fact that a *metanoia* is needed – on the part of individual Christians and as members of the Body of Christ that we call "Church:"

What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an inner change of heart, which can lead to a change in lifestyle and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Pope John Paul II. "Peace with God the Creator; Peace with all of Creation", 13. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 37.

⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no.42.

⁹⁷ "God has not Abandoned the World: A Joint Statement of Pope John Paul II of Rome and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople", *Saint Paul's Greek Orthodox Church Website*. Accessed on 12 December 2015.

The Catholic Church believes that humanity must change its attitudes and mindsets, its way of life if they want to change the world. This transformation to an ecological consciousness is already underway, but it needs the cooperation, the commitment and the best efforts of the whole human community, according to Denis Edwards. Sean McDonagh passionately suggests that with such dire consequences for humanity and the whole of creation, surely Pope John Paul II's call to "ecological conversion" ought to be at the heart of the 'New Evangelization.'

For his part, Pope Benedict XVI following Pope John Paul II's pronouncements made it clear that part of Christian witnessing to the gospel is their care for all that God has created. The "green pope," as many advocates of the integrity of creation call him, has brought to the fore the issue of climate change as considers it as one of the most important concerns of the Church today. He said:

*The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction.*⁹⁸

Furthermore, in what is considered as one of the most important social encyclicals in the post-modern times, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI reiterated his predecessor's call: "*Nature expresses a design of love and truth. It is prior to us, and it has been given to us by God as the setting for our life. Nature speaks to us of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:20) and his love for humanity. It is destined to be —recapitulated— in Christ at the end of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:19-20). Thus it too is a — 'vocation'.*"⁹⁹ Also in a message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in 2010, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the need for a "greater sense of intergenerational solidarity" to protect whatever is left of the environment. During his encounter with the youth, of Italy, Benedict XVI rallied them to be stewards of creation: "There needs to be a decisive 'yes' in defense of creation and a strong commitment to reverse those trends that risk creating situations of irreparable degradation."¹⁰⁰ Denis Edwards remarked that the two pontiffs articulate that environmental ecology and human ecology belong together, interrelated in the prior gift of the Creator, the God who, according to Pope Benedict XVI is — "Truth and Love."¹⁰¹

More than two years later, Pope Francis, despite seeming pressures from many sectors of global society not to proceed with the release of the document, the Vatican officially made public *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on care for our common home. Not unknown to many, some financial capitalists and those in the business of manufacturing vehicles, oil firms, and coal-based electric generation – all dependent on the burning of fossil fuels have made it all up to discredit Pope Francis, telling him to leave science to the scientists.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Message to Italian Youth*, September 2007.

¹⁰¹ Denis Edwards, "Ecology and Faith in Jesus Christ: Recent Catholic Teaching". Catholic Earth Care Australia. Accessed on 31 January 2013.

Laudato Si' is perhaps the most talked-about papal document in recent times for it is not only being discussed in Catholic theological circles; *Laudato Si'* has become a subject of academic discourses, debates, and informal arguments involving various disciplines and areas of societal life. Indeed, while *Laudato Si'* is clearly a Catholic document, a valuable addition to the body of the Church's social teachings, it is nevertheless addressed to the global citizenry as an appeal to create a dialogue about how various groups are to join efforts in the advocacy of shaping the future of our common home, the planet earth. The encyclical, which is comprised of five chapters and 246 articles, offers a gist of the major environmental challenges by considering the scientific data. Francis then proceeds with an analysis of the deeper causes of these ecological situations in our society that is dominated by selfish motivations bent on profit without concern for the needs of the poor and the integrity of creation. The encyclical is specific in singling out the main causes of the destruction of the planet. Even if there are noticeable anthropocentric slants in the encyclical, putting humanity at the center of ecological endeavors, one could sense the genuineness of Francis' motivation – his only motivation is to inculcate in the consciousness of all, believers and non-believers care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.

The Role of Catholic Educational Institutions in Educating about Care for Creation

Catholic educational establishments play an essential and crucial role in the Church's mission of evangelization. Although "born from the heart of the Church"¹⁰² is a description that Pope John Paul II ascribes specifically to catholic universities, it still adequately describes all catholic educational institutions.¹⁰³ The Second Vatican Council also affirms the significance of a Catholic school in the formation of values in the young. The council says: "It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life."¹⁰⁴

Pope Francis reminds people in the academe that Catholic education has, as its aim, not only the full development of every person, but are also called upon to offer, "with full respect for the freedom of each person and using the methods appropriate to the scholastic environment, the Christian belief, that is, to present Jesus Christ as the meaning of life, the cosmos and history."¹⁰⁵ In the age of the 'new evangelization,' the context where Catholic schools find itself is not so much different from where Jesus began to proclaim the Good News – a 'Galilee of the nations,' a crossroads of people, diverse in terms of race, culture and religion.' Here, our Catholic Schools are called to maintain what Pope Francis calls 'a courageous and innovative fidelity that enables Catholic identity to encounter the various 'souls' of multicultural society.'¹⁰⁶ This proclamation includes the Christian vocation to be protectors of God's creation.

¹⁰² Pope John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 1.

¹⁰³ "Manual for Christian Formation." Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines. Available at www.ceap.org.ph. The proponent of this study is part of the ad hoc committee that was formed to draft the manual.

¹⁰⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Pope Francis "Address to the Participants in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

One of the ideal places where ecological values may be formed in the hearts and minds of the young is the Catholic school. By its very nature, they have a moral and Christian responsibility to educate students to care for the earth. Catholic schools, more than just being a venue for the doing environmental education, may provide ‘theological and spiritual frameworks within which young people can think about environmental issues and deal with them through the wisdom of the faith.’¹⁰⁷ Enabling them to espouse a holistic worldview based on the idea of stewardship of God’s creation will in turn translate to having right relationships with the Creator God and the natural world. By integrating care for creation in the curriculum and creating a culture of concern for the environment in the academic institutions, not only the students but all sectors of the academic community will have a lifestyle change – one that contributes to the flourishing of the environment and not to the further destruction of what is left of it. In this way, Catholic schools will be able to achieve what Vatican II and the recent popes have envisioned them to be.

The Role of lasallian Institutions in Educating about Care for Creation

The Brothers of Christian Schools is a religious institute of men dedicated to the mission of evangelization through the running of Christian schools that was founded by Saint John Baptist de la Salle, a 16th century French cleric who established Christian schools in Reims, France because he was moved by the plight of the poor who have no access to education during his time. In his lifetime, John Baptist de la Salle had to give up many things – from his inheritance from his family to being a canon of the Cathedral of Reims – in order for him to effectively fulfill his mission – his dream of establishing schools that would cater to the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor youth in his hometown. This vision of establishing schools that utilize an innovative means to form young minds was not unmet with opposition. Nevertheless De La Salle and his first group of teachers who later on became the first Brothers succeeded in creating a network of quality schools throughout France that featured teaching in the vernacular, students grouped according to capability and accomplishment, integration of religious education with other subject areas, well-prepared teachers with a sense of vocation and mission, and the involvement of parents in the educational process.¹⁰⁸ Today, there are around 560 Lasallian educational establishments around the world which is assisted by more than 73,000 lay colleagues, teach over 900,000 students in over 80 countries.¹⁰⁹

The Brothers of Christian Schools arrived in the Philippines in 1911 upon the instruction of the pope who was requested by then archbishop of Manila, the Most Rev. Jeremias Harty, D.D., who was once a student of the Christian Brothers in St. Louis, Missouri, to intervene so they could open a school in Manila. There are, at present, 16 La Salle schools in the country. Each of these Lasallian educational institutions is committed to the help through the education of the youth to uplift the lives of the most vulnerable in the Philippine society. The 16 Lasallian institutions in the country are the following: De La Salle University, Manila (Established in 1911), De La Salle

¹⁰⁷ “Leaflet for Catholic Schools”. Alliance of Religions and Conservation. Accessed on 09 January 2016.

¹⁰⁸ For a complete story on the life, works, and mission of Saint John Baptist de la Salle, visit the official webpage of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools at <http://www.lasalle.org/en/who-are-we/st-john-baptist-de-la-salle/>.

¹⁰⁹ George Morgan, F.S.C., *Lasallian Education - 150 Years in Toronto* (Toronto: Christian Brothers, 2010), 89.

Andres Soriano Memorial College, Toledo, Cebu (Became a member of DLSP in 2006), De La Salle Araneta University (Became a member of DLSP in 2002), De La Salle College of Saint Benilde (Established in 1988), De La Salle Health Sciences Campus (Established in 1979), De La Salle John Bosco College (Became a member of DLSP in 2006), De La Salle Lipa (Established in 1962), De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (Established in 1977), De La Salle Santiago Zobel School (Established in 1978), Jaime Hilario Integrated School- La Salle, Bagac, Bataan (Established in 2006), La Salle Academy, Iligan (Established in 1958), La Salle College Antipolo (Established in 1986), La Salle Green Hills (Established in 1959), La Salle College, Ozamis (Originally opened by the Jesuits but turned over to La Salle in 1994), Saint Joseph-La Salle (Established in 1960), University of St. La Salle, Bacolod (Established in 1952).

The Lasallian spirituality, having been influenced by the spiritualities of the great spiritual thinkers and reformers of 17th century France and founders of new forms of religious orders in the likes of Nicholas Barré, Pierre de Bérulle, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, is basically characterized by three important elements which have guided the Founder in his personal life and in the process of his founding of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. There are: the spirit of faith, zeal for service, communion in mission. To keep the ‘spirit of faith’ means to ‘see as God sees,’ and this presupposes that we are not dealing with a remote God but someone with whom we form a relationship.¹¹⁰ The spirit of faith, in the mind of Saint John Baptist de La Salle must be translated into zeal for service. As the gospels teach that love of God cannot be separated from service of neighbor, Saint La Salle, in his meditation on the Feast of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr, notes:

Was he [Stephen] not, in fact, inspired by this spirit when he spoke with such great zeal to the Jews and when several of them who disputed with him could not resist the Holy Spirit, who was in him and inspiring his zeal? You ought to make known by your conduct, as he [Stephen] did, that you are true disciples of Jesus Christ, having only God in view in all your actions and announcing, with as much boldness and intrepidity as he did, the maxims of the holy Gospel. In all this what must strengthen your zeal as well as your faith is the fact that you announce these truths in your position as ministers of God¹¹¹

Vital to fulfillment of the mission of educating the poor youth, is the spirit of communion¹¹² among those who share the vision. Saint La Salle himself embodies this ideal and had formed a group of teachers who live together in community, which later on became a religious institute, a group of consecrated men who served as elder brothers to the poor youth who, according to Saint La Salle are in need most of spiritual care. Rummery notes: “This essential “spirit of community” has

¹¹⁰ Gerard Rummery, “Lasallian Spirituality”, The Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. Accessed on 04 April 2016.

¹¹¹ Augustine Loes, FSC, and Francis Huether, FSC, *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*. Trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC, and Augustine Loes, FSC (USA: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994), 20.

¹¹² Some communities, particularly in the United States, would rather use community instead of communion.

become enshrined in the Lasallian heritage through the expression used by the Brothers in the first vowed formula of consecration, “together and by association.”¹¹³

The Lasallian Educational Mission and the Ecological Crisis

In the earlier part of this chapter, we mentioned that the former superior general of the Brothers of Christian Schools, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, after listening to some views of the brothers and other Lasallian partners considered education for the protection of the environment as an essential component of the Lasallian education mission. Following the example of the Founder who read the ‘signs of the time’ and responded to it proactively in the spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission, he urged the brothers as well as those who are directly involved in designing the curriculum in the schools to integrate this education for sustainable development in the lessons. The former superior general also realizes the urgency of developing a collective response from the Lasallian world to the global phenomenon of climate change and sees ‘renewed evangelization’ as an effective tool towards attaining the vision of a ‘sustainable earth.’ More than integrating this idea of caring for the earth in the curriculum, he believes that if each and every Lasallian in our schools would have a change in attitudes, lifestyle, and convictions, from one that destroys the earth to an attitude of ‘love and solicitude’ for mother earth, this place, the earth, would be a more habitable place and the ill effects of climate change will be lessened.

The present superior general, Brother Robert Schieler, FSC, adhering to the words of his predecessor, spoke of the need to craft an institute-wide environmental policy on many occasions but specifically in his 2015 Pastoral Letter to the Brothers.¹¹⁴ He recalled, in that letter, that in the history of the Institute, there are brothers who made significant contributions in the area of the natural sciences, in the likes of Brother Marie-Victorin, who is hailed as “Father of the Montreal Botanical Garden,” making a positive effect on the environment. Brother Schieler further writes: “As an international Institute dedicated to human and Christian education we should be especially attentive to caring for our common home. While environmental issues and community service projects are addressed and promoted in individual schools, *Laudato Si*’ is a good impetus for us to consider crafting an Institute-wide environmental policy.”¹¹⁵ Following Pope Francis’ agenda for the new evangelization, he challenges the brothers to respond to the Church’s invitation to care for the earth in their own way and in their respective places. In emphasizing the social dimension of evangelization that every Lasallian institution must promote, Br. Schieler used the following words of Thomas Groome: “Every graduate of a Catholic school should emerge with a deep commitment to promoting the quality of life, to justice as a seamless garment, and to protecting the integrity of

¹¹³ Gerard Rummery, “Lasallian Spirituality” in The Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. Accessed on 04 April 2016.

¹¹⁴ The Pastoral Letter entitled “A Gospel Adventure: Outside the Camp” is Br. Robert Schieler’s second pastoral letter following his election as superior general on May 2014.

¹¹⁵ Br. Robert Schieler, FSC, *A Gospel Adventure: Outside the Camp*. Pastoral Letter to the Brothers 2015. (Rome: Brothers of Christian Schools, 2015), 24.

creation.... They ought to come out committed to oppose all sinful social structures, and to help reform them or create new ones.”¹¹⁶

During his welcome address to the participants of the International Session on Lasallian Research held at the Generalate of the La Salle Brothers in Rome, Italy, he encouraged Lasallian researchers from various continents to conduct investigations that will impact the environment as the Institute is committed to ensure a sustainable future for those entrusted to our care and to the larger society. He adds: “*We have been forcefully reminded of both the interconnectedness and the fragility of creation and our planet by Pope Francis' Laudato Si. As Lasallians with three centuries of educational innovations we can contribute to making sense of the postmodern world for all those entrusted to our care.*”¹¹⁷ Coming up, therefore, with a concrete spiritual framework for caring for the earth for Lasallians is much needed as the Church calls upon educational institutions to be at the forefront of its evangelizing mission, which includes, the proclamation of the gospel of creation – a gospel that impels us to see God in the created order.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith?* 251, as quoted in: Miller, FSC, Ernest, *Let Us Bear Witness to the Reign of God: Reimagining Lasallian Education and Evangelization*, a doctoral dissertation, The Catholic Theological Union, May 2015, p. 176 as quoted in *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹⁷ Br. Robert Schieler, Opening Remarks at the International Session of Lasallian Studies. Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools, Rome, Italy. October 12, 2015.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ECOLOGICAL INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS OF THE PHILIPPINE LASALLIAN FAMILY

De La Salle Philippines, as a network of academic institutions in the country, is one of the pioneers in advocating the protection and preservation of the environment through education and other means. “Greening” the Philippine society has been one of DLSP’s programs right from its inception. Realizing the seriousness of the ecological crisis, Lasallians in the Philippines are admonished not to remain indifferent to the many abuses inflicted upon the environment or to slumber in apathy in the midst of rampant destruction of our natural resources that threaten their very future. At the onset of this new millennium, individual and groups coming from different La Salle schools in the country have taken initiatives in helping achieve this goal. An example of which is the “Zero Styro” program, an idea that was conceived by the Student Council of DLSU way back in Academic Year 2007-2008 but was eventually adopted as a University policy the following academic year because of its successful implementation. It motivated nearby commercial establishments to sell goods by using paper instead of styro and plastic products for packaging.

The Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE)

The need for a more concerted effort in protecting and preserving what is left of our environment and natural resources was recognized during the Philippine Lasallian Family under the leadership of Br. Armin Luistro FSC, then Visitor of the Brothers of Christian Schools during its Synod in the year 1999. The participants were invited to reflect on the question “Are we ‘good stewards’ of GOD’s Creation?” As a result, one of the ten ministry action plans of that historic district synod is to intensify the existing environmental protection and preservation efforts at that time and to set up a central office that will gather and facilitate environmental programs and initiatives throughout the country. Thus, the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE) was born. LIFE is geared not only towards perfunctory environmental clean-up projects and tree-planting activities and the like, but towards a sustainable environmental development through the education and values formation of Lasallians and the Philippine society.¹¹⁸ By setting up this institute, the programs conceptualized in Luzon may be replicated by the Lasallians in Mindanao and Visayas. Thus, their programs will have a wider reach and more people will be involved in the noble cause of protecting the earth. The following is the Vision Statement of LIFE:

LIFE envisions a society of people who not only love their environment but understand and respect it as well. We see Lasallians and others actively learning about what the environment is, its importance and how it affects our lives. We see the communities participating in data and information collection and sharing

¹¹⁸ “Genesis of LIFE,” Lasallian Institute for the Environment. Accessed 09 March 2016.
<http://www.life.net.ph/genesis.html>.

their knowledge and learning with other people. They do this not only inside the classroom but outside the real world as well.¹¹⁹

In order to achieve this vision, LIFE has taken as its “Mission Statement” the following:

We, the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE), fulfilling our roles as stewards of God’s creation, aim to educate children, teachers, Lasallians and others in Natural Resources Management (NRM). We aim to help them not only to love and appreciate the environment, but also to understand and take care of it as well. LIFE strives to provide education with values formation.

Guiding Principles for the Philippine Lasallian Family

The First Lasallian Family Convocation of 2003 held at the then Provincialate of the Brothers of Christian Schools of the Philippine District at La Salle Green Hills has produced three important documents that call for the reinforcement among individuals and institutions in the then Philippine District, of the sense of Lasallian identity and the deepening of the Lasallian charism. These documents are: the (1) Foundational Principles of Lasallian Formation, (2) the Principles of Lasallian Education in the Philippines, and (3) the Principles of Lasallian Social Development. The documents have as their foundational principles the three values fundamental to Lasallian identity: the spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission.¹²⁰ In the last document, one of the principles stated is to for the Institute to “bring forth awareness and a deeper understanding of social realities”¹²¹ In explaining this principle, the document furthers: “Lasallian institutions, must strive to develop among its members greater recognition of the realities of human suffering and the stewardship role that each shares in preserving the integrity of God’s creation and creating a humane and just society.”¹²² To achieve this objective, the document states that foremost, an awareness advocacy in a “prolonged process of formation-conscientization that is integral to our educational mission”¹²³ must be done in the schools.

Environmental Educational Plan for Sustainable Development

In 2012, the Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools, motivated by the Institute’s 44th General Chapter and the 2006 International Assembly of Lasallians—both directing all members of the Lasallian family to develop formation programs that deal with respect for life and preservation of nature, released a MEL Bulletin that features the “Environmental Educational Plan for Sustainable Development”¹²⁴ of the Lasallian family worldwide. The document is aimed at

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Philippine Lasallian Family, *Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family* (Mandaluyong: Brothers of Christian Schools, Philippine District, 2003), 2.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Jose Martin Montoya Durá, FSC, Environmental Education for sustainable development, MEL Bulletin No. 46, October, 2012, p. 39.

generating greater interest among members of the Lasallian family to create environmental programs and activities. While not intending to come up with a universal approach, the documents acknowledge that each school must draw up their programme of environmental activities on the basis of their particular situation.¹²⁵

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However, the document also lays down the essentials of a common approach that will facilitate the promotion of the “integrity of creation and safeguarding of creation as a Christian value”¹²⁶ in Lasallian educational institutions. Four key result areas were identified with their own specific objectives:

Area	Overall Objective
1. Internal Organisation and Funding	To establish organisational structures to improve environmental initiatives at all levels coordinated by the Institute, and to obtain financial resources to promote environmental education.
2. Formation	The objective is that everyone belonging to the De La Salle Institute should become aware of environmental issues and ethics, so that their decisions and attitudes can have an impact on the education of their pupils ; and that raising of awareness regarding environmental issues can be promoted by both the school curriculum as well as by instruction in Catholic doctrine
3. Transparency and Good Practices	Promote in Lasallian schools environmental education lines of action and projects, taking into account good environmental practices, democracy based on virtues, equality of the sexes respecting their basic differences, respectful tolerance of other cultures, etc., maintaining in this way Christian social attitudes which help to safeguard creation, and offering them as present-day cultural models of sustainable development.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

4. Internal and External Participation	Be the motive force behind the expansion of environmental education, combining responsible collaboration and the social demands of Lasallian schools, as a response to the environmental problems which hinder peace and justice among nations.
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Figure 2.1
Key Result Areas of the Environmental Education Plan of the Institute¹²⁷

Moreover, the author of the document makes it clear that it “responds to the needs of the Lasallian Family in its commitment to promote in its area of competence and by its role as an energizing agent, environmental education, as well as other educational schemes to promote sustainable development.”¹²⁸

Facilities and Environmental Program Management (FEPM)

When Br. Ricky Laguda FSC assumed the position of Sector Leader of the Philippine Sector of the Lasallian East Asia District (LEAD), he initiated the drafting of a Modern Conduct of Schools, a manual of governance for brothers and key decision makers in Lasallian academic institutions in Philippines. It is an adaptation of Saint John Baptist de la Salle’s Conduct of Schools, a manual he himself wrote for his brothers and teachers on how to go about education children in Christian schools. Part of the revision process is a reflection and assessment on how “Lasallian” are our schools in the Philippines. Taking into account St. La Salle’s educational ministry as a response to the “signs of the times” the framers of this new manual included environmental awareness and education and even dedicated one section on how to manage programs related to this.

The Facilities and Environmental Program Management Manual is a set of principles and standards that guide De La Salle Schools in drafting facilities and environmental policies and programs. As a product of a collaborative effort of the various Lasallian institutions, this section of the Modern Conduct of Schools is particularly geared towards motivating Lasallians, especially the administrators of schools to take into consideration our environment before making a decision concerning all aspects of the educational ministry. The framers of this manual makes clarifies the objective of this project in its Introduction:

For any initiative to be sustainable, not only must it consider economical efficiency but also its environmental impact. Not only can green practices and processes help protect the environment, it may also contribute to the schools’ over-all campus development programs. The manual takes into consideration our schools’ sustainability towards future generations—adopting policies, principles and practices that improve the quality of life of employees, the students and their

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 22.

families. The FEPM Manual will guide the schools in managing their facilities and the environmental programs relevant in managing these facilities.¹²⁹

Part of the process is the self-assessment phase using a tool that benchmarks current practices and processes with local and international standards. After which, each school is invited to come up with its own environmental policies. It has ten sub-categories.

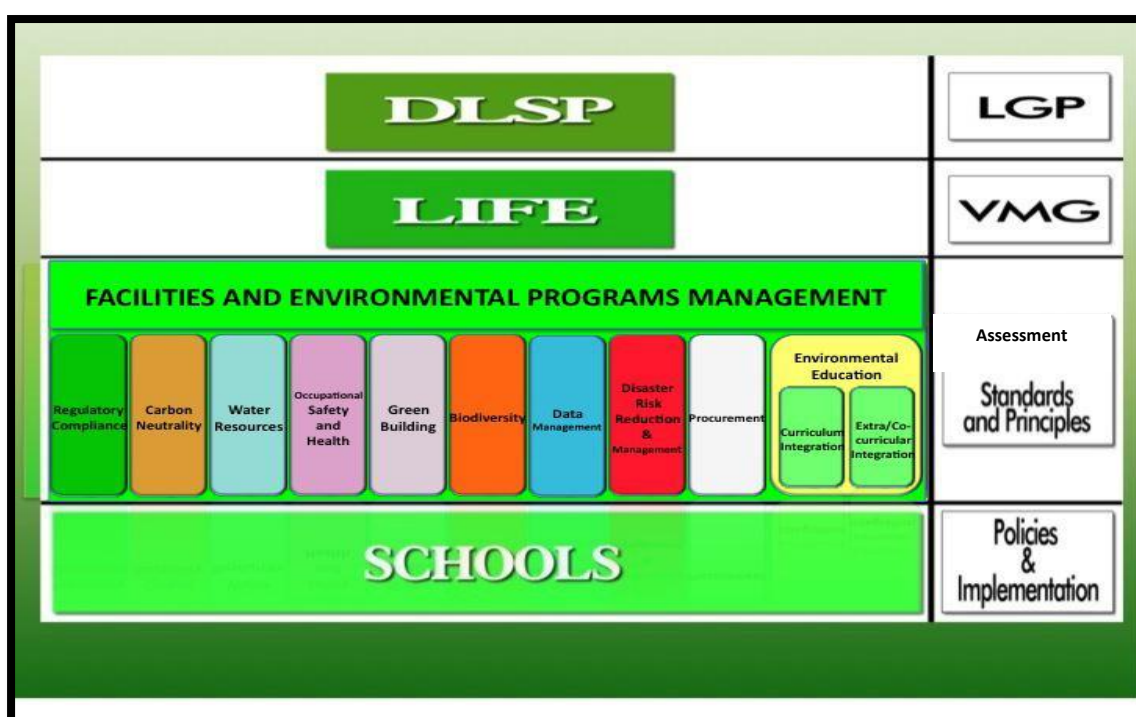


Figure 2.2
Modern Conduct of Schools
Facilities and Environmental Programs Management¹³⁰

1. Regulatory Compliance

Regulatory Compliance means being able to conform to the laws concerning pollution, waste segregation, proper disposal of wastes, etc. such as Republic Act No. 8749 or The Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, Republic Act No. 9275 or The Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, and the national and local ordinances on waste management. It also ensures that all Lasallian institutions in the country meet the standards set by the Philippine sector concerning air pollution, water conservation, and waste management. The manual expresses the rationale behind this principle:

¹²⁹ De La Salle Philippines, *Modern Conduct of Schools: Facilities and Environment Programs Management* (Mandaluyong: DLSP, 2015), 5.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

All Lasallian schools must, as part of its commitment to promote stewardship of God's creation, create and promote a sustainable campus. This takes into account the belief by each institution that creation of pollution of any of its activities is an unsustainable practice. Constant evaluation and a holistic approach to pollution management is an integral part in the development of campus where God's presence is lived and shared.¹³¹

2. Green Buildings

Following the example of the bigger and older Lasallian institutions in the country, the “Green Building” program was institutionalized through the FEMP. True to its being green, De La Salle Philippines would like all the buildings in all Lasallian educational institutions in the country to be energy efficient, i.e., lower energy is consumed. In consultation with experts on this area, information on cost-effective measures to enhance energy efficiency and the integration of renewable energies is provided to school.¹³² The manual also states that “Best Practices” must be made available by the Lasallian institutions so that it could be replicated and adopted by others. According to the manual, “Green Building” targets the lessening of energy demand and use, “resulting in economic savings from smaller fuel bills.”¹³³

3. Carbon Neutrality

Carbon Neutrality seeks to achieve a “green” educational network that minimizes demand for and consumption of energy from fossil fuel sources¹³⁴ The initial conceptualizers thought of having a “Carbon Zero” campaign at first but then it was realized that it is almost impossible to achieve a “zero” carbon footprint in our schools. Therefore, having a “Carbon Neutral” project would be more viable. In order to achieve its objectives, all La Salle schools must keep watch of the carbon footprints specifically in the following areas which are deemed to be the main contributors of carbon emission: (1) Over all Campus Environment Management, which includes all aspects of energy consumption in schools, (2) Energy Users (light, air-condition/ chillers, fans, motors, pumps, engines, turbines, furnaces, and other raw fuel), (3) Transportation, (4) Livestock, because some La Salle schools have farms, and (5) Wastes.

4. Occupational Safety and Health

In the area of Occupational Safety and Health, all Lasallian schools must be actively engaged in the holistic development and wellbeing of its community. Administrators must ensure that the working and learning environments in our campuses must be safe, secure, and conducive for all aspects of human development. Furthermore, the school environment must enhance productivity and effectivity among individuals and units, and this includes areas like the working space and

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid

¹³⁴ Ibid.

condition, roadways and gates, parking space, and personal facilities, water supply and dealing with persons with disabilities.

5. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is also part of the FEPM. The manual states: “The call for a Disaster Risk Reduction Management - Emergency Preparedness (DRRM-EP) is a step towards increasing capabilities and reducing vulnerabilities in every Lasallian institution.”¹³⁵ The manual acknowledges that there are already existing DRRM policies in each and every Lasallian institution but in order to have a concerted effort, DLSP thought of having a unified policy on emergency preparedness. This manual focuses on three main aspects of DRRM namely, Disaster Prevention, Mitigation, and Preparedness; and Emergency Response and Management.

6. Biodiversity

On the biodiversity project, De La Salle Philippines would like each school to be empowered to make a sound judgement on balancing and using natural resources keeping in mind the economic value of biological diversity. Principles and standards are laid out to help schools come up with policies for developing their environmental action plans. For the sake of clarity, the manual gives a definition of “biological diversity.” It means “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.”¹³⁶

The first principle states: “Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.”¹³⁷ Hence, La Salle schools are encouraged to establish a unit that will supervise and organize means for sustainable development in their respective areas. Related to this is the principle on environmental protection: “In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process.”¹³⁸ Other principles deal with curriculum integration, commitment of schools to promote this cause, and the proper approach that must be used.

7. Water Resource Management

Recognizing that water is essential to life, the FEPM gives priority to water management in La Salle schools. This category seeks to develop and strengthen a rational and coordinated water resources management program.¹³⁹ Water Resource Management is approached through the efficient use of water in schools, educating students and adults in the Lasallian community on the importance of water and on how they can contribute to water conservation. The assessment of risk

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 132.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 133.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

factors concerning water resource in the light of climate change is also part of this category. The manual also includes as part of this category a principle on how to distribute water supply according to the needs of the community. 42

8. Green Procurement

As a network of La Salle schools in the country, De La Salle Philippines is committed to the highest level of integrity and quality in all aspects of the educational ministry. Therefore, this section of the FEPM ensures that all administrators, faculty, support staff, and students adhere to this objective. By laying down principles on procurement and material management, all stakeholders will be able to uphold the judicious use of its resources through proper planning, monitoring, and control of the procurement and handling of goods and services.¹⁴⁰

9. Data Management

Educational institutions keep a record of different kinds of data. The FEPM outlines principles and standards governing the management of environmental and ecological data. These data may in turn be used for identifying, planning, and executing programs and advocacies for and by students and staff. The five activities vital to the effective management of data are: Data Acquisition, Data Storage, Data Retrieval, Data Analysis & Interpretation, and Data Reporting.

10. Environmental Education

An indispensable component of the FEPM deals with the very nature and essence of an educational institution. Environmental education is geared towards having students, faculty, administrators, and staff who recognizes: “De La Salle schools must be able to address the issue of environmental care to promote lifestyle change. It is important to incorporate the idea that over time “we are losing the opportunity to have a better quality of life, we are deteriorating our planet and the creatures that inhabit it.”¹⁴¹

Other Sustainability Initiatives of the Lasallian Institute for the Environment

The following are the network-wide ecological initiatives and programs of the Philippine Lasallian family based on the data provided by De La Salle Philippines (DLSP) to the proponent of this study.

1. Leadership for Environmental Action and Formation (LEAF) Program

The Lasallian Leadership for Environmental Action and Formation Program is a certificate course on environmental education and sustainability that will be conducted through an online and on-site learning environments. Each Lasallian institution is expected to send representatives to this program. It is being carried out in the La Salle schools in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 145.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 184.

target participants for the first run of the program are the environmental champions of the 16 De La Salle Schools in the Philippines but eventually it will be opened to other interested faculty and staff. The Academic Year 2015-2016 is dedicated to the development of modules and pilot testing on the following topics: Environment and Sustainability 101 and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management 101. The following academic year (AY 2016-2017) is set aside for an Online Course Offering on Environment and Sustainability.

2. Project Carbon Neutral (PCN)

Project Carbon Neutral is one of the Lasallian local responses to the global warming/climate change concern where the sixteen La Salle schools conducted an inventory of how much carbon dioxide each school generated from its activities and how much of the carbon dioxide generated are offset by other activities by getting their carbon footprints through inventory of their carbon emission and identification of their offset measures. Below is the chart of the initial survey conducted by De La Salle Philippines on carbon emissions in La Salle schools in the country.

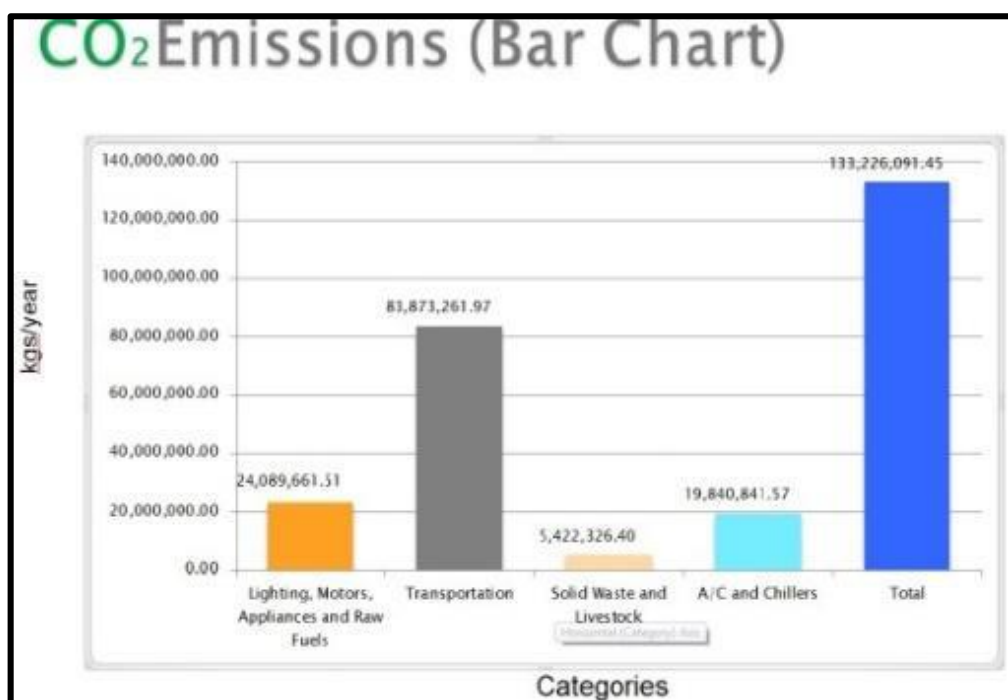


Figure 2.3
CO2 Emission in DLSP schools¹⁴²

¹⁴² Lasallian Institute for the Environment “CO2 Emission in DLSP schools” LIFE Presentation to DLSP Schools, Accessed March 17, 2016.

In its website, the Lasallian Institute for the Environment states that this project “is a meaningful step to survival for all of us and our future generations.”¹⁴³ Several recommendations for the mitigation of carbon footprints were given and are classified into three major areas namely, behavioral, administrative, and technological. Under the behavioral type of mitigation, teachers are advised to encourage their students through their science classes to actively participate in pro-environmental and low-carbon activities. Likewise, gentle reminders, and eventually oral and written warnings must be given to whoever is in charge of switching off all electrical and electronic devices in the event that that person fails to do what he is supposed to do.

Under the administrative category, several recommendations were given such as the scheduled use of the ACU, minimization of the lights in each classroom, “Last Person Out” policy, training and deployment of “Energy Patrol,” and the energy conservation program. For the technological forms of mitigation, they have encourage the gradual replacing of incandescent bulbs with fluorescent, the installation of CFL instead of fluorescent, the utilization of renewable sources of energy, retrofitting of lighting features in the buildings.

DLSP has yet to reach its goal of carbon neutrality. It is hoped that all stakeholders will participate in this campaign. The figure below shows the gap between total carbon emissions and the offsets done in the schools.

3. Green For LIFE: One Million Trees and Beyond Project (OMTB)

The OMTB Project provides De La Salle Schools and its partners a venue for increased environmental awareness and education through the “learning by doing” approach which involves systematic land preparation and actual tree planting, monitoring and nurturing activities with local partner communities. These pro-active responses to pressing environmental issues are seen as educative activities towards the protection and preservation of our natural resources. Using the acronym of the word “plant,” LIFE, the office that is primarily responsible for implementing this program, makes it easy for any individual or group who would like to actively take part in it, to know the step-by-step process of planting and nurturing a tree: P – Planning (Scientific and Community Based), L – Learning, A – Actual Planting, N – Networking, and T – Tracking and Monitoring.

Until now, some students, faculty, personnel, Brothers, parents and alumni are involved in this program. They coordinate with the partner local communities, non-government (NGOs), people organizations (POs) local and national Government units and institutions in the ongoing process of planting, nurturing and monitoring of trees. In 2010, the trees planted already reached the targeted number of 1,000,000 plants.

¹⁴³ “Project Carbon Neutral”, Lasallian Institute for the Environment. Accessed 09 March 2016. <http://www.life.net.ph/genesis.html>.

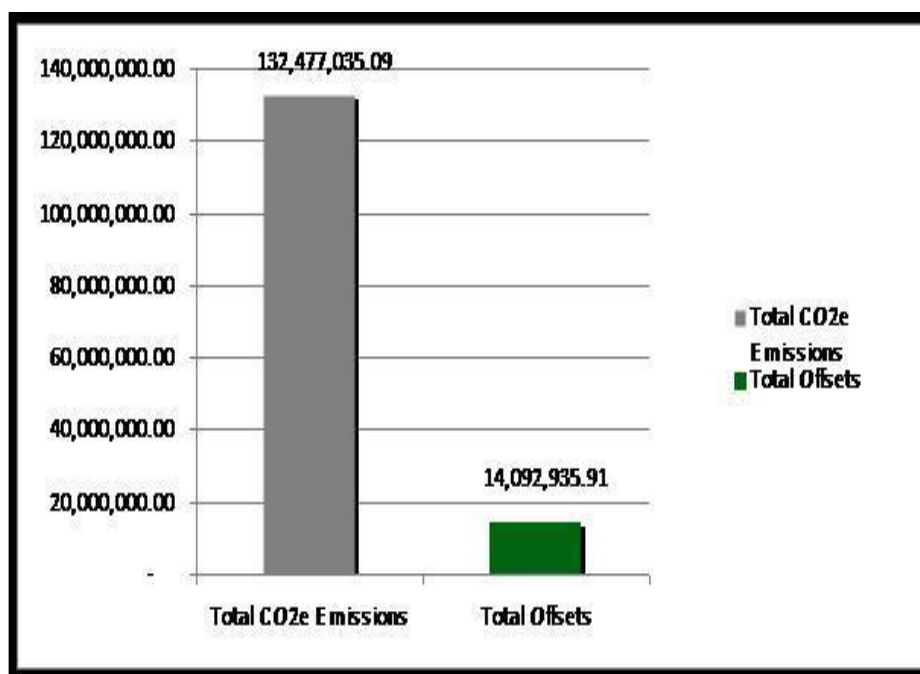


Figure 2.4

Total CO2 Emissions vs. Total Offset¹⁴⁴

As of this writing, a total of more than one million three hundred trees were planted by various sectors of the sixteen La Salle schools in the country. The following shows the number of trees planted by each Lasallian institution over the years.

4. Lasallian Earth Day (LED)

The Lasallian Earth Day (LEC) celebration is an educational and consciousness-raising activities being conducted by De La Salle Schools every first Friday of the month. Some activities of the Lasallian Earth Day include the Green Hour where the lights and air-conditioning units are turned off for an hour or more (time is determined by each school to suit their conditions); wearing of something green (preferably green shirt but could be something as simple as a pinned green ribbon or button); and the use of the month's environmental theme for the homily at Mass or Liturgical Service that is held on that day.

¹⁴⁴ Lasallian Institute for the Environment, "CO2 Emission in DLSP schools" LIFE Presentation to DLSP Schools, Accessed March 17, 2016.

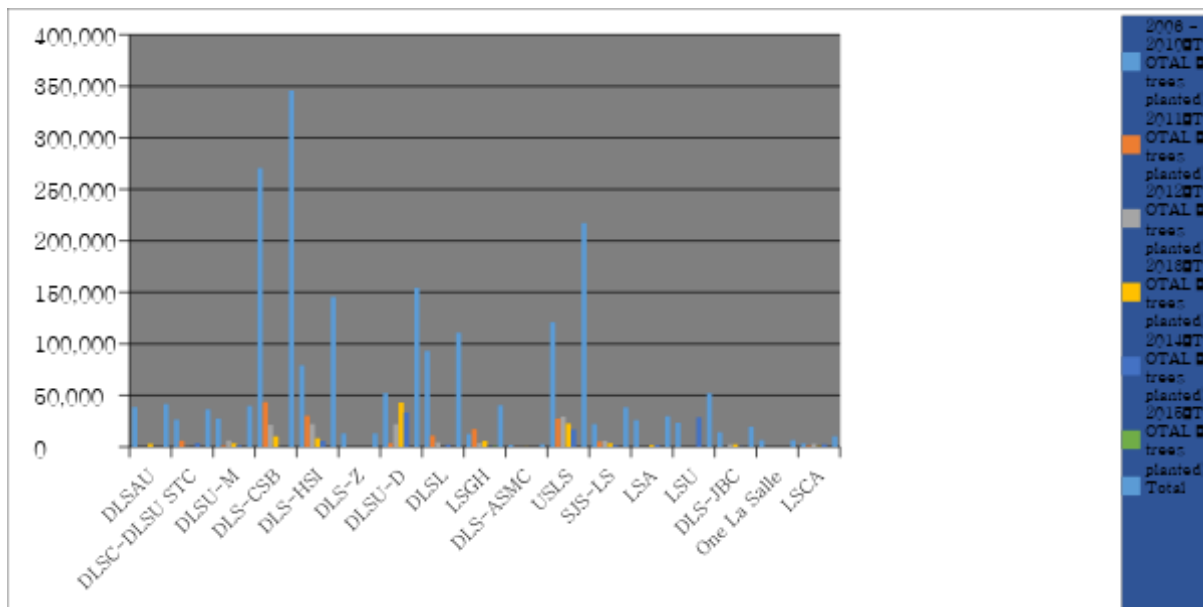


Figure 2.5
One Million Trees and Beyond: Total Number of Trees Planted¹⁴⁵

In 2013, inspired by the annual celebration of the Earth Hour held every Third Saturday of March, the present Auxiliary Visitor of the Brothers of Christian Schools, Br. Jose Mari Jimenez FSC, vouched this idea of having a Lasallians Earth Day on a monthly basis so that all will be reminded constantly of our commitment to save the environment. All students, faculty, personnel, brothers, parents and alumni are encouraged to participate in this monthly observance. Eventually, it is hoped that partner local communities, non-government (NGOs), people organizations (POs) Local and National Government units and institutions would join the Lasallian family in observing the Earth Day.

5. Ecological Solid Waste Management Program

All De La Salle schools implement RA9003 or Ecological Solid Waste Management Act. The Lasallian family in the Philippines commit themselves to cooperative with both local and national governments in ensuring the protection of the public health and environment; utilizing environmentally-sound methods that maximize the utilization of valuable resources and encourage resource conservation and recovery; and ensuring the proper segregation, collection, transport, storage, treatment and disposal of solid waste through the formulation and adoption of the best

¹⁴⁵ Lasallian Institute for the Environment “CO2 Emission in DLSP schools” LIFE Presentation to DLSP Schools, Accessed March 17, 2016.

environmental practice in ecological waste management excluding incineration among others.¹⁴⁶ This program started in 2002 and is being done in La Salle schools in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

6. Green Leaders Camp-ference (GLC)

GLC is an annual conference and outdoor camping that aims to gather student leaders from all De La Salle schools in the Philippines to listen, discuss and mobilize action towards positive environmental response particularly in their respective communities. Originally started by De La Salle Santiago Zobel School, this annual activity now involves students, faculty, and other staff of the sixteen La Salle schools in the country.

7. La Salle Botanical Gardens (LSBG)

The Botanical Gardens is being envisioned as the environmental platform by which ecological research, education and awareness goals can be achieved. It is designed to provide laboratory for scientific research, a garden for plant conservation, a means of increasing public awareness, education and appreciation, and a venue for public recreation.

The site for the La Salle Botanical Gardens (LSBG) is yet to be decided. However, from the initial developments of the project, it was proposed that around 30 hectares of land will be used in putting up the ex-situ conservation site. The conceptualization of this project started in June 2015 and it will involve students, teachers, researchers, gardeners, local government units, the entire Filipino community.

8. La Salle School Gardens

An environmental initiative to assist De La Salle schools in maintaining and expanding their existing school gardens and green spaces. The main partners of this program are the students, teachers, researchers, gardeners of the La Salle schools as well as the local government units.

9. Watershed Management

One of the pioneer programs of the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE) is the Watershed Management program wherein, with the assistance of the La Salle Institute of Governance of De La Salle University, they developed a “brick-by-brick” approach in managing watersheds. A watershed is a part of land that drains to a common point such as a stream, river, pond, or lake and it also acts like a funnel, on the other hand, that collects all water falling within it and channelling it into a discharge point/opening.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ “Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000”, Arellano Law Foundation. Accessed on 17 March 2016. Available at http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9003_2001.html.

¹⁴⁷ “Water Shed Management”, Lasallian Institute for the Environment. Accessed 09 March 2016. <http://www.life.net.ph/watershed>.

The first step undertaken is profiling which provides the basis for developing Natural Resources Management (NRM) plans by initially “benchmarking” the status of the environment. Then, it is followed by forging of partnerships with the community and other stakeholders in the area. Below is the management process that was crafted by LIFE in partnership with the La Salle Institute of Governance of DLSU.

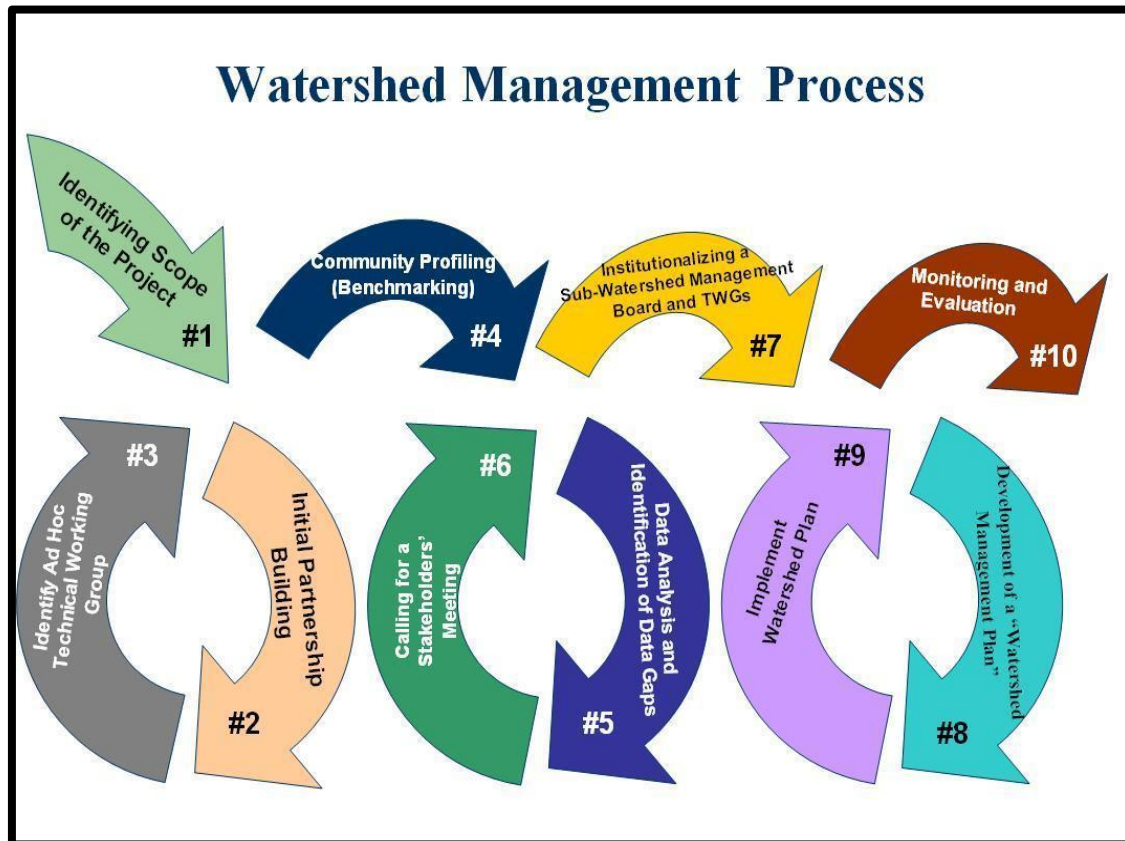


Figure 2.6
LIFE Watershed Management Process¹⁴⁸

Ecological Initiatives of Some La Salle Schools in the Philippines

1. De La Salle University (DLSU)

When Brother Raymundo B. Suplido FSC assumed the presidency of the University on June 30, 2015, he immediately called for a strategic planning workshop and had asked the administrators to read the then recently published encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. In that workshop, after a careful study and reflection, they revised the University's vision-mission, which now reads: “A

¹⁴⁸ Lasallian Institute for the Environment “LIFE Watershed Management Process”, LIFE Presentation to DLSP Schools, Accessed March 17, 2016.

leading learner-centered and research university, *attuned to a sustainable earth*, bridging faith and scholarship in the service of society, especially the poor.”¹⁴⁹

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The University’s commitment to save the environment in the face of the ecological crisis is now enshrined in the very vision-mission statement, thereby serving as a persistent reminder to all its stakeholders that in all endeavors, care for the earth must be prioritized and always taken into consideration.

Two years earlier, however, DLSU, under the leadership of the then president and chancellor, Br. Ricardo P. Laguda FSC, had taken a significant step in ensuring that environmental sustainability must be taken into account by all decision makers and stakeholders by coming up and implementing the DLSU Environmental Sustainability Policy. Below is the rationale of the said policy:

Recognizing the environmental challenges of the 21st Century and inspired by the commitment to build *a community that participates actively in improving the quality of life in Philippine society*, De La Salle University commits to promote environmental education and sustainability research, establish sustainable “green” campuses and operations, ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations, adherence to high environmental quality standards, and to develop resilience and adaptations to the impacts of climate change.

In accomplishing this task, the University pledges to initiate programs and activities under the following Key Result Areas (KRAs): *Education for Sustainable Development* which includes curriculum integration and research for sustainable development; *Green and Sustainable “Green” Campuses & Facilities* which has four components, namely, Environmental quality and standards, Healthy community and safe campus, Biodiversity conservation, and Waste minimization, efficiency and green productivity; *Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience*, which covers the areas of Disaster risk reduction management and emergency preparedness and Community engagement and partnership.¹⁵⁰

2. De La Salle University-Dasmariñas

DLSU-D for many years now has been at the forefront of promoting a greener school and community through its ecological programs and initiatives, some of which has garnered national and international recognition from reputable agencies. True to its commitment to push sustainable initiatives as we face ecological challenges, the University commits itself to promote a “greener” lifestyle among its stakeholders as well as to their immediate locality. As early as 2001, it has already created an office to initiate, monitor, facilitate, and evaluate the sustainability programs

¹⁴⁹ Raymundo B. Suplido FSC, “New DLSU Vision-Mission Statement”, President’s Address at the University General Assembly. August 28, 2015. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵⁰ Br. Ricardo P. Laguda FSC, “DLSU Campus Sustainability Policy,” DLSU Helpdesk Email. 22 October 2013.

and policies as well as the compliance of the University to national and local government standards regarding safety, pollution, and disaster risk reduction. The office is now called the Environmental Resource Management Center (ERMaC).

Also in 2001, the University has introduced its own comprehensive Solid Waste Management Program and establish its own Materials Recovery Facility.¹⁵¹ Through its faculty and students, and with the help of the grants given by various organizations, DLSU-D developed energy solutions by use of solar power, switching to LED lighting, even as the school established a water treatment facility to treat wastewater and reuse it for the University's needs.¹⁵² Today, the University boasts of having a unique learning environment with a microclimate that is 2 degrees lower than the temperature outside its walls owing to the rich biodiversity inside the 27- hectare campus of DLSU-D.

Aside from the programs mentioned above, the following are the other ecological projects of the University:

a. Bird Sanctuary

Owing to its location and through the arduous research work of its faculty, DLSU-D is home to endemic and migratory species of birds such as Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*), Crested Myna (*Acridotheres cristatellus*), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), a migratory bird present only during the summer, Lowland White-eye (*Zosterops meyeri*) which is only endemic to Luzon, Pied Fantail (*Rhipidura javanica*), Red turtledove (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*), White-collared Kingfisher (*Halcyon chloris*), Yellow-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus goiavier*) and Golden-bellied Flyeater (*Gerygone sulphurea*).¹⁵³ Because of the number of diversities of species of birds present in the sanctuary, as well as to seek assistance in protecting the wildlife in the University, DLSU-D applied for and was granted a sanctuary status by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

b. Greening the Campus and Beyond

Several years ago, the DLSU-D community conceptualized a tree-planting project within the confines of their campus. It was reported that as of the first half of 2014, 1,398 trees have been planted. Today, a total of 64 varieties of species, ranging from indigenous types like narra, kamagong and ipil ipil to tropical species like the jade vine and canistel. There are also peculiar plants in the University like the *Tree of Heaven* and *Yellowbell*, as well as fruit bearing trees like mango, avocado, sampaloc and langka. Below is the chart of tree species present in DLSU-D:

¹⁵¹ “Green DLSU-D”, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas. Accessed 16 March 2016.
<http://www.dlsud.edu.ph/green.htm>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Tree Species in DLSU-D			51
African Tulip	Anabiong	Aratilis/Aratiles	
Atis	Avocado	Babao	
Balete	Banaba	Bangkal	
Bayakbayukan	Benguet Pine	Bignay	
Bitaog	Black wattle/Manguim	Breadfruit	
Calamansi	Callos	Champaka	
Chico	Citrus	Duhat	
Earleaf acacia	Eucalyptus tree	Ficus	
Fire Tree	Gmelina	Golden Shower	
Guava	Guyabano	Hawili	
Indian mango	Ilang-ilang	Imbabao	
Indian guava	Indian Lanutan	Ipil Ipil	
Jackfruit/Langka	Jade vine	Kalachuchi	
Kamagong	Kamias	Katmon	
Lumbang	Macanya	Macaranga	
Macopa	Mahogany	Mango	
Narra	Neem tree	Palosanto	

Pili	Rain tree	Rambutan	52
Sampaloc	Sandbox tree	Santol	
Star Apple	Talisay	Taluto	
Terminalia	Tiessa/Canistel	Tree of Heaven	
Yellowbell			

Figure 3
Chart of Plant Species in De La Salle University-Dasmariñas¹⁵⁴

c. Botanical Gardens

Even prior to the publication of the Facilities and Environmental Protection Manual of the De La Salle Philippines, De La Salle University – Dasmariñas already conceptualized the development of botanical gardens in their locality. Primarily, it is meant to be a resource for biological education and research but it is also one of the University’s approaches to conserve of plant diversity. Its existing collection of wild and cultivated plants also functions for the enjoyment, and benefit of the student’s populace, and that of the community.¹⁵⁵ Besides, according to the conceptualizers of this project, the garden is expected to contribute to the objectives/projects of the Biological Sciences Department (BSD) of the University as it will provide the latter the necessary research support facility such as a reference collection of dried preserved plants (voucher specimens) herbarium and a modest greenhouse/laboratory unit¹⁵⁶. Like any acknowledged botanical garden around the world, the plants at De La Salle University-Dasmariñas Botanical Garden will be organized in a certain systematic manner. It will be designed according to its purposes namely: **Scientific Research** – plants that are collected and grown for botanical research, breeding studies, plant exchange and experimentation of economically or ornamentally important plants; **Education** – laboratory work could be done within the garden. Animals and insects can also be observed and studied in the Garden; **Aesthetic and Recreation** – the different species of trees, ferns, ornamental plants, together with the various forms of insects and animals, will enhance the beauty of the Garden; **Conservation** – it will function as a repository for representative specimens of Philippine endemic and endangered species; **Public Service** – identification service to the inquiring public, enterprise of plants and special exhibits may be rendered.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ “Plant Species in De La Salle University-Dasmariñas” in *ibid*.

¹⁵⁵ “Green DLSU-D”, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas. Accessed 16 March 2016.
<http://www.dlsud.edu.ph/green.htm>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

d. Other Ecological Banner Programs

1. Project ICON

In response to the University's call to save the environment, the Information and Communications Technology Center (ICTC) and the Environmental Resource Management Center (ERMaC), initiated this project to urge the members of the Lasallian community in DLSU-D to donate their old and obsolete IT equipment to the ICON project for environmentally sound disposal. Initially, ICON aims to create an awareness on the impact of the fast pace of technology (surfacing and release of new gadgets) on the volume of waste (import/export of surplus goods in the country, etc.) so proper measures can be observed to mitigate its damage to Mother Earth.¹⁵⁸

2. Ikot La Salle E-jeep.

First implemented on June 2, 2008, the Ikot La Salle E-jeep remains an accessible means of transportation around the campus of DLSU-D today. Instead of using fuel, this jeep is powered by electricity, thus, less harm is inflicted upon the environment. It is an initiative of the Parents Organization of La Salle Cavite, Inc. (POLCA) then headed by Dr. Carmelyn C. Antig, a retired DLSU-D professor; this means of transportation offers a more eco-friendly substitute to regular jeepneys.

3. Bike to Work Program.

One of the University's contributions to the Project Carbon Neutral of De La Salle Philippines is the Bike to Work Program. Through this program, faculty, employees and students who live in nearby areas are encouraged to use bicycles instead of bringing their cars or taking busses or jeepneys which contribute to carbon emissions and air pollution.

3. University of Saint La Salle (USLS) Bacolod

The University has continuously pursued programs and projects towards a "greener" campus. The following are their ecological programs already being implemented by the academic community:

a. Education and Advocacy Programs

The National Service Training Program (NSTP) continues to implement as part of its core requirements, the environment module and activities without which the students cannot pass the course. The NSTP students are actively involved in mangrove planting and the International Coastal-Clean Up. The University also actively participates in the Provincial Environment Week held annually during the month of June. During the peace and ecology month that is being celebrated every September, the University puts up exhibits on biodiversity.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

USLS was part of the International Service-Learning Program participated by several universities in Asia and 9 students were sent to take part in this. Among the activities they have implemented together with their Asian counterparts are: mangrove inventory, tree planting, lectures on DRRM to the community, coastal clean-up and environment education to children in Suyac Island in Sagay and also at the GK Pueblo Jose Antonio Village and a public school in Sagay.

Last year, under the Christian Service Learning Program, the Environmental Engineering class conducted an Environment Fair in Barangay Punta Taytay which is their unique and simple way of educating the residents on solid waste management and its processes.

A research undertaking in consortium with other schools and institutions on the Ilog-Hilabangan River Biodiversity Study was also concluded this academic year. Other researches being done now include a study on Irrawaddy Dolphins and Malisbog River Biodiversity Study.

Included in the University's programs with community partners at GK Dulao, Bago City are environmental awareness and protection. The contest for best garden and Christmas tree last year include as part of the criteria the use of recyclable materials.

b. Greening Program

As part of their contribution to the One Million Trees and Beyond Program of De La Salle Philippines, the University planted around 225,178 trees in upland and coastal areas in their province. As we the school gears up for the new Integrated School campus, trees are also being cultivated in their future campus. Since August 2014 to date, 23 NSTP classes have planted around 5,175 propagules in Balarang, Silay and Seawall, Punta Taytay. Student organizations, faculty, and non-teaching staff have contributed to this project over the years. Moreover, a herbal garden was set up at the back of the Engineering Laboratories near Balay Kalinungan complex.

c. Solid Waste Management

During the academic year 2015-2016, Balayan and the General Services Office conducted the Waste Analysis and Characterization Study or WACS. It was a comprehensive and extensive study done to come up with updated data on the volume of the solid waste that comes from the University. The result of the study was presented to key stakeholders and now serves as baseline data and will be the basis for a thorough planning and evaluation of their environmental initiatives. Shredding of leaves and branches for vermi composting is now being done at Granada campus. The University ensures that healthy and nutritious food is available in their canteens. No carbonated beverages are being sold to the children.

d. Energy Conservation Projects

The Thermal Energy Storage (TES) project of the University has been fully installed and is now awaiting operations. The TES is considered the biggest investment towards Carbon Neutrality. This involves a centralized air-conditioning system coming from huge chillers that will be charged at night and used during daytime. These chillers can cover up to 4 buildings in campus. The projection is to cut down up to 63% of the electrical expenses of the University. According to the

study conducted by the sustainability office, the TES will have 15 – 20 years functioning life and will greatly lower operation and maintenance costs.

Another effort is the installation of solar panels for the University Chapel. At present, it now supplies the power for the lights surrounding the chapel.

A designated bike rack was set up in campus as part of our Project Carbon Neutral to encourage bikers when they come to school for their classes or work.

A bridge connecting the university to the area at the back of Bacolod Doctor's Hospital was set up to help the students as part of carbon sequestration. They can now alight from the jeepney at the gasoline station near the hospital and walk from there to the campus. In line with this, canopies have been constructed to serve the Lasallians and guests with the rapid change in weather these days. So come rain or shine, the canopies would serve as their protection.

e. Special Projects

Landscaping of the campus is being undertaken so as to address both environment maintenance and beautification. These are the University's pocket gardens initiated by the NSTP and some Economics classes.

f. Sustainability Mechanisms

The Facilities and Environmental Program Management (FEPM) structure is being worked out. An orientation and self-assessment workshop was facilitated by the Lasallian Initiative for the Environment (LIFE) personnel from De La Salle Philippines to help the university in its various undertakings.

The Emergency Response Team of the University was established to take charge of responding to emergency situations including calamities that would affect the university. The manual of operations is being finalized. Balayan is also working on the manual of operations in response to external communities for DRRM under the Lasallian Justice and Peace Commission. (LJPC). Balayan is the office coordinating our environment initiatives. Partnerships with various stakeholders are maintained especially with the Local Government Units and Agencies.

Hermeneutical Analysis

1. On the Use of "Sustainable Development" Paradigm

One would easily notice that in the documents pertaining to environmental preservation and protection coming either from the Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Rome or from the Philippine Lasallian Family, words and phrases like "sustainability," "sustainable development" or "sustainable earth" are employed. Ecological initiatives are almost always referred to as "sustainability measures." The office that supervises and gathers all ecological efforts and initiatives in most La Salle schools in the country is called "Campus Sustainability

Office.” It has become the operative principle behind the efforts to save the environment from further destruction.

The use of the term “Sustainable Development” in recent decades elicited and continues to stimulate debates from among scholars, environmentalists, justice and peace advocates, economists, and other people coming from various disciplines. The term was popularized by the United Nations and is being used by various international agencies and even governments to refer to their attempt to protect the environment for various reasons, some treating nature as a potential for greater capital or income. For some organizations and nation-states, it serves as the controlling belief on the necessity to preserve nature and natural ecosystems for the utilization of future generations. It may also be considered as the “practice of reserving resources for future generation without any harm to the nature and other components of it.”¹⁵⁹ While others see nothing wrong in the use of the term and in espousing the kind of attitude it promotes among peoples and nations because it still offers a “critique of narrowly anthropocentric conceptions of development,”¹⁶⁰ Sabrina da Silva still cautions us of the danger of having that mind-set:

Although efforts in seeking a more sustainable attitude are always positive and necessary, the *indiscriminate use of the term sustainability* may not lead to any significant changes in the relation between humanity and nature and, in this way, may just become a way for individuals to justify their actions, however environmentally degrading these may be.¹⁶¹

Moreover, it has been observed that major financiers and benefactors of the sustainable development programs and projects, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, outline a number of priorities in their related spending, often focused on social and economic rather than environmental priorities.¹⁶² In fact, some of the matters being discussed under the “environment” banner is always associated such as health and nutrition, just and equitable distribution of natural resources, climate change adaptation, etc. It has been noted that under the Sustainable Development paradigm, even in the area of education, protection of environment independent of human interests is rarely talked about.¹⁶³ Additionally, in the realm

¹⁵⁹ Melvin K. Hendrix, *Sustainable Backyard Polyculture: Designing for Ecological Resiliency* Smashwords ebook edition, 72.

¹⁶⁰ Priya A. Kurian and Robert V. Bartlett, “*Ethics and Justice Needs for Sustainable Development*”. Institutional issues Involving Ethics and Justice. Vol. II. Accessed on 14 March 2016. Available at <http://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c14/E1-37-04.pdf>.

¹⁶¹ Sabrina Soares da Sila, “*Proposal for a Model to Analyze Commitment to Sustainability*”. *Ambiente & Sociedade*. São Paulo v. XVII, n. 3., p. 35-54. Emphasis mine.

¹⁶² Helen Kopnina, “*Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Using Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes Toward the Sustainable Development (EAATSD) Scale*”. *Environment, Development and Sustainability: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Theory and Practice of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 14, NO. 4, 2012.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Kopnina observes that recent researches on “Education for Sustainable Development” centers on the economic and social development, thereby leaving on the sidelines real concern for the plight of nature. Furthermore, Kopnina presents some traces of anthropocentrism in the ESD paradigm: “In contrast to traditional ecocentric learning, ESD follows the prescriptions of ‘official’ UNESCO guidelines on learning to manage the environment and to develop competencies to preserve natural resources.”

of education, presenting environmental problems as the issue of lessening of natural resources suggests that protection of environment is seen as only significant in as far as it serves human interests and that students are not taught to recognize the intrinsic value of the nature.¹⁶⁴

This anthropocentric attitude makes individuals and organizations think, feel, and behave as if every other living being on earth is inferior to humans. There are two main ramifications of this notion: foremost of which is that nature and the environment is fundamentally seen as an economic resource and, secondly, the significance of nature relates to satisfying a myriad of human interests which are not limited to the economic dimension.¹⁶⁵

Brother Jose Martin Montoya Dura FSC, the author of the document *Environmental Education Plan for Sustainable Development* for the De La Salle Institute clearly explicates that the document was written as a response to the recommendations of the Bonn Declaration which encourages the creation of “institutional mechanisms... which can guarantee the continuation of the pursuit of Education for Sustainable Development beyond the Decade.”¹⁶⁶ If the Institute’s environmental educational plan follows the “sustainable development” thought pattern, which, as mentioned above is being promoted by nation-states and international agencies such as the UNESCO, then it poses a high likelihood that every effort that the Institute does in response to the ecological crisis is done out of trepidation or to ensure that there would be enough resources for the coming generations. This is evident in how the questions in the questionnaire that was used to assess the environmental education in Lasallian educational institutions were formulated. One of the questions under the “environmental organization” heading is “Does the school take into account the idea of sustainability (satisfying the needs of the present generation without compromising the possibility of future generations satisfying their own needs) when they sign contracts for services or other work (cleaners, caterers, extra-curricular activities, deals with bus companies, etc.)?”¹⁶⁷

In the same manner, the Facilities and Environmental Programs Management (FEPM) Manual of the Modern Conduct of Schools crafted and promulgated by De La Salle Philippines carries with it traces of this “sustainable development” paradigm, hence, the anthropocentric position of the Philippine Lasallian Family becomes apparent. In the introduction, it is stated that the manual’s goal is to guide the La Salle schools “to a more efficient and environmental performance towards sustainability.”¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, it shows that the principles enshrined in the manual are meant to advance the quality of life of Lasallians and that protecting the environment is more of an afterthought or simply a means to achieve this goal:

¹⁶⁴ D.W. Orr. *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994), 45 in Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ CAMPBELL, E. K. *Beyond Anthropocentrism*. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Malden, v.19, p.54-67, 1983 in Sabrina Soares da Silva, *Proposal for a Model to Analyze Commitment to Sustainability*, 37.

¹⁶⁶ “World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development” (Germany: UNESCO, 2009) as quoted in Jose Martin Duya FSC, *Environmental Education Plan for Sustainable Development*, 22.

¹⁶⁷ Jose Martin Montoya Durá, FSC, *Environmental Education Plan for Sustainable Development*, 22.

¹⁶⁸ De La Salle Philippines, *Modern Conduct of Schools: Facilities and Environmental Programs Management Manual*, 10.

For any initiative to be sustainable, not only must it consider economical efficiency but *also* (sic!) its environmental impact. Not only can green practices and processes help protect the environment, it may also contribute to the schools' over-all campus development programs. The manual takes into consideration our schools' sustainability towards future generations—adopting policies, principles and practices that improve the quality of life of employees, the students and their families.¹⁶⁹

Some of the principles outlined in the FEPM also have an anthropocentric stance. For example, under the Biodiversity category, the first principle reads: “*Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development*. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.”¹⁷⁰ If human beings are placed at the center of concerns, then, it implies that non-human creatures are advertently or inadvertently pushed to the margins and their intrinsic worth and rights are set aside. Nature, then, is merely treated as a resource that will enable humanity to survive in this planet. If this utilitarian view of creation serves as the basis for all ecological efforts of the Philippine Lasallian Family, there is high probability that the initiatives will all be geared towards the sustainability of future generations of humanity and that in the course of executing the ecological programs and projects, the intrinsic value of all the sub-human creatures will be violated.

2. Education as a Means to Protect the Environment

As a religious institute dedicated to the educational ministry of the young, the Brothers of Christian Schools are called upon to make, as an essential part of their educational apostolate, education towards the protection of the environment. At the beginning of this paper, we cited Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría FSC, then Superior General of the Brothers of Christian Schools who, in his 2009 Pastoral Letter to the Brothers, expressed his conviction that care for creation must be an integral part of the Lasallian educational ministry. In that letter, he insisted that as a way of collaborating for the building of the kingdom of God in the here and now, it is the duty of the Brothers and all those who share in the mission to instill in the consciousness of the students the respect and care for God's creation:

Without a doubt the concern for climate change and its consequences should be part of the educational curriculum of our schools, as well as the interiorization of attitudes of respect, gratitude, love and solicitude for our mother earth. We all need to make an effort in this regard as the Guarani Indians of Paraguay said as we search for an earth without evil. It has to do with a covenant with creation and a decisive “yes” for its care. The earth is

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

our common house, we are fulfilled in it, we meet others in it, and there we discover God.¹⁷¹

The Environmental Educational Plan of the Institute also recognizes the importance of education in getting our students, other stakeholders, and the larger society engaged in this environmental advocacy. The Institutes believes that since the Brothers of Christian Schools are, at present, running formal educational establishments in various levels in more than 80 countries in the world, and that it has more than 70,000 educators in these academic institutions, a significant change insofar as environmental awareness and protection is concerned will happen if environmental education is imbedded in the curriculum. Dura notes: "... one can say that the De La Salle Institute, as an organization for education and evangelization, can and must be a powerful promoter of awareness-raising, of showing active respect for the natural environment, including by the scope of its social network."¹⁷²

Moreover, the Environmental Educational Plan of the Institute proposes that environmental issues and ethics be made part of the education, not only of the students, but also in the ongoing formation and learning of committed partners, considering this matter to be a *sine qua non* of coexistence.¹⁷³ The Institute believes that when administrators, faculty, and staff cease educating themselves on environmental concerns, they also cease becoming effective agents of transformation of society which is the one of the essential features of a Lasallian educator. Following the example of Saint John Baptist de la Salle, who established Christian schools, as his personal response to the "signs of the times," Lasallian educators today must possess the same zeal towards the protection of the environment amidst global warming and climate change.

In the mind of the Institute, education does not only refer to formal education in the classroom, but it also includes all other opportunities for education, including improvement of organizational structures for better monitoring of day-to-day affairs of the school, ethical fund raising and investments, promotion of good ecological practices between and among stakeholders in the educational unit, establishment of common approaches of mitigating the effects of climate change, and the use of various means of communication, especially social media in advocating the protection of the environment. In other words, Lasallians must seize every opportunity to form and educate people towards the goal of preserving nature and protecting the environment.

In the same manner, The Philippine Lasallian Family's Modern Conduct of Schools, particularly in the Facilities and Environment Programs Management, education plays a vital role not only in the development of policies and programs in the respective La Salle schools in the country but also in ensuring that these policies and programs are carried out correctly with utmost diligence. Without proper education, adherence to the policies and participation in programs will only be an

¹⁷¹ Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría FSC. *Consecrated by God the Trinity as a Community of Brothers: Messengers and Apostles sent by the Church to make present the Kingdom of God*. Pastoral Letter to the Brothers. (Rome: Brothers of Christian Schools 2009), 25.

¹⁷² Jose Martin Montoya Durá, FSC, 40.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

exercise in futility and may appear meaningless to some. Thus, the overarching theme of the manual is formation and education in the environment.

A particular section is dedicated to the advancement of environmental education in schools. The manual spells out its purpose:

Environmental Education aims at training individuals to know and recognize the interactions between what is natural and social in their environment and to act in that environment. The De La Salle schools should be enabled to inform their students, staff, faculty, partners and associates in making possible the existence of a sound environmental quality for their development.¹⁷⁴

Knowledge of the goings-on in the environment and in the effects of global warming and climate change is a pre-requisite to the development of any program that seeks to address the issue. Hence, De La Salle Philippines came up with a certificate program that is aimed at educating “green leaders” so they can effectively promote this cause. The Leadership for Environmental Action and Formation (LEAF) Program is an avenue to educate environmental champions in the sixteen La Salle schools in the country with the recent developments in environmental science as well as in other realms. The Green Leaders Conference, the annual environmental gathering of student environmental champions as well as the *Return to Vaugirard* program, a formation program aimed at enabling the students, faculty, and staff towards justice, peace, and integrity of creation, are venues for formation and education towards care for creation.

However, if the Philippine Lasallian Family would like to achieve the goal of transforming the attitudes, lifestyles, and mindsets of its stakeholders – the Brothers, administrators, faculty, non-teaching personnel, students, parents, alumni, and other partners in the educational ministry, the “education of the mind”, i.e., exposition and explanation of facts and theories would not be sufficient. A holistic approach including the formation of values must be developed or adapted in order that all stakeholders become responsible stewards of the environment.

3. The Use of Cutting-Edge Scientific Findings in the Development of Ecological Policies and Programs

The documents that were studied on the Lasallian responses to the problem of global warming and climate change reveal that it is inevitable to make use of the recent researches on science and other related fields. As a network of educational institutions, development of policies and programs must almost always be grounded on solid scientific data exacted through research. The Institute is aware that several individuals, groups, and nation-states have created programs to mitigate the effects of climate change but after careful evaluation, was proven ineffective, lacks scientific basis, or worse, contributive to the degradation of the environment.

¹⁷⁴ De La Salle Philippines, *Modern Conduct of Schools: Facilities and Environment Programs Management* (Mandaluyong: DLSP, 2015), 150.

Dura remarks that the De La Salle Environmental Education Plan will approach the ecological crisis using “...environmental aims based on an exhaustive knowledge of the environmental situation of the world, on research by international organizations into environmental education, on papers presented at congresses and international environmental forums, on studies of new world trends, on the analysis of other environmental plans and on the evaluation of the results of these plans, etc.”¹⁷⁵ To achieve this objective, one of the action plans proposed is to urge Lasallian institutes of higher learning to encourage ‘research, follow-up and evaluation’ in their pursuit of new pedagogical practices appropriate for Lasallian schools.¹⁷⁶

The Facilities and Environment Programs Management of De La Salle Philippines is carefully drafted employing scientific data from the research projects conducted by the faculty from different Lasallian institutions and also from various experts in the different scientific areas, but most especially environmental science. It likewise utilizes readily available innovative studies conducted by internationally renowned scholars and those commissioned by reputable international organizations, making the manual truly grounded on factual scientific data.

History attests to the fact that it has been the singular merit of the scientific community to have perceived the signs of the imminent ecological crisis and to have cautioned humanity of the effects of this climate change to our common home.¹⁷⁷ Joshtrom Kureethadam notes that one of the first scientists to call the attention of the world to the impending global ecological crisis is Rachel Carson in her short but influential book, *Silent Spring* which she wrote in 1962.¹⁷⁸ Kureethadam furthers that the global awareness regarding the crisis the earth is facing and all its dwellers was expanded through a number of publications by scientists such as *The Population Bomb*, *The Closing Circle*, *A Blueprint for Survival*, *Fundamentals of Ecology*, *The Limits to Growth*, *Only One Earth*, *The Global 2000 Report to the President*, and *Our Common Future*.¹⁷⁹

Admonitions from the scientific community continue to exist even up to the present time. For instance, when NASA reported that average global surface temperature in February 2016 was 1.35 degrees Celsius warmer than the average temperature for the month from 1951-1980, Ed

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Joshtrom Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 52.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. In *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), Rachel Carson raised questions on the impact of human activity to the plight of the world’s natural resources.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. These books opened the eyes of the world community to the impending global ecological crisis. It contains data gathered from their observations and offers solutions to leaders of governments, business, economy, and even churches. Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Sierra Club/ Ballentine Books, 1968); Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Confronting the Environmental Crisis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971); Edward Goldsmith et al., *A Blueprint for Survival* (London: Penguin Books, 1972); Eugene P. Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1971); Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (London: Earth Island Limited, 1972); Barbaea Ward and Rene Dubos, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972); *The Global 2000 Report to the President: Entering the Twenty-first Century: A Report Prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of State* (London: Penguin Book, 1982); *The World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Hawkins, a climate scientist at the University of Reading, UK, has the following interpretation of the event: “It is a pretty big jump between January and February, although this data from Nasa is only the first set of global temperature data. We will need to see what the figures from NOAA and the Met Office say. It is in line with our expectations that due to the continuing effect of greenhouse gas emissions, combined with the effects of El Niño on top, 2016 is likely to beat 2015 as the warmest year on record.”¹⁸⁰ “This is really quite stunning ... it’s completely unprecedented... We are in a kind of climate emergency now,”¹⁸¹ said Prof Stefan Rahmstorf, from the Potsdam Institute of Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Not only do scientists warn us of what may happen or cease to happen insofar as the environment is concerned; they also present to us a variety of solutions based on empirical studies and actual data they gathered from their extensive research.

4. The Lack of Reference to the “Ethnic Wisdom” of Filipino Indigenous Peoples and Communities

While it is laudable that the ecological efforts of the Philippine Lasallian Family are firmly rooted in the latest scientific data, it is evident that the efforts do not find its grounding on the wisdom of our indigenous communities. These communities have much to share with the rest of Filipinos in caring for the natural environment. They are “sons and daughters” of the land and are one with Mother Nature. We are cognizant of the efforts being done by Lasallian educational institutions to help these communities, such as the *Mangyans* of Mindoro, and other ethnic communities in Bataan, and in Mindanao. However, we believe that they are not only recipients of our assistance but we, especially those who live in big, complex, and complicated cities have much to learn or unlearn if we are to listen to and understand their convictions and age-old customs and practices.

One important feature of an indigenous conviction is their oneness with the earth. Cajes notes that traditional Filipinos do not see nature in terms of utility nor do they relate with an element of nature as an ‘it’; indigenous Filipinos relate everything as if everything in nature has a “spirit” or “soul.”¹⁸² Until today, our indigenous Filipinos espouse and embody this belief. It is because of this conviction that a Filipino’s relationship with nature is marked by respect, interdependence, and openness to care and love.¹⁸³

In describing this relationship, Paul-Francois Tremlett has this today: “*Inang kalikasan* suggests that the relationship between nature and human beings is an analogue of a relationship enjoyed between a mother and her children. For Filipinos, that relationship is or ought to be defined by respect by juniors for seniors, and for a duty of care between them that creates a cycle of

¹⁸⁰ The Guardian, “February Breaks Global Temperature Records by 'shocking' Amount”. *The Guardian Website*. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/mar/14/february-breaks-global-temperature-records-by-shocking-amount>; accessed 18 March 2016.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Prisco A. Cajes, OFM, *Anitism and Perichoresis: Towards a Filipino Christian Eco-theology of Nature* (Quezon City: OFM Province of San Pedro Bautista, 2002), 76.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

reciprocity between the mother and her offspring.”¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, while conducting a study in the Philippines, he realized that Filipino indigenous communities exemplify an eco-centric consciousness, which is profoundly informed by animistic conception of nature, and that it is precisely this consciousness that may bring about renewal for the Filipino society.¹⁸⁵

Leonardo Mercado says that although varied in many ways, tribal groups in the Philippines find a common ground: their closeness with nature as evidenced by many things such as the environment being the point of reference in terms of human time, and nature providing food, medicine, and everything they need.¹⁸⁶

Social stigma has been attributed to the embodiment of the Filipino indigenous convictions. However, the abovementioned studies show that it is because of these cultural practices and beliefs that Filipinos may regain their once harmonious relationship with the earth and everything that dwells on it. It is high time to include, as an essential component of our Lasallian ecological principles and practices, the wisdom that we can get from our tribal Filipino communities.

A. Summary and Conclusion

Recognizing the gravity of the ecological crisis, the Philippine Lasallian Family encourages Lasallians not to remain indifferent to the many abuses inflicted upon the environment or to slumber in apathy in the midst of rampant destruction of our natural resources that threaten their very future. A number of initiatives have been identified to help mitigate the effects of global warming and climate change and to support the society in adapting to the “new norm” – stronger typhoons, new paths of storms, rising temperatures, etc. The Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE) was formed to gather the existing efforts to save the environment from further degradation. Right from its inception, it organized two main projects: The One Million Trees and Beyond (OMTB) project which, up to the present, is being carried out by various stakeholders in all La Salle schools in the country; the other one is the Watershed Management Process, a joint effort of the LIFE and the then La Salle Institute of Governance (LSIG) of De La Salle University, Manila.

As the years went by and as the world experienced the grave effects of climate change, the Philippine Lasallian Family’s commitment to protect the environment takes prominence. One of the principles of social involvement that the Philippine Lasallian Family developed is that schools must strive to develop among its members greater recognition of the realities of human suffering and the stewardship role. The Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Rome came up with the, “Environmental Educational Plan for Sustainable Development” which is aimed at laying the principles for the Lasallian family’s ecological actions. On the other hand, De La Salle Philippines spearheaded the development of a manual for running Lasallian educational

¹⁸⁴ Paul-Francois Tremlett, 'The Ancestral Sensorium and the City: Reflections on Religion, Environmentalism and Citizenship in the Philippines' in Harvey, G., (ed) *Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, London: Equinox. 2012., 118.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD, *Spirituality of Creation according to Selected Philippine Indigenous Peoples* (Manila: Logos Publications, 1998), 7-8.

institutions in the Philippines. Titled “Modern Conduct of Schools,” the manual is an adaptation of Saint La Salle’s own guidebook which he wrote for the first batch of brothers. Part of that manual is the Facilities and Environmental Program Management (FEPM), which was formed to assist the schools to a more efficient and environmental performance towards sustainability in all areas of the educational ministry. Several other projects and activities that facilitate awareness and spur interests among various stakeholders to actively get involved in the advocacy are being done in the Lasallian educational establishments in the country.

After careful analysis of the documents and after observing some of the programs, we can conclude that the ecological principles, programs, and projects of the Philippine Lasallian Family among other given factors, are characterized by three things, namely: it is highly influenced by the “Sustainable development” paradigm being promoted by some nation-states and by international organization such as the UN’s UNESCO and others, it harps on education as an effective tool towards creating an attitude of solicitude for the environment; all principles and action plans are crafted based on up-to-date scientific data; and the need to listen to the wisdom of the Filipino indigenous communities.

CHAPTER THREE

A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF CREATION BASED ON A RE-READING OF ROM. 8:18-23 IN THE LIGHT OF THE ‘NEW COSMOLOGY’

In the previous chapter, we have seen the specific responses of the Philippine Lasallian Family to the present problem of global warming and its greatest effect in the natural world – climate change. The grave effects of the ecological emergency prompted many nation-states and organizations to identify practicable solutions to mitigate its effects upon humanity and our physical environment. Many of the solutions that have been proposed focus on the active dimension – the “doing” or “undoing” of current practices. The ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family address the ecological crisis using this kind of approach. The principles, policies, programs, and projects of De La Salle Philippines, albeit driven by a sincere and authentic concern for the environment, are all action-oriented and very little emphasis is given to the need to transform humanity’s attitude towards the natural environment.

Our present experience shows that a deeper conviction has to be in place for a more lasting and effective change to happen. The present ecological crisis calls for a “new way of being on Earth,”¹⁸⁷ and this will only be made possible if we develop a theology of creation that is based on a “re-reading of biblical sources on creation based on modern scholarship.”¹⁸⁸ The need for a creation or ecological theology that is made intelligible, relevant to our times, and earth-centered has never been as unrelenting as today as we face an ecological crisis, that, according to scientists, have been worsened by humanity’s lack of concern for our earth or worse, our deliberate violation of the integrity of all God’s creation. Only then will we be able to propose an alternative way of life, a new way of living as human beings alongside non-human creatures of God, the author of all life in the universe.

Pope Francis dedicates the entire second chapter of *Laudato Si’* to the discussion of the Church’s doctrine of creation that is based on the “wisdom of the biblical accounts of creation.”¹⁸⁹ This study supposes that as the “soul of theology,”¹⁹⁰ Sacred Scriptures must lay the foundations of a sound and responsive creation theology. Pope Francis admits that many of the creation theologies in the past are rooted in a distorted interpretation of the creation narratives, thereby providing an easy justification to humanity’s uncontrolled and excessive consumption of the resources of this earth. The book of Genesis, Francis accentuates, conveys that all human life is grounded on three

¹⁸⁷ Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Natural World* (Australia: Garratt Publishing, 2012), 3.

¹⁸⁸ Colm McKeating, *Light which Dims the Stars*, xv.

¹⁸⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 65.

¹⁹⁰ Dei Verbum, 24.

fundamental relationships namely, with God, with our neighbor (our fellow human beings), and with the earth itself.¹⁹¹

Leonardo Boff had voiced the same concern two decades earlier. He articulates: “Theology has to review past conceptions, see if others are needed, and in the light of new problems, update old ways of looking at things that fit only the experience of the past and not the major questions of the moment”¹⁹² The ecological crisis, then, poses a serious challenge to our doing of theology. This process of updating our old conceptions (or misconceptions) about the physical world begins with a re-reading of the scriptures in the light of the recent happenings in our world.

Not all theologians, however, follow this thought pattern. Some theologians see a re-reading of scriptures from an earth-centered (or cosmic-centered) perspective as ‘creating’ the meaning of the scriptural texts rather than objectively ‘discovering’ what those texts actually say and that nothing in the Bible speaks about solicitude for the earth.¹⁹³ These theologians and exegetes do not subscribe to the idea that showing concern for the physical environment must be the preoccupation of Christians.

However, as in any literary analysis, there is really no “pure text” untainted by assumptions, and the reader always has some degree of participation in the interpretation of a text.¹⁹⁴ Every reader brings with him/ her presuppositions of the texts and thus, all reading is an active construal of the text’s possible range of meanings based on the reader’s animating engagement with these potentialities.¹⁹⁵

Mark Wallace in his argument in favor of an earth-centered reading of the scriptures, emphasizing that this is an interpretative struggle of some biblical scholars and theologians to engage the Bible to speak against the concerns of this generation that is the focus of the earth-centered hermeneutics.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, our present experience of global warming and climate change calls for a recovery of the Judeo-Christian tradition of respect for the earth and of the restoration of what Pope Francis calls “disrupted relationships between God, humanity, and creation.”¹⁹⁷ Through earth-centered biblical hermeneutics, Wallace notes that:

Traditional biblical exegesis had stripped the natural world of its agency, its subjecthood, its voice. A new hermeneutic of biblical Earth solidarity challenges the personal salvation model of conventional Christianity and its occasional indifference to the wonder and suffering of creation. A new hermeneutic of Earth solidarity is a recovery of the Bible’s lost witness to the beauty of creation, as well

¹⁹¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 66.

¹⁹² Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 43.

¹⁹³ Mark I. Wallace, *Green Christianity: Five Ways to a Sustainable Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 29-30.

¹⁹⁴ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), xxii.

¹⁹⁵ Mark I Wallace, *Green Christianity*, 30.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 66.

as its message of prophetic judgement against all of us in the human community who have emptied the natural world of God's presence and then desecrated and despoiled the planet accordingly.¹⁹⁸

Paul's Idea of Integral Redemption in Rom. 8:18-23

Providing an overview of the purpose and goal of creation according to God's design, Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'* focuses on the hermeneutical analysis of the Genesis' creation accounts in the light of what is happening to our common home. There are, however, other gleams of wisdom on how we must regard all creation that we can discover in other biblical texts, both in the Old and New Testaments. In this chapter, the proponent of this study will make an attempt to present a theology of creation based on Paul's Idea of "Integral Redemption" in Rom. 8: 18-23. The pericope contains one of Paul's writings on the very important theme of "Redemption in Jesus Christ." In highlighting the theological significance of this scriptural text, Denis Edwards notes: "This text is fundamental for a theological understanding of the natural world because it insists that God's other creatures will participate in salvation *with* human beings."¹⁹⁹ Taking a cue from the book of Genesis, Paul believes that humanity and the rest of God's creation are linked together in their destiny. Such a relationship, which according to Genesis began with harmony, was destroyed by sin.

The interpretative focus of this study is on the third and last part of Sandra Schneider's Triadic Hermeneutical Approach – the World Before the Text or the World of the Reader, which is the focus of contemporary hermeneutics.

The Letter to the Romans

The Letter to the Romans is one of the seven letters originally written by the apostle Paul. The apostle himself identified at the very beginning that it was he who is writing the letter (Rom. 1:1). In addition to his self-identification is the presence of the narration of his conversion experience that happened on his way to Damascus and his references to it (Rom. 1:1, 5, 12-17; 15:15-24). It is this experience of encounter with the Risen Christ that paved the way not only for his reconciliation with Jesus and his community of followers but also of his committed preaching of the Gospel. It is for these reasons including the fact that Paul the Jew, or the Israelite as he prefers to be called (Rom 11:1), believed that he was thus commissioned to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13) that this letter is presumed to be indeed written by Paul.

As to the date of the writing of the Letter to the Romans, Paul himself gives us a hint in Rom. 15: 22-32. He tells his readers that as of writing, he has already completed a major part of his work of preaching the Gospel in Asia and Greece, and is planning to embark on a new missionary journey to Spain, and on the way to Spain, he is planning to pass by Rome. However, before that happens, he is planning to go back to Jerusalem to hand over to the 'saints' there the relief fund

¹⁹⁸ Mark I Wallace, *Green Christianity*, 30.

¹⁹⁹ Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Natural World: Exploring a Christian Approach to Ecology* (Australia: Garratt Publishing, 2012), 36.

subscribed by Macedonia and Achaia.²⁰⁰ This narration corresponds with Acts 20 which also suggests the place where Paul wrote this letter. It speaks of the three months spent in Greece at the beginning of the final journey to Jerusalem. The correlation therefore suggests Corinth as the place of origin of the letter for it is mentioned also in the letter that Phoebe came from Cenchreae, one of Corinth's ports at that time (Rom. 16:1-2), and Gaius and Erastus (Rom 16:23) probably lived in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). It is also believed that his three months stay in Corinth gave the apostle ample time to reflect and compose what is certainly the most carefully thought through and constructed of his letters.²⁰¹

Obviously, Paul is not writing to a Christian community he established²⁰² for as mentioned above, it is indicated in the letter that he is planning to visit Rome on his way to Spain to do missionary work. But one may ask, "Who is in Rome and what makes that place important for Paul to 'waste' his time, resources and energy to preach to them who have never been part of his ministry as an apostle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" A thorough reading of the texts of the letter will provide the answer. Paul makes a clear remark that it is not his intention to establish another foundation of the faith in Rome through his apostolic work, and likewise he tells those in Rome that he does not aspire to continue the work of another apostle. (cf. Rom 15:20). However, Paul sees the necessity of extending his apostle work by the very essence of his being called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, to those who are in Rome as he implies in Rom 1:6, 14-15.

There are other factors that led to the writing of the Letter to the Romans that is worth mentioning here. First, it is said that at that time, the Jewish community was both influential in Rome and deeply reviled by the most influential voices of the Roman *intelligensia* partly because of the sheer number which would number around 40,000- 50,000, and partly because of the preferential treatment that they had received from Julius Caesar and Augustus and also partly because of the increasing number of Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism.²⁰³ Finally, as in the case of Alexandria, history tells us that the Jewish community in Rome had no clear authority. This means that they are fragmented, scattered, and perhaps, the different synagogues there do not communicate with one another. This, therefore, implies fragmented Christian communities as well in that place. As implied by the unusual fact that Paul does not speak of a "church," in its singular sense, in Rome, the Christians in Rome may be lacking in organizational homogeneity. Paul instead mentions names of several "*oikos*" – house churches or synagogues (as in Rom. 16:5, 10-11, 14-15).

²⁰⁰ Matthew Black, *Romans: The New Century Bible Commentary*, Second Edition (England: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973), p. 4. The 'saints' refers to the Jewish Christians in the Holy City of Jerusalem which were impoverished primarily because of the persecutions they are experiencing in those days.

²⁰¹ Anchor Bible Dictionary. Volume 5 (NY: Doubleday, 1992), p. 431.

²⁰² To date, the actual date for the foundation of the Church in Rome is still a matter of inference and conjecture. The persons responsible for its establishment also remain to be unknown although some scholars believe that their names may have been preserved in chapter 6 of the Letter to the Romans. There Paul refers to Andronicus and Junias who are 'of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me' (Rom. 16: 7). It may have been one or more of these notable pre-Pauline apostles who were the first to preach the gospel in the imperial city. See Matthew Black, *Romans: The New Century Bible Commentary*, Second Edition, 6.

²⁰³ Anchor Bible Dictionary. Volume 5 (NY: Doubleday, 1992), 431. Scholars suggest that these will also no doubt have been factors in the tensions between Jew and Gentile evident in the letter, and will help explain such emphases as Romans 1:16 and 12: 14- 13:7.

Given the above reasons for writing to the Romans, The Anchor Bible Dictionary suggests the Paul had three major purposes in so doing. The first and foremost of all is the *missionary intent* of Paul. Although Paul perceives his writing a letter to the Romans as part of his apostleship to the Gentiles as he himself said in the letter, he nevertheless had in mind that he would plead to the Christians in Rome to support him financially and spiritually in his planned missionary journey to Spain. He verbalizes this in Rom. 15:24, 28. The letter is thus an attempt to bring forth the gospel to Spain in the same way that he has successfully preached in in several other places in Asia.

The second is his *apologetic* purpose. Paul felt that outside forces are attacking the Christian faith and he felt the need to defend it. Paul's strong conviction in the faith in Jesus as clearly shown in Rom. 1:16; 3:8 and 9:2, attest to this. Hence, it appears that the letter functions as Paul's apology for his gospel, and therefore also a self-apologia, since his whole life's work was bound up with the gospel he preached.²⁰⁴

Lastly, it is very apparent that the apostle had a pastoral purpose in mind in writing this letter. As mentioned above, there are potential factions happening between the churches in Rome so his exhortations in Rom. 14:1 and 15:7 are to be understood as appeals to them to always have a good Christian conduct. Likewise, Paul, most probably, would have wanted them to be united in the faith in Jesus Christ.

The Wider Context: Rom. 1-8

B. Dianzon, adheres to the suggestion of Edward Adams that the first eight chapters of the Letter to the Romans can be read as one section which may be given the heading "The Story of How God brings to fulfillment his original purposes in creating humanity and the universe as a whole."²⁰⁵ Hence, in our attempt to have a broader perspective and for us to have a clearer understanding of what Paul really intended to say, it is but necessary to at least have a view of the "story" of the first eight chapters of the Letter to the Romans. Furthermore, the fact that the manuscript is a letter addressed to a specific audience, the narratives can only be ascertained after a closer analysis of the larger context of the text.

Going over the first section the Letter to the Romans, one would notice immediately that the author made many allusions and references to the book of Genesis, most especially to the first parts of that Old Testament book wherein the "story" is told of how God had originally intended humanity to be his "stewards" of the created world but that Divine design was destroyed by human frailty which he would often refer to as "sin and death" (as in 5:12-21) or "sin and self" (as in 6:1-23) or just simply "sin" which is the cause of God's wrath (as in 1: 18-22). Paul makes use of the etiological story of Genesis 2-3 in order to explain how this sinful condition of humanity first emerged.²⁰⁶ Those chapters explain how sin entered the world – it existed not because it originated from the Creator God but its entry was caused by humanity's weakness. The result was a cut-off

²⁰⁴ Anchor Bible Dictionary. Volume 5 (NY: Doubleday, 1992), 431.

²⁰⁵ Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul and His Message* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing, 2007), 99.

²⁰⁶ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 135.

in the relationship between God and humanity. Because of this, all other relationships in the created world suffered a breakdown, which includes the relationship between all of creation and the Creator God.²⁰⁷ Again, that great chasm was put into existence not because of God's doing because the Lord God, as depicted in the Scriptures, is faithful to his covenant with man; it is but by man's infidelity to the Creator God that all others have been separated with Him. In his analysis of Rom. 1: 14-16, exegete Paul Achtemeier writes:

God's faithfulness to his promises, his "righteousness," however, is not something to be trifled with. To abuse God's offer of salvation, to imagine that God is something other than he is, the sovereign Lord and sole Creator of all that exists, brings in its train terrible consequences. If God is faithful to his covenant promises, he is also faithful to his own nature as God; and to refuse to acknowledge him as divine Creator and Lord is to remove oneself from any possibility of fellowship with him. Not to acknowledge him as Creator and Lord is to remove oneself from his lordship, and the results are simply terrifying.²⁰⁸

Thus, Gen. 3: 14-19 reflects God's curse bestowed upon Adam and Eve and all other creatures, which is a confirmation of the chasm caused by humanity to exist between them:

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,
you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures;
On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."

To the woman he said:

"I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing;
in pain shall you bring forth children.
Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master."

To the man he said:

"Because you listened to your wife
and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat,
"Cursed be the ground because of you!
In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life.

²⁰⁷ Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul and His Message*, 99.

²⁰⁸ Paul Achtemeier, *Romans – Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1985), 37.

Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field.

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By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return."

Paul explains in Rom. 1: 18-32 that the root of all sin is the rejection of God as the lord of all; it is the replacement of God with something or somebody else. Such idolatry resulted into a real curse for human beings who are incapable of functioning as its own creator and lord. This is precisely the temptation to which Adam and Eve succumbed: the temptation to become God, and hence Lord, themselves (see Gen. 3:5); and it is, in Paul's view, the continuing root of our malaise.²⁰⁹ In describing the wrath or curse of God, Paul is strong in his conviction that it is not a divine restraint imposed as punishment to humanity—the most terrifying thing God can do; it is rather a punishment that makes humans control their own destinies.²¹⁰ For Paul, the punishment, although presented as coming from God, is God's own withdrawal from human affairs. He permits humanity to do whatever they would want to do by allowing their idolatry of the self to prevail. Therefore, the consequence of such a life devoid of God's grace is the wrath itself.

Paul also puts forward the argument in the abovementioned pericope that human beings have the responsibility to use creation properly, both in the way we live life as individuals and as we live it in relation to others.²¹¹ As he mentions how one must live appropriately in the created world, he communicates to the reader that it is the abuse of creation that leads to sin, which in turn, invites the wrath of God to visit them. It is clear for the apostle that such as abuse of the created world is an insult to the one who ordered it and such an insult will not go unpunished.²¹² He utters this conviction in his letter by listing a number of vices that is illustrative only of how improper conduct destroys all relationships in the world.

The apostle Paul believes that God's original plan of salvation was destroyed by the idolatry of humanity as characterized by Adam in Rom. 5: 12-21, he talks about Adam as the ultimate depiction of the humanity's infidelity to God. Achtemeier expounds that Adam, the one in whom all humans find their common ancestor, and who, individual or not, represents the whole of humanity, fallen under the power of sin.²¹³ The apostle once more alludes to the Genesis story in which Adam caused sin to enter the world. It was through Adam that the created order succumbed to destruction. Now, he uses Adam to symbolize humanity individually and collectively.²¹⁴ Not only that, the term "Adam," as used by Paul, is a symbolic representation of the sinful humanity not only of the past, but of the present, and also of the future. H. F. Robinson states that "the whole group, including its past, present and future members might function as a single individual through any one

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 39. Even if in Paul's time, the idolatry of the people may take the form of animal worship, it is also undoubtedly a rejection of God's authority, a rebellion raged by the creatures against the Creator.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 40

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 41

²¹³ Ibid., 96.

²¹⁴ Sr. Bernardita Dianzon FSP explains in her exegetical work that '*adam* in Hebrew is a generic word which has both an individual and collective meaning, and can thus be rendered as "a human being" or "humankind". See Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul and His Message*, 101.

of its members conceived as representation of it.”²¹⁵ Therefore, “in Adam,” humanity disobeys God and stumbles into the pit of idolatry, selfishness, and greed and a world that distances itself from God, cutting its ties with Him. “Adam” as a corporate personality, is not a historical person who lived in the past, according to Paul’s world. “In Adam,” biblical scholar Karl Barth suggests, “the old was and is and shall be.”²¹⁶

However, Paul is quick to present Jesus Christ not only as the second Adam but the complete opposite of what Adam represents. The apostle already articulated this in Rom. 3:21 and further stated that God’s “saving faithfulness” has been manifested in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. He further explains that Christ got us out of the mess Adam got us in; what Adam did, Christ undid; where Adam failed, Christ succeeded.²¹⁷

A clear and strong comparison is made by Paul between Adam and Christ. He employs the image of Christ as a parallel counterpart and disparity to Adam. And as Fitzmyer elucidates, the comparison is not smoothly worked out, for Paul also wants to clarify the dissimilarity and the superabundance of Christ’s grace that now reigns instead of sin and disgrace, which have been in control since Adam.²¹⁸ Moreover, Fitzmyer gives a detailed observation of this comparison made by Paul:

In making this comparison, Paul establishes once more the basis for Christian hope (5:5): as Adam’s sin introduces baleful consequences for all historical humanity, so the justification wrought by Christ Jesus has affected those consequences for good and for salvation. Thus Adam and Christ are type and antitype... The comparison involves an antithetical parallelism between the death wrought by Adam and the life brought by Christ... Christ, the new Adam and the new head of humanity, was incomparably more beneficent toward humanity than Adam was maleficent.²¹⁹

The faithfulness of Jesus Christ was brought to its fruition through his obedience to the will of his Father. This obedience was manifested through the consistency of Jesus’ words and action and his persistent and passionate proclamation of the Kingdom of God. However, his proclamation of the Good News of salvation in a world where sin thrives cost him his very life. He suffered and died willingly to achieve his mission. Indeed, his embodiment of the values of the kingdom caused him to die on the cross for the sinful condition of the world did not accept his teachings. Nevertheless, he has shown an example of true obedience and fidelity to God – something that all human beings must follow and emulate. This makes him all the more the contrast of Adam. Adam is a symbol of selfishness and conceit; Jesus is the epitome of obedience and humility. As such,

²¹⁵ See H. F. Robinson, “The Hebrew Conception of the Corporate Personality”, in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments* (Beitrag zur ZAW 66, ed. J. Hempel (1936), PP. 49-62) IN Matthew Black, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Romans*. Second Edition. (England: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1989), 79.

²¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Fifth Impression (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 165.

²¹⁷ Paul Achtemeier, *Romans – Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 97.

²¹⁸ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 406.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Adam was cursed and Jesus was rewarded by the Father. This is best explained by Paul in the Christological hymn in his Letter to Philippians (2: 6-11):

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Though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
 Rather, he emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness;
 and found human in appearance,
 he humbled himself,
 becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
 Because of this,
 God greatly exalted him
 and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
 of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The coming of Jesus Christ brings forth hope for all humanity, Paul asserts. If “in Adam,” there was sin, division, and death; “in Christ,” there is new life and hope for humanity. Additionally, Karl Barth suggests that “in Christ,” the old has passed away, and the new is come into being (1 Cor. 5:7).²²⁰ However, this will only be brought to fulfillment if we go through what he calls the critical “moment”: the moment when mankind and its world are passing as one whole, from the old to the new, from ‘here’ to ‘there,’ from the present to the coming age, does the distinction between the two becomes apparent. The distinction exists therefore only when this world is dissolved by the dissolution whereby it is established.²²¹

Hence, the eschatological component of Paul’s theology becomes evident. He believes that although Christ has entered the scene by creating a new story, one that is abundant in grace, the “Adamic community” in the world nevertheless ceases to exist. The “Adam” in all of humanity continues to live in the world because as Paul declares we are continually being corrupted by our human bodies. Christ Jesus exemplifies the “saving faithfulness” of God, human beings remain to be blinded and enslaved by sin, which, has ever since been a hindrance to God’s continuing creative work in the world and the human beings’ active role in ensuring that this creative work of God reaches its realization. The reality of sin continues to proliferate because, according Paul, it is a power that dwells in the human flesh as what is presented in Rom. 7:22-24:

For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self,
 but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind,
 taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
 Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body?

²²⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* 165.

²²¹ Ibid.

It seems that Paul attributes the reality of sin²²² to the weakness of the flesh and that for as long as humanity holds on to the flesh that is in them, humanity will remain under its power. It is also implied that humanity has no control over our sinful situation for it is imbedded in their nature. Dianzon explains further:

“Flesh” is the term used by Paul to signify the weakness and corruptibility of human beings. The term points to their belonging to the world and being subject to temptation, to appetites and desires that lead to doom and death. It is the dimension of the human personality through which Sin attacks and which Sin uses as its instrument.²²³

The Immediate Context

J. Fitzmeyer suggests that the immediate context in which Rom. 8: 18-23 belongs to is Rom. 8:14-39, which has the theme “Christian Life, Lived in Freedom Bestowed by the Indwelling Spirit, has its destiny in Glory.”²²⁴ Reading the immediate context, one would readily notice that the apostle is employing an apocalyptic language, something that is not unusual during his time.²²⁵ In Rom. 8:14-39, Paul, in his discussion of what will happen at the end of the world, uses a familiar literary genre and emphasizes that there will be a lasting transformation that will happen not only to human beings but to all of creation “in Christ.” The key to the transforming event is no less than the whole of all creations’ incorporation to the person of Jesus Christ himself who will make all things “new.” It is the Spirit of God who will enable us to be in solidarity with grace in Jesus Christ according to Paul. In fact, it is the same Spirit who will make us God’s children and make us cry out to God: “Abba, Father!” as stated in vv. 14-15. Hence, the Spirit empowers us to respond to God’s invitation to have an intimate relationship with him.²²⁶ In fact, the exegete notes further that this is the first appearance of the theme of adoption (υιοθεσία - huiosthesia) in the Letter to the Romans.

While it is true that by being adopted children of God entails inheritance, E. H. Maly carefully reminds the readers that the notion of inheritance in this regard does not need a performance on our part – it implies a free gift from God. Following the theme of the earlier verses and chapters, Paul reiterates that through weakness of the flesh, we become one with Adam but those who allow

²²² Fitzmeyer explains that in the mind of the apostle Paul, “sin” is a missing of the mark (hamartain), This Greek verb retains in Paul’s writings its basic meaning, “miss the mark,” in other words, to fail to attain a moral goal or standard, as in classical Greek literature (Homer, Iliad 5.287; 9.50; Odyssey 13.214; 21.155; Aeschylus, Prometheus vinctus 26). But it also connotes transgression against nature, custom, law, or divine will. “To sin” means to commit personal, individual acts in thought or execution from which evil results (TDNT 1.296-302, 208-11; EDNT 1.65-69).

²²³ Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul and His Message*, 107.

²²⁴ Joseph Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, 497.

²²⁵ Harry Alan Hahne, *The Whole Creation Has Been Groaning*, (USA: Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2010), 22. H. A. Hahne says that from roughly about 200 B.C.E. until 100 C.E., many Jewish writers used apocalypses to express their struggle with the problem of evil and the expectation that God would dramatically intervene to make things right at the end of history.

²²⁶ Ibid. J. Fitzmeyer explains our ability to address God as our “Father,” as a fruit of our adoption as “children of God”, is a token of the eschatological destiny that awaits us.

themselves to be “led by the Spirit” are the “children of God,” and therefore will become heirs of the kingdom.²²⁷

Since Christ Jesus, through his resurrection from the death, attained the glory of a new life, Paul implies that those who believe in him, too, will eventually share in that glory that Christ Jesus has won for us. Jesus Christ, for the apostle, is the center of the concept of God’s saving plan for humanity and all of creation. However, this eschatological effect of our being co-heirs with Jesus Christ in his glory, E. H. Maly states, must be preceded by sharing in Christ’s suffering, which was a necessary presupposition to his own exaltation (cf. Phil. 2:6-11). Furthermore, a look back at Gospels will give us a hint that at the very core of the teachings of Jesus Christ is the conviction that glory cannot be attained without going through suffering. The apostle Paul emphasizes in this section the direct connection of glory with suffering.

Paul speaks of suffering but not without hope for he believes that the suffering of the children of God will bring about a new life not only for them but for all creation. This is the basis for Christian hope. A Christian hope is anchored on the future glory that awaits all of us in spite of all tribulations that we are experiencing at present. Albeit eschatological in character, it is not without basis for it is with the help of the Spirit that we become sharers not only in the sufferings of Christ but also in his resurrection.

J. Fitzmyer explained it very clearly when he said: “Paul recasts his thinking about the difference between the two aeons, the reign of sin and death, and the reign of the Spirit. Christians may still be in the former aeon in a sense, as may be manifest in the sufferings they still undergo, but they also experience in faith the longing for the glory that is to be. This longing manifests itself in Christian hope.” In the succeeding verses, Paul continues with the discussion of his eschatology. He moves on to assure the Christians in Rome that nothing in this life can harm Christians, whether it be suffering, or the attack of hostile evil powers, for all these things can contribute to the destiny to which Christians are called, and they are now referred to as “those who love God.” A Christian, for the apostle Paul, is one who loves God above all else. This implies that as a lover of God, a Christian puts all his confidence and complete trust in God who first loved them and will see to it that all things will work for the good of all who love him in return.²²⁸

The immediate context concludes with the magnificent “hymn” to the love of God. In describing this hymn that impresses anyone who reads it, E. H. Maly quotes V. Taylor: “(It is) an impassioned testimony to the all-sufficiency of the Love of Christ for us, a testimony which is without parallel in the world’s literature.”²²⁹ With this hymn, Paul beautifully sums up his discussion on the different aspects of the new life in union with Jesus Christ. Everything boils down to the certainty of the love of God which is the foundation of all other virtues, including hope. In the words of Fitzmyer, the apostle, makes it clear to the readers that “no creature can bring about the separation

²²⁷ Eugene H. Maly, *Romans* (Delaware: Michael Glazier Books, 1979), 45.

²²⁸ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 515.

²²⁹ Eugene H. Maly, *Romans*, 70.

of the justified Christian from God, so secure is the union of the Christian with Christ because of that love.”²³⁰

Time Dimension

The subject of this present study is considered as the epilogue of the first eight chapters of the Letter to the Romans. As such, the texts are rich in meaning, symbolisms, and important theological statements. Scholars say that this text is a good way to end the reflections on the “Christ event” and the attention will be shifted to the eschatological narratives. In the next chapters, Paul will dwell on the eschatological dimension of salvation in Christ. It is most useful at this point to be cognizant of the time dimension employed by the author in these verses. In the minds of the theologians Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, these chronological distinctions present in the text, albeit a bit fuzzy, since past-present, and present-future are inextricably connected in the narrative, Paul’s idea of creation is clearly ascertained. Let us look closely at the illustration presented by these theologians after a careful analysis of the text:

<i>Past (with ongoing present reality)</i>	
I.	Paul’s use of κτίσις (vv. 19-23) itself implies some past event or act of making/ founding/ creating, though it remains open to discussion whether the reference is to the whole product of such an event (“the creation”, in toto), or to an individual who has been created (“the creature”).
II.	The current, and presumably prior, state of κτίσις, is bondage to decay (v. 21). The precise sense remains unspecified, and the meaning is dependent in part on the content ascribed to κτίσις.
III.	κτίσις has been subjected to futility, of an unspecified nature, not of its own choice, though the subjector is not named (v. 20). These two facets of creation’s existence highlight the negative dimensions of its past and present experience, which are transformed with the resolution of the story.

²³⁰ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 529.

<i>Present (continuing from the past)</i>	
IV.	The whole of κτίσις is personified as having been, and continuing to “co-groan” in “co-travail” “until now” (v.22).
V.	In this, it accompanies, or is accompanied by, the inward groaning of Paul and his audience, defined as those “who have the first fruits of the Spirit” (v.23).
<i>Future</i>	
VI.	κτίσις longs (now) to see the (future) revealing of the “sons of God” (whose identity is debated [v. 19]).
VII.	Those (human) hearers who have the “first fruits of the Spirit” wait for adoption as God’s sons, when their bodies will be redeemed (v. 23).
VIII.	κτίσις will be, or hopes to be, liberated from bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the children of God (v. 21). Here, the plot looks forward to a final transformation which resolves and surpasses the negative state of decay and futility.

Figure 3.1
Time Dimension of Paul’s use of κτίσις ²³¹

²³¹ David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a time of Ecological Crisis*. (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 72.

The κτίσις (ktisis) ‘Creation’

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In this immediate context, Paul used this word four times and may be taken as the overarching element in the story. This word also has been used by the apostle in his other writings but the examples below are the other occasions wherein Paul used the word κτίσις in the Letter to the Romans: In Romans 1:20 —ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου (apo ktiseōs kosmou) “the creation of the world.” Paul talks about the Jewish belief that God existed, ever since the foundation of the world; in Romans 1:25—τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα (tē ktisei para ton ktisanta). ‘... they exchange the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.’ Paul refers to κτίσις as involving all creation in the world; and in Rom. 8:39—οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα (oute tis ktisis hetera). Paul again uses the term κτίσις to denote “else in all creation.”²³²

Given the above examples, Paul uses κτίσις to refer to the creation of the world, to God as creator, and to the creation as a whole. Because of this, the meaning of κτίσις in the Rom. 8: 18-23 has been the subject of numerous debates among theologians since the time of Augustine. One of those who insists that Paul is only referring to human beings when he mentioned the word κτίσις is Karl Barth argued that the word means “in the first place and above all man in general.”²³³ Furthermore, although Barth acknowledges that κτίσις can also be inclusive of all creation, “he concludes that since ‘the world was created for the sake of man, to be dominated by man,’ Paul’s use of the term in Romans 8 applies primarily ‘to man as the center of God’s creation.’”²³⁴

Contrary to Barth’s position, recent biblical scholars agree that the term here refers to the sub-human world, i.e., all life forms on earth including all species of plants and animals but excluding human beings. The reason for such a conclusion is that Paul uses another term to refer to the human beings. He calls all human beings, in particular, those believers in Jesus Christ, the “children of God” (v. 21). Moreover, Paul uses the phrase *πάσα ἡ κτίσις* (*pasa hē ktisis*), meaning ‘the whole creation,’ thus, we take it to mean that all who are part of the created world are included in this reference.

This study concurs with the ideas presented by recent exegetes that Paul keeps in mind the other sub-human creatures when he says ‘the whole creation groans together and suffers together until now.’ There is solidarity in its futility and bondage of corruption. But there is also solidarity of humans with the human world in the redemption that Christ has wrought.²³⁵ It appears that Paul had in mind God’s promise to Noah in Gen. 9:12-13: “See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark.”

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Mark Allen DeJong, “Pauline Theology Revisited: An Exegesis of Hope and Salvation in Romans 8:18-25”. Internet. Available in <https://hereticalrhetoric.wordpress.com/2011/05/09/pauline-theology-revisited-an-exegesis-of-hope-and-salvation-in-romans-818-25/>. Accessed on 07 July 2016.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 406.

Another observation as regards the use of κτίσις in this context is that Paul personifies it and makes it appear that it having been endowed with human qualities. It groans; it is capable of waiting; it will be set free and will attain glory. One might find this absurd but going over the scriptures, and most especially in the Old Testament, we encounter narratives wherein living creatures other than human beings are portrayed as having emotions and capable of thinking. For instance, recorded in the book of the prophet Isaiah is this passage: “The earth mourns and fades, the world languishes and fades; both heaven and earth languish. The earth is polluted because of its inhabitants, who have transgressed laws, violated statutes, broken the ancient covenant.” (Isaiah 24:4-5) Again, Paul here denotes the solidarity of human and sub-human creature in attaining their future glory.

Paul’s Allusion to the Creation Accounts in Genesis

It was earlier mentioned in this study that Paul keeps on alluding to Genesis 2-3 to present a message that God’s originally intended plan of salvation was hampered by the sin of humanity as symbolized by Adam in what appears to be the second creation account in the book of Genesis. However, scripture scholars now concur to the idea that the story of the beginning of the world in Genesis 2-3, which have been stored in the cultural memories of the people long before the text was written, is the earliest story which was put into writing by the people of the Yahwist tradition. In the Yahwist creation story, man was created first. He was formed from the clay of the earth by the potter God and he gave him life by breathing on him. After creating man, God made a garden filled with plants of sorts, then animals in order that he may have companions (cf. Gen. 2:4b – 3:24). When God’s work of creation is about to be accomplished, God entrusted to man the responsibility of cultivating and care of the garden: “The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.” (Gen. 2:15)

In her study of the prehistory of Genesis, theologian and bible scholar Mary Lou Van Rossum enlightens us that the story in Gen. 2-3 comes to us through the oral tradition of an early semi-nomadic people who established permanent agricultural settlements on the arable land in southern Palestine.²³⁶ Life was extremely difficult for these people that they really have to sweat it out just for them and their families to survive. It is in this sense that the story becomes meaningful for these people and it provides them and their succeeding generations the reason why they have to till and cultivate the land – that God created us from the same earth and we have to be responsible for the up-keeping of the land. Eco-theologian Mary Lou Van Rossum also suggests that this creation story was passed on through a paradigm shift from pastoral living to a life in the royal court and committed to a written form in the ninth century BCE during the opulent reign of Solomon.²³⁷ And as narrated in the book of Kings (1: 1-11), they were living in a life of excessiveness so much so that King Solomon was able to purchase not only hundreds but thousands of horses and chariots, gave away cities as presents in exchange for political favors, engaged wisdom scholars from Egypt and Mesopotamia, and devastated the cedars of Lebanon with enforced laborers to supply timber for his many building programs. Thus, this creation story

²³⁶ Mary Lou Van Rossum, *Reinhabiting the Earth: Biblical Perspectives and Eco-Spiritual Reflections*. (Missouri: Triumph Books, 1994), 15.

²³⁷ Ibid.

has since then become a countercultural response to the lavishness of the royal household and urges the people to live lives of simplicity and humility. They are led to the realization that they are made of the earth and they, too, have been entrusted by God to care for the earth as its stewards. Walter Bruggemann saw the contrast between the setting and the message of the story. He says: “It tells them there are limitations to human wisdom and autonomy and invited them to return to covenant fidelity and live trustfully in the presence of God.”²³⁸

It is in this context that we can conclude that Paul alludes to the Yahwist story of creation – a story that uses the more pastoral and feminine language of cultivation and care in contrast to the priestly account of Genesis 1 which is presented in a more masculine and regal way by using the language of subdue and dominion. However, it is interesting to note here that even the understanding of the words “dominion” and “subdue” as used in Gen. 1: 28 do not really imply “lording it over” and “taking full authority over the earth.” In the original Hebrew, the word used for “dominion” is *rada/ radah* and the term for “subdue” is *kabash/ kavash*. Mary Lou Van Rossum’s explanation is most helpful in this regard. She says:

In the Hebrew language, *rada/ radah* is understood as to *rule, subdue, or tread down* as one would tread down grapes in a winepress. In its earliest biblical setting, it expresses the ideal of kingship of Israel, which is patterned after David, the shepherd-king. Imaged and celebrated in Psalm 72, this ideal shepherd-king will govern the people with justice, defend the afflicted ones who cry to him, and rescue the lowly and the poor. The psalm tells us that ‘Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more’ (Psalm 72.)²³⁹

In this sense, then, having dominion and subduing do not carry an aggressive element. It is more like ushering salvaging creation from a dreadful state to a state of freedom and peace. Suffice it therefore to say that the priestly story of creation, if understood in the light of Psalm 72 does not support the idea that man must be the ruler of everything else that is on earth. The relationship that man must have with the rest of creation is one of justice, of peace, and of compassion. L.H. Steffen puts it succinctly: “*Rada/ radah* is about intimacy and inter-relatedness.”²⁴⁰

On the other hand, *kabash/ kavash* may be translated as ‘to subdue’ or ‘to tread down.’ Its use in Genesis 2 may be seen as God’s entrustment to human beings tending of the earth. In the Hebrew bible, God is often pictured as a shepherd who tends his sheep with compassion and care. This means ‘to subdue the earth’ is an exhortation of God to the people to tend it as he would all of creation. It is not about ‘lording over all creatures;’ it simply means that human beings are stewards of creation. And stewards are not masters of the universe but caretakers accountable to God who created everything that is on earth.

²³⁸ Walter Bruggemann, *Interpretation: Genesis* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 51-52 as quoted in Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁴⁰ L.H. Steffen, “In Defense of Dominion,” *Environmental Ethics*, Spring 1992, Vol. 14, No. 1, 63-80. in Ibid.

‘Subjected to futility’

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Another subject of arguments among exegetes in time past is v. 20: “for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope.” What is unmistakably established in the above statement is that the κτίσις has been subjected to futility. The result of this is mentioned in the following verse – chaos, decay, and corruption. But the question arises: “Who is responsible for this?” The answer can be found in the preceding chapters of the Letter to the Romans. It was mentioned in the preceding parts of this paper that the sin of humanity has its negative consequences to other living creatures on earth. Earlier in the same letter, Paul explains how sinful humanity was damned through the sin of humanity as represented by Adam. Exegete Tobin explains the connection between Romans 5 and Romans 8 as follows:

Since Paul has already in Rom. 5:12–21 traced the roots of the present situation of sin and death to Adam’s transgression, 8:20–21 is closer to the Jewish texts that build on interpretations of the Genesis account, in that the futility to which creation has been unwillingly subjected and the decay to which it is enslaved are the consequences of Adam’s transgression.²⁴¹

While it is clear that creation was subjected to futility through the transgression of Adam, scholars are now unanimous in saying that it was not him who subjected it for he does not have power to subject the entire sub-human creation to futility and have hope in view at the same time. The expression, ‘in hope,’ is understood as having the purpose of hope, or ‘upon the basis of hope’ when the act occurs.²⁴² In the Jewish viewpoint, only God would have the power to subject the whole sub-human creation to futility and the bondage of corruption. Only God could orchestrate all the events of history to bring hope in the end. Fitzmyer suggests that Paul would be saying that God, though he cursed the ground because of Adam’s transgression, still gave it a hope of sharing in human redemption or liberation.

The ‘groaning of creation’

In describing the process of liberation from the bondage of sin, Paul uses a peculiar word: groaning. He associates this redemptive process with a woman about to give birth and he uses it in the present tense. Horrel, et. al, suggest that there are already precedents in Jewish literature for anticipating times of upheaval in creation before the end of this present age as in Is. 24:1, 3-7, 19-20; 1 En. 80:2-8; Jub 23:18; and 1 QH 11:29-36. Furthermore, these theologians have this to say in explaining Paul’s use of the verb ‘groaning:’

²⁴¹ T.H. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric in Its Contexts*, (MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 290, This viewpoint is supported by Myers, who argues there is a direct linguistic connection in structure between Romans 5 and Romans 8. Myers, C.D., Chiasmic inversion in the argument of Romans 3–8, *Novum Testamentum* 35:42–43, 1993. In *Ibid.*,

²⁴² Henry B. Smith Jr. *Cosmic and universal death from Adam’s fall: an exegesis of Romans 8:19–23a*. Available in <http://creation.com/cosmic-and-universal-death-from-adams-fall-an-exegesis-of-romans-819-23a>.

The use of language associated with labor pains has often led commentators to see here a reference to the so-called “messianic woes;” the advent of the messiah is linked with an expectation of tribulation for humanity often concomitant with upheavals in the natural world, reaching a climax before the ‘birth’ of a new age.

The personification of the κτίσις by Paul has its parallels also in the other books in the Bible such in Is. 24:4 and Jer. 4:28 where the earth being depicted as mourning, and in Hos. 2:22 where the earth is depicted as speaking. The specific image of labor pains recalls the depiction in Jewish writings of the Earth as womb (Job 1:21; Ez. 10:6-4). Paul’s use of the verb in its present tense means that the travail of the κτίσις continues up to the present time. For him, it is an on-going process and a contemporary feature of its existence.

Narrative Analysis of Rom. 8:18-22

At the beginning of this immediate context, Paul reminds the believers in Christ in Rome that suffering is inevitable and it is a sign of an authentic discipleship: *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.”* (Rom. 8:18) Even though there is no allusion to the suffering that Christ endured until his eventual death on the cross out of obedience to the will of the Father, Christians, too, must accept this as a sign of genuine Christian experience. The apostle also assures the Christians that if only we become like Christ in his fidelity to God’s will and obedience to his precepts, then, nothing will prevent us from attaining what Christ has attained – the glory of the resurrection. He believes that in our solidarity with Christ Jesus, we must endure suffering. But this suffering is not without meaning for it will lead us surely to eternal glory just as Jesus was rewarded by the Father with a new life. This suffering in the present time, according to Paul, is not worth comparing to the immensity of God’s grace to be poured out to us in glory. The apostle is mindful that we live in a ‘moment’ of transition from the Old Age to the New Age. The Old Age is not yet completely over with sin for it continues to actively operate in our world. However, the New Age has already begun with the Christ-event. Jesus Christ ushered in a new way of living harmoniously with God and all of creation.

In the succeeding verses, Paul makes use of an apocalyptic language which is similar to the predominant Jewish apocalyptic literature written during Paul’s time. Paul shares the view of most Jews that the coming again of Jesus Christ will usher in a lasting transformation not only of human individuals but of all of creation. When Christ comes, he will bring with him the grace of renewal and conversion and the result will be the removal of the curse and the abundance of blessings.

In v. 19, creation waits with eager longing for the revelation of the ‘children of God.’ In v. 21 it is said that creation would be ‘set free from slavery to corruption’ and will ‘share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.’ Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate believe that nothing is mentioned about what preceded the subjection of creation to futility. They say: “Paul wants to emphasize here – a theme in keeping with the wider concerns of this chapter – is that creation was subjected in hope.”²⁴³ For them, Paul focuses the readers’ attention to the forward-looking aspect of creation.

²⁴³ David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a time of Ecological Crisis*. (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 82.

Moreover, these theologians believe that the attention is tilted towards what we shall expect in the future: “In narrative terms, this means that the focus, from the subjection onwards, is entirely *forward-looking*; there is no description of the act of creation, no indication as to what (if anything) preceded its subjection to futility... The present – and forward-looking experience of κτίσις characterized by co-groaning and co-travailing”²⁴⁴

Indeed, as the apostle writes that the creation and the ‘children of God’ are co-groaning and co-travailing in the present time, he is implying that they are conjoined together in solidarity in the Spirit – they both groan and hope for their glorification. The hope, according to the apostle, is something that is dependent on the ‘children of God.’ He believes that at the center of the redemptive process are the believers in Jesus Christ – the ‘children of God.’

I would like to point out also that Paul’s words are in consonance with the New Testament idea of the resurrection of Jesus as involving not only the whole of humanity but the entire created world. Paul, here, concurs to the theological statement found in various New Testament writings that the risen Christ is the beginning of the new creation (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5; 22:13). In his discussion of the process of liberation, Paul thinks not only of this involving humanity but of the entire cosmos. Fitzmyer, thus, explains:

It is no longer considered from an anthropological point of view; it is now in cosmic terms. Human bodies that are said to await such redemption (8:23) are merely part of the entire material creation, which is itself groaning in travail until such redemption occurs. For the Christ-event is expected to affect not only the human beings, but all material or physical creation as well.²⁴⁵

The last point that I would like to emphasize is regarding the characters in the story. Although not presented in the narrative as the leading character, what seems to be very obvious is the presence and work of God in the redemptive and liberation process, albeit passive, in the way Paul arranges the story. God was only mentioned directly in vv. 19-21. Even if the ‘children of God’ appears to be the most crucial character in the development of the story from groaning to liberation, Horrel, et.al, write: “God’s actions, hidden within the force of the so-called divine passives, are clearly the crucial motor of the entire plot, as encapsulated *in nuce* within two (passive) verbs: *was subjected... will be liberated*”²⁴⁶

Re-reading Rom. 8: 18-23 in the Light of the ‘New Cosmology’

Diane Bergant writes, “Today, we face the challenge of either devising a viable religious worldview that is more compatible with contemporary knowledge and experience, or resigning ourselves to religious thinking that is either out of date or, if attuned to contemporary science,

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 507.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 83.

lacking solid theological foundation.”²⁴⁷ It is precisely the objective of this section to look into Paul’s idea of “Integral Redemption” in the light of the recent scientific discoveries about the universe and its beginnings, which we aptly refers to as the “new cosmology.” Paul does not give a blueprint for action for Christians today as the world faces the present ecological crisis. However, this paper would like to develop a creation theology that is in comprehensible by people of this century and also one that will give humanity a faith foundation for our ecological action based on a re-reading of Rom. 8:18-23. At the beginning of this chapter, it was contended that traditional theologies of creation somehow contributed to the ecological crisis by providing a basis for the abuses humans have inflicted upon the earth and its non-human inhabitants. Given all these, Bergant goes on to say: “Since the religious tradition is situated within the cosmology or worldview of the society, a shift in scientific understandings which shape our worldview requires a comprehensive reexamination of theology and the spirituality that flows from it”²⁴⁸

Recent scientific discoveries about the beginnings of the earth and all life forms in the universe have influenced the way of thinking of many of the people in various fields and it has changed the way people see the world. This new ‘story’ of the universe and its beginnings has already brought humanity to a new level of awareness of the realities around us it challenges them to respond to the emerging concerns with greater creativity and a new paradigm.

In the exposition of these relatively new scientific discoveries and the insights science offers to all human beings today as we are confronted with the issue of climate change, the primary source that will be used are notable works of Judy Cannato.²⁴⁹ Although she was not a scientist, she wrote several notable books that bring together the great ideas and insights of the most brilliant scientists and theologians in our age. With utter clarity and coherence, her re-appropriation of the ideas of these scientists produces a transforming vision of this ‘new story of the universe.’

a. The ‘Old Cosmology’

It is helpful that at this point, the differences between the old and new cosmologies be laid down. The old cosmology is a belief in a static and fixed universe with its mechanistic images. It is based primarily by the prevailing, masculine consciousness that had wanted to control and dominate anything and everything.²⁵⁰ This belief is no longer feasible because it no longer resonates with what we know to be true. The Old Cosmological paradigm which was advanced by Aristotle especially in his work, *On The Heavens*, has influenced the people of the world for more than eighteen centuries. Aristotle presented that all bodies are made up of four elements: earth, water, air and fire. In the Aristotelian cosmology, the earth is central to the universe with the moon, sun and stars revolving around it. Moreover, he believes that all things in the heavens are perfect while

²⁴⁷ Dianne Bergant, CSA, *Biblical Perspectives on the Integrity of Creation*. CBAP Lectures 2007 (Quezon City: Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines, 2007), 4.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

²⁴⁹ Judy Cannato (1949-2011) was an associate member of the Congregation of Saint Joseph. She has master’s degrees in both Education and Religious Studies from John Carroll University, where she was also a member of the adjunct faculty in the Department of Religious Studies. She travelled extensively around the United States giving lectures, conferences, workshops, and retreats. Her work *Radical Amazement*, was awarded by the Catholic Press Association.

²⁵⁰ Diarmuid O’ Murchu’, *Reclaiming Spirituality* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2007). 89-90.

all elements on earth are imperfect. This worldview started to change with the advancement of scientific knowledge and methods which was ushered in first by Ptolemy of Alexandria (127-151 C.E.) who introduced a new way of understanding the motion of the planets in the universe, and later on, by the Polish Astronomer Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) who, in turn proposed that the earth revolves around the sun, which is the center of a system of planets, and the earth itself rotates on its own axis. Another Italian scientist of the time, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) embraced the Copernican cosmology and observed other realities in the universe that reversed the ideas in the ‘old cosmology.’ Galileo died on the year Isaac Newton was born (1642). Newton’s formulation of the law of gravity is considered as one of the greatest scientific discoveries ever made. Newton’s findings that the motion of the Earth and all other celestial bodies operate out of the same laws destroy the earlier presumption that the perfect Heaven is distinct from the imperfect Earth.²⁵¹

The progression of science and technology ushered in a new way of understanding the world and has changed the place of man in the cosmos. Human beings could no longer assert their primacy over all other creatures. However, the scientific methods that arose then thought that it was possible to conduct observations with total objectivity; that it would be possible to separate the observer from the observed, being completely detached without influencing the observation.²⁵² This resulted into another, what we may consider now as also inaccurate, view of the world – a machine consisting of perceptible, determined, predictable pieces of matter.²⁵³

This old story of the universe no longer hold true for us people of the twenty-first century although it is still influencing the way people think, behave and act in today’s society in the same way that it has also significantly affected the people in the generations that preceded ours. Eco-theologian Thomas Berry, reflecting on the magnitude of the social, political, and economic ills facing in the human community, realized that humanity is in almost a suicidal direction in the way they regard nature and environment and in their violent and indifferent treatment of one another. He recognizes the need for a ‘New Story’ as a fitting response to the travails of human beings in a universe where they perceived themselves as deeply estranged. He says:

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The Old Story—the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it—is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the New Story. The Old Story sustained us for a long period of time. It shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with a life purpose, and energized action. It consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge, and guided education. We awoke in the morning and knew where we were.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from the Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe*. (Indiana: Sorin Books, 2006), 23.

²⁵² Ibid., 24.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Thomas Berry, “New Story”. Teilhard Studies Series. 1978

b. The ‘New Cosmology’

Thomas Berry is one with the many people from various fields in asserting a new way of looking at the universe. He contends that humanity today has the obligation to learn and hold on to a new story of how things originated, where we are now, and what is in store for us so we can all be given some meaningful direction. He holds that the world is experiencing so many societal ills, including the degradation of the environment because humanity has lost touch with the reality and that they have lost their values and direction for human action. For Judy Cannato, the recent scientific discoveries form part of this new story – the “new cosmology.” The “new cosmology” is an important theological strand that weaves together great scientific discoveries of recent decades with the wisdom of mystics throughout the ages.²⁵⁵ Cannato concurs to the proposition of Steven Goldman who once said: *“By the end of the 20th century, every aspect of the Earth, from its solid core to the uppermost reaches of its atmosphere, was viewed as ‘alive,’ continuously driven by the play of awesome forces”*²⁵⁶ This New Cosmology indeed shall make every human being think about who they are in relation to one another and in relation to other living beings on earth for they realize that the earth community is not only composed of human beings, who for a long time thought that they are at the center of a static universe, but of a variety of living creatures seen and unseen.

In *Radical Amazement*, Judy Cannato effectively summarized the significant features of this New Cosmology brought about by the scientific findings. It is not the intention of this study, however, to discuss all the major features of the New Cosmology and to give a thorough explanation of each of the pivotal scientific concepts. What will be elaborated in the following pages are the more relevant scientific discoveries in the twentieth century that will give insights to humanity as we are confronted with the issue of global climate change.

c. Hermeneutical Analysis:

Today, as all nations of the world experience the global phenomenon of climate change, Paul’s concept of ‘groaning of creation’ is no longer an intangible construct of human imagination that is not within the realm of our human experience. It is happening right before our eyes and people who have experienced the devastating effects of the recent natural calamities that hit our country have literally suffered and are continuously groaning in pain. The only hope of some of these people is God’s continuing mercy, care, and compassion for them. They have anchored their hopes in a God whom they believe would never leave them orphans and one who will eventually uplift their spirits and would leave them out of the bondage they have been subjected to.

What, then, could this narrative written by Paul offer them and all of us co-inhabitants in our home that we call planet Earth? Bernardita Dianzon poses another pivotal question as we endeavor to

²⁵⁵ The Community of the Holy Spirit, “The New Cosmology”. Accessed on 29 March 2016. Available from <http://www.chssisters.org/new-cosmology/>.

²⁵⁶ Steven L. Goldman, *Science in the Twentieth Century: A Social-Intellectual Survey* (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2004), 24 in Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from the Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe*. (Indiana: Sorin Books, 2006), 32.

make relevant these words of the apostle given our experience today: “Does Paul’s image of ‘groaning of creation’ simply mirror for us the sad and alarming situation that can be verified not only in our country, but in so many parts of the world, or does it also point to us the way out of this grim situation?”²⁵⁷ 87

Our earlier analysis of the text provides a hint to the possible solution to the problem. Paul’s intention of using the image of a woman who is laboring in pain is not to dampen the spirits of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome but to encourage them to put their hopes in God who has the capacity and the power to make all things new. An expectant mother encounters difficulties and suffering along the way before she gives birth to her child, but her hope does not fade because of the suffering she faces. She endures all the pains and afflictions with the hope that one day, the joy of seeing a new-born baby will not only give her tremendous joy but also the sense of fulfilment that goes with the blessings of being a mother. It is also reflective of the painful struggle to bring the new creation to fruition. The apostle Paul speaks of hope for a new creation not only as a concept or idea but as an actual event happening in the future.

1. ‘Integral Redemption’ in Jesus Christ

In the earlier part of this study, it was mentioned that the apostle Paul incorporates the image of the ‘groaning of creation’ towards the end of his lengthy discourse on God’s plan of salvation being perfected in the person of Jesus Christ whom he considers as the embodiment of the faithfulness of God. Colm Mckeating alluding to Karl Rahner’s theology articulates that the Incarnation of the Word and the resurrection of Jesus are the permanent, definitive, and surpassable principles of God’s salvation.²⁵⁸ The resurrection event must not only be interpreted as a spiritual reality that brought about forgiveness of sins and spiritual renewal. In the resurrection of Jesus, he Holy Spirit transformed the humanity of Jesus that led to what Mckeating notes: “a new relationship was set up between Christ and the world so that all things would be drawn towards him as towards their end and consummation.”²⁵⁹

Though these events, humanity is given an exemplar of how it is to truly live as ‘children of God’- by being and becoming obedient to the will of God who is the Father of all creation and having right relationships not only with our fellow human beings but these right relationships are extended to all our co-inhabitants in this created order.

The apostle Paul believes that as the children of God will share in the glory of the redemption in Christ Jesus, the rest of creation, too, will reach that point wherein it will emerge as a champion over death and decay, thus sharing in the fruits of Jesus’ rising to new life. The apostle writes that the creation and the ‘children of God’ are co-groaning and co-travailing in the present time, implying a ‘conjunction’ or solidarity in the Spirit – they both groan and hope for their glorification.

²⁵⁷ Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul and His Message*, 107.

²⁵⁸ Colm Mckeating, *Light Which Dims the Stars*, 270-271.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 271.

The suffering of creation, for Paul, is caused by humanity's greed and selfishness. When sin enters the picture, humanity loses its incorporation into Jesus Christ and identifies with 'Adam'. It is because of humanity's sinful nature – the 'Adamic personality' that hinders humanity and creation from realizing their destiny, which is their redemption. It implies that it is through humanity's incorporation into Christ that the offer of salvation will be experienced by non-human creatures. Lucas comments: "The general picture conveyed here by Paul is that human disobedience of God means that the natural order cannot achieve its goal, indeed it is falling into disorder. Yet, there is hope. The redemption of humans by Christ is the central part of the wider redemptive work, involving the whole created order."²⁶⁰

Yet, in spite of humanity's limitations and sinful nature, God continues to entrust to humanity the stewardship of the earth. God had made humans His co-workers in his continuing work of creation, sharing with him the responsibility of making this earth a garden of life. Anderson writes: "Creation is not just an event that occurred in the beginning, at the foundation of the earth, but is God's continuing activity of sustaining and holding everything in being."²⁶¹ God sustains the earth through his goodness and with humanity's cooperation. The terms "dominion" and "subdue" are to be interpreted in the context of the human beings, man and woman, being God's representatives in the work of ongoing creation in the world, making him or her – his sons and daughters, co-creators. Dianzon expounds on this reality:

God creates the future of the world but draws human beings into the process all the while. Yes, the Creator takes the risk again by placing the fate of the earth in human hands. Having overcome the age-old block of sin, Christ has gifted us with true freedom to make a choice. Which story do we want to run in our lives – the "sin-story in Adam" or the "grace-story in Christ"? Creation is counting on us to make the right choice.²⁶²

As humanity participates in the divine work of creation, the tension between grace and sin continues to happen in the hearts of humans as creation awaits for the day when they will also experience fully their redemption in Christ. Christopher Southgate offers an idea, which admittedly is a product of his own re-reading of Rom. 8: 19-22 in the light of contemporary science. He suggests that the 'futility' that Paul is talking about refers to what we now call the "evolutionary process." He sees within this cycle of birth and death, a great value. He adds that "the rhythm of nature's birthing and dying, with all the creaturely suffering that we have seen necessarily attends

²⁶⁰ Ernest Lucas, "The New Testament Teaching on the Environment," *Transformation* 16:3; 1999: 96-97 in Mark Bredin, *The Ecology of the New Testament: Creation, re-Creation, and the Environment* (Colorado Springs, Biblica: 2010), 140.

²⁶¹ Bernard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 89 in Carol J. Dempsey and Russel A. Butkus, Eds., *All Creation is Groaning: An Interdisciplinary Vision for Life in a Sacred Universe* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 156.

²⁶² Bernardita Dianzon, *Glimpses of Paul*, 111.

it, awaited the ultimate self-transcendence of the humanity of Christ, whose dying and rising again inaugurated a new era of possibilities.”²⁶³

This new era of possibilities will enable human beings to move to a higher level of glory which will also result to the glorification of all other creatures. He also infers that creation’s liberty awaiting that of humankind means that we human beings have a specific role to play in this world. God has subjected the world in hope – a struggle exists in which humans and non-humans to groan together. But it is only through the human being that all the rest will attain its liberation. This simply means that Paul knows that the human beings are the most capable of attaining a high level of consciousness so much so that it is capable of lifting every creature from the bondage that we have been subjected to. Southgate offers to us the image of a *midwife* as a metaphor to be used to refer to human beings in this regard.²⁶⁴ The pregnant woman who is groaning in pain will be liberated from suffering by the midwife whose primary task is to aid the laboring mother to give birth to a child. A new life of the world will only come into a realization in and through the conscious efforts of human beings who have taken upon themselves the God-given mission of cultivating the earth and caring for creation.

In consonance with this story of the human tendency to commit sin but at the same time it’s longing to be righteous is what science tells us through Darwin’s theory of evolution. Judy Cannato writes: “Evolution as a process that moves toward ever-increasing complexity and the movement toward consciousness provides a plausible explanation for the development of the universe and its components.” It was in the 19th Century CE that a number of natural historians started to think of evolutionary transformation as an explanation for patterns observed in the environment. One of the protagonists of this scientific theory, if not the most famous of all is Charles Darwin (1809-1882). In his book, *Origin of Species*, he offered an explanation to this controversial proposition. In that book, he explicates the process of natural selection. According to Darwin, this process has four components: First, each organism varies in appearance and behavior. Second, some of its components are consistently passed on to the succeeding generation. Third, each generation experiences substantial mortality. As mutation happens, they affect the ability of members of the species to survive and reproduce. Lastly, Individuals possessing traits well suited for the struggle for local resources will contribute more offspring to the next generation.

Denis Edwards, however, says that Darwin’s theory suffered in that he had no way of accounting for the rise of inherited variations. It was not until the turn of the century when the insight of Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) began to seep into the consciousness of some European scientists. Through the experiments Mendel conducted and the “re-discovery” of Mendel’s theory, it became clear that inherited characteristics are transmitted from one generation to another through units known today as genes. It was also known that changes in genes can happen, and they called it “mutation.” These mutations were not seen as novelty, which created the possibility of evolutionary change.

²⁶³ Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 94-95.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Judy Cannato has the same opinion as Barbara Marx Hubbard who suggests that humankind is at the crossroads in the process of evolution. She explains that we live in a unique and urgent time and humanity is being challenged to make a leap from being Homo Sapiens (wise ones) to becoming Homo universalis (universal ones). Now that we have the capacity to think and decide, we are urged to use these gifts well so that we may choose wisely, thereby, worthy of being called “wise ones.” As we are confronted with the issue of the survival of the earth, Cannato recognizes the urgency of the problem and exhorts all to engage our consciousness now. This consciousness will also lead us to the realization that we are not alone in this planet. We co-exist with other inhabitants on earth. It will lead us to the fact that we are connected with one another—person-to-person, person-to-creature, and person-to-organic-life. Whatever we do will have a tremendous impact on others and to the whole of life. Cannato declares: “Evolution, rather than degrading or diminishing humanity, asserts that we are part of a magnificent whole that consist of a vast web of relationships, an organic and cosmic body that evokes pure wonder.”

Believing that all creation stretches as one body, always pregnant and always struggling to give birth to the new, Cannato writes: “God is at the heart of the evolutionary process, working from within creation, endowing creatures themselves to be empowered to choose life in whatever way is appropriate for their mode of being. All creation experiences this divine movement from within.”²⁶⁵

2. Ecological Conversion

In recognizing that creation has been subjected to futility because of humanity’s sinfulness, Paul subtly addresses the Christians in Rome that there is certainly a hope for the transformation of the world. This hope, according to the apostle, is something that is dependent on the ‘children of God.’ He believes that at the center of the redemptive process are the believers in Jesus Christ – the ‘children of God.’ It is through the conversion or transformation of human beings, who have been endowed with the gift of attaining the highest level of consciousness that all creation will finally experience its glory in Christ Jesus.

Mentioned earlier is the reality of sin, which destroys humanity’s relationship with God and with the rest of creation. Sin hinders these three to continually live in harmony and peace. In the light of the ecological crisis the earth is facing today, there is a need for Christianity to broaden its understanding of sin. From a traditional view of sin that is limited to the personal and human societal realm, it must extend to a more inclusive perspective – a cosmic standpoint. Joshtrom Kureethadam comments: “... any human action that damages our common home and engenders the life and survival of our common household becomes a sin. On a collective level, ecological sin is irresponsible stewardship of our home planet and its biosphere... The current ecological crisis is a consequence of our own values, beliefs, and conscious choices—and our sinful behavior.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 61.

²⁶⁶ Joshtrom Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis*, 338.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, remarks: “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.”²⁶⁷ Ecological conversion is the key to the healing of the relationship between humanity and God and with the rest of creation. Ecological conversion, coming from the Greek work *metanoia* means “going away” and “turning towards”. The apostle Paul in Rom. 8:18-23 exhorts Christians to turn away from our ‘Adamic personality’ and turn towards Jesus Christ, who will lead all to fullness of life. It is in this context that Pope Francis notes that “the effects of their (Christians) encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”²⁶⁸

Pope Francis is not the first pontiff to underline the importance of ecological conversion. While awakening the entire Church to the present realities that affect the earth, Pope John Paul II offered an alternative to the prevailing lifestyle of the people. It is a way of life that is not death-dealing but life-giving; one that recognizes that human beings are not “masters” of creation but stewards of all that is on earth. He thinks that the solution to the urgent ecological problem is a *metanoia*, a conversion. The pope expresses this in the following words:

...the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. *Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.*²⁶⁹

Humanity today indeed must change their attitudes and mindsets, their way of life if they desire to transform the world. This transformation to an ecological consciousness is already underway, but it needs the cooperation, the commitment and the best efforts of the whole human community, according to Denis Edwards. Sean McDonagh passionately suggests that with such dire consequences for humanity and the whole of creation, surely Pope John Paul II’s call to “ecological conversion” ought to be at the heart of the Church’s call for a renewed evangelization. There is hope for the future, the apostle Paul proclaims, if only humanity allows itself to go through the process of conversion and transformation in Christ. Rom. 8:18-23 suggests that if everything were created out of love, then surely, everything will be restored in love and mercy.

In the scientific realm, there is an analogous to the sin-conversion story, which is called the theory of the black holes. French scientists John Michell of England and Pierre LaPlace in separate studies suggested the existence of an “invisible star” taking into consideration Newton’s Laws in the late eighteenth century. It was John Wheeler, an American theoretical physicist, who coined the term “black hole” to refer to these distorted objects. National Geographic defines Black holes

²⁶⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 217.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Pope John Paul II. “*Peace with God the Creator; Peace with all of Creation*”, 13. Emphasis mine.

as the cold remnants of former stars, so dense that no matter—not even light—is able to escape their powerful gravitational pull. National Geographic also explains that a budding black hole shrinks to zero volume—at which point it is infinitely dense. Even the light from such a star is unable to escape its immense gravitational pull. The star's own light becomes trapped in orbit, and the dark star becomes known as a black hole. Moreover, the following are the characteristics of this entity:

Black holes pull matter and even energy into themselves—but no more so than other stars or cosmic objects of similar mass. That means that a black hole with the mass of our own sun would not "suck" objects into it any more than our own sun does with its own gravitational pull... Planets, light, and other matter must pass close to a black hole in order to be pulled into its grasp. When they reach a point of no return they are said to have entered the event horizon—the point from which any escape is impossible because it requires moving faster than the speed of light.²⁷⁰

It is difficult to find a black hole in the universe for it is invisible. The only way we can verify its existence is the measuring effect it has on the surrounding matter. The discovery is based on velocity measurements of a whirlpool of hot gas orbiting the black hole. In 1994, Hubble Space Telescope data produced an unprecedented measurement of the mass of an unseen object at the center of M87. Based on the kinetic energy of the material whirling about the center, the object is about 3 billion times the mass of our Sun and appears to be concentrated into a space smaller than our solar system.²⁷¹

According to Cannato, there is no definitive boundary to the black hole, but what will be noticed is the great gravitational pull and as we move toward the black hole, the light around surrounding us becomes redder, an evidence of its loss of energy. Once a thing passes the event horizon—the point of no return—the gravitational pull becomes so great that space and time becomes distorted and the thing will soon cease to exist. A further approach to the black hole will result to the stretching of our bodies and at some point; we shall be drawn completely into darkness, becoming one with the super-dense singularity.²⁷²

Steven Hawking theorized that black holes emit radiation under certain conditions. This is a result of the *uncertainty principle*, which says we can never be sure that an apparent vacuum is truly empty and, instead, that virtual particles are constantly appearing in pairs. These couples, made of a particle and its antimatter counterpart, rapidly annihilate and vanish again, so normally go unnoticed.²⁷³ Cannato suggests that that radiation is in reality, light. It implies that not even a black hole lies outside the influence of light; that the darkness of the black hole is not absolute at all. The

²⁷⁰“Black Holes”. National Geographic Website. Accessed on 10 January 2014.

<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/space/universe/black-holes-article/>.

²⁷¹ “No Escape: The Truth About Black Holes “. Accessed on 10 January 2014. Available in <http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/resources/explorations/blackholes/teacher/sciencebackground.html>.

²⁷² Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 109.

²⁷³ David Shiga, “Hawking radiation glimpsed in artificial black hole”. Accessed on 28 September 2010. Available in <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn19508-hawking-radiation-glimpsed-in-artificial-black-hole.html>

radiation or light has the potential to curse darkness. In her reflection on the existence of black holes and its implications and relevance to human existence, Judy Cannato has this to say:

Like travel to the black hole, this journey of darkness that we sometimes make crosses no readily boundary, but is characterized by an ambiguous event horizon that quickly throws us off our bearings and takes us to a place of no return. Once we pass its indistinct perimeter all that we are becomes oriented toward the darkness. Familiar objects, no longer able to retain shape under the intense pressure, become distorted and stretched beyond recognition. Cut off from ordinary experience, time and space stand still as we collapse in upon ourselves. We are utterly oriented toward a dense singularity that will not allow escape from its gravitational pull. All light dims, then vanishes completely as any trace of our former self disappears.²⁷⁴

Cannato likens black holes to humanity's sinfulness where through it, horizons are dimmed and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel; humanity in a state of deep despair and hopelessness.²⁷⁵ The apostle Paul also talks about a situation wherein darkness looms and hopes are shattered. "In Adam," we have been in solidarity with the sinful world. Whenever we sin, we fall into the trap of selfishness and personal ambition. We "miss the mark" that causes us to struggle against our inner darkness that wants to suck the life out of us.²⁷⁶ Worse, we may find ourselves as desirous of a status over against God. Southgate talks of a human tendency to attain power that draws human beings into idolatry that in turn drains away the freedom that comes from worshipful dependence on God.²⁷⁷ There can be no more dangerous ideology than to think that we have the absolute authority over our own affairs and everything that dwells on this universe. With the ecological crisis happening today, we cannot think of any other cause than humanity's abuse of its freedom and the misuse of its gift of intellect and free will. Hence, the result is a shattered relationship between humanity and the non-human creation. The black hole of sin has taken power over us and there seems to be no escape from it.

Whether our black hole moments have been caused by us or inflicted to us by others, Paul reminds us that although we have been subjected to 'futility' because of sin, the *one* who subjected us, subjected us in hope. It seems that the theory of black holes has a corresponding explanation to what Paul is saying. Stephen Hawking's theory, as earlier explained, articulates that even the black hole can eventually be collapsed that can be caused by a formation of a radiation brought about by the formation of subatomic particles in the space adjacent to the black hole. In layman's terms, this radiation is called light. Because of this light, the darkness of the black hole is not really definitive.

The same is true with the Christian story. Paul's emphasis that we have subjected in hope means that humanity and all of creation will suffer but our suffering will end one day in glory – the

²⁷⁴ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 111.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Christopher Southgate, 102.

renewal of all things. Glory awaits humanity and all of creation because there is light. This light, for us Christians, is no other than Jesus Christ who came to redeem us from sin and death. By his coming to us a human like us and through his resurrection, we have been given the grace to share in his glory. Thus we see some traces of similarities between the end of the material universe as taught to us by science and the Christian idea of eschaton or the end times.

3. Stewardship is an Essential Component of Christian Discipleship

Until today, stewardship remains a controversial concept because of its reference to the terms “dominion” and “subdue” in the second creation account in the book of Genesis. However, given the clarifications mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, we can say that it remains an acceptable term provided that it is understood in the light of the correct interpretation of the Genesis creation accounts.

In Rom. 8:18-23, Paul subtly implies that the responsibility of ushering in the salvation of all creation lies upon the hands of humans who have been entrusted by God to “till the earth and subdue it” – to take good care of it and ensuring its growth and fruitfulness according to the plan of God. Russel Butkus clearly expounds: “God is the primary author of the meaning and value of creation. Its inherent goodness and beauty is a consistent theme in ancient Israel’s theology of creation. Moreover creation discloses both the nature of God and the human vocation within God’s world.” Humans are thus accountable to God for the treatment of non-human creatures for to them God has given the vocation to care for our common home.

The notion of humanity’s stewardship of creation must above all recognize that humans have been endowed with the capacity to attain the highest level of *consciousness*.²⁷⁸ The apostle Paul, aware of this distinction between humans and non-human creatures points out in Rom. 8: 18 that creation (non-human creatures) eagerly longs for the ‘revelation of the children of God (humans)’. This distinctiveness, however, as Butkus explains, has two aspects: on one hand, with a God-human relationship, humanity represents the divine as God’s responsible and caring steward; and on the other hand, with a human—earth relationship humanity recognizes that they share the same organic source with all living beings.²⁷⁹ This parallels with the opinion of some scientists and philosophers that while possessing unique and distinctive characteristics nevertheless humans remain one among other species and evolved as all life-forms on earth did. In emphasizing that humanity must know that they are not God but are agents of God’s care and love in the world, Pope Francis reminds Christians: “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God.... Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Russel Butkus, “The Stewardship of Creation”. The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. Accessed on 14 March 2016. Available at <http://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/CreationarticleButkus.pdf>

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 83.

By becoming man, Christ has taken unto himself this material world, and now, risen, is intimately present to each being. For Paul, Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's saving faithfulness, has shown us the path to obedience and love. In a world that has been darkened by sin, Christ enters and proclaims, through word and deed, the faithfulness of His Father, even unto death, death on the cross (cf. Phil. 2:8). As the antithesis of Adam who represents sinful human condition and selfish ambition, Jesus shows humanity that obedience to the Father's will usher in not only the transformation of our own selves but of all creation. Dianzon remarks: "In Adam is told the age-old story of human refusal to be a creature in love and responsibility before God. Christ's facilitates and models the new possibility opened up by grace."²⁸¹ The text suggests that in the person Christ Jesus, God gives hope to a world that is suffering due to sin and fills it with hope for renewal.

Paul implies that it is incumbent upon all Christians, therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, to live their vocation as messengers of hope, especially to a world that is experiencing an ecological crisis. Creation, according to the apostle Paul, is waiting for humanity to be faithful to its calling to be stewards of creation. Following Christ's example of faithfulness and obedience to God's will, Christians abandonment of sin and openness to God's grace by being responsible stewards of the earth will lead to the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. By keeping the memory of Jesus, who has achieved the highest level of *consciousness*, alive in the personal and communal lives of those who follow him will enable themselves to think like him, act like him, and be like him in relation to creation.

Rupert Sheldrake's theory of morphogenic fields suggests that systems are surrounded by invisible fields that carry information or memory from one generation to another. This hypothesis implies that a human being and as such any other living species on earth is a field of energy and information embedded in the body but extends outside of it, interacting with the energy and information from other beings. Sheldrake says that "each member of a species draws on the collective memory of the species, and tunes in to past members of the species, and in turn contributes to the further development of the species."²⁸² As time goes by, these memories becomes habits and these habits are stored in the internal system of an organism and assists succeeding generations in acquiring newly-developing configurations. Sheldrake notes:

Social groups are likewise organized by fields, as in schools of fish and flocks of birds. Human societies have memories that are transmitted through the culture of the group, and are most explicitly communicated through the ritual re-enactment of a founding story or myth, as in the Jewish Passover celebration, the Christian Holy Communion and the American thanksgiving dinner, through which the past become present through a kind of resonance with those who have performed the same rituals before.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Dianzon, 113.

²⁸² Rupert Sheldrake, "In the Presence of the Past: An Interview with Rupert Sheldrake," <http://twm.co.nz/sheld-int2.htm>. In Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 84-85.

²⁸³ Rupert Sheldrake, "Morphic Resonance and Morphic Fields - an Introduction," Accessed on 31 March 2016. Available at <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/morphic-resonance/introduction>.

It is the morphogenic fields, acting like a force that binds organisms, which enables groups to maintain its organization and form. It is said that like other the other invisible forces like gravity and magnetism, the morphogenic fields cannot be seen but their influence and impact can be measured and experienced. However, as time passes by, new force fields are developed containing a kind of memory that is deposited in the collective memory of the species, thus affecting the shaping of the quality of the fields surrounding it. The only thing that makes human beings distinct from other species is that they are capable of self-reflection.

At the heart of Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God is love and compassion, which extends to all of God's creation. This vision of Jesus is the "formative field"²⁸⁴ of Christians and it is indicative of how Christians must operate as individuals and as a community of disciples. Cannato comments: "Besides being rooted in scripture, the capacity to operate out of our lived experience of Jesus Christ will keep his memory and mission alive, allowing his vision and values to become more deeply embedded in our field of awareness."²⁸⁵ Christian discernment plays a pivotal role in determining which habits must be shun or discontinued and which ones will be helpful in living our vocation and mission as Christ's followers, including the call to be stewards of His creation.

4. The Interrelationship of Creation

Paul's allusion to the book of Genesis acknowledges the conviction of ancient Israel that the whole of creation has its origins in the supreme, creative, and sustaining power of God. And as the entire biosphere including human beings come from our source, Paul, following the line of thought of the Yahwist creation account in Gen. 2, also suggests that there is an inevitable connectedness among all of God's creatures. James Limburg comments, "The whole account stresses the interrelatedness of creation. The plants, the animals and human beings are all made from the same raw material."²⁸⁶

In the earlier part of this chapter, it was mentioned that the God-given vocation of humanity is not one of 'lording over' creation but that of keeping it safe from harm and destruction; humans must be earth keepers who care for and nurture the only home they share with all forms of life. Because everything is interrelated, the brand of stewardship that a Christian must embody is the one that recognizes that in the scheme of created order, humanity is not superior to the rest but the ones who have been endowed with the potential and responsibility of taking care of everything that has life on earth. Humanity must take the cue from Jesus Christ, who, in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, has called upon all men and women to renewal and conversion. Jesus' call is for the restoration of right relationships not only amongst human beings but between God and humanity and humanity and the rest of creation. The U.S. Presbyterian Church notes: "Christ is

²⁸⁴ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 89. Here, I borrowed the term coined by Judy Cannato in reference to the morphogenic fields.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ James Limburg, "The Way of an Eagle in the Sky: Reflections on the Bible and the Care of the Earth," *The Catholic World* 233:1396 (1990): 151.

the perfection of the image and the paradigm of ‘dominion.’ This means to live out the image and the responsibility with nurturing and serving love.”²⁸⁷

This conviction therefore calls for a redefinition of humanity’s role and place in the context of the created order. Human beings therefore are not ‘above,’ ‘superior,’ ‘lords’ but are co-existing and co-dependent with the rest in the earth’s biosphere. Leonardo Boff, in calling for a new ethical order involving not only humanity but the rest of the created order noted: “Human beings live ethically when they decide to stop placing themselves above all others. To be truly ethical, humankind has to be able to understand the urgent need for ecological balance, of being together with nature, and of being human together with other human beings.”²⁸⁸ James Feehan believes that even science today holds the same conviction and claims that “the ripples of consanguinity must extend to all creatures, and with those expanding ripples the ethical imperative that is grounded in relationship”²⁸⁹

Pope Francis highlights this interrelatedness of creation and more than once calls on humanity to restore the broken relationships between God, humanity, and the earth. Going through the encyclical, one can easily conclude that its overarching theme is a call to “a deep sense of communion with the rest of nature.” The pope asserts: “we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also united us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river, and mother earth.”²⁹⁰

Related to the theory of morphogenic fields is the another theory called the “Theory of Holons,” which finds its consonance with the abovementioned theological theme.

It was the American developmental psychologist Ken Wilber, who formulated the Integral Theory, a theory that brings together the realms of physical science, cultural and social history, psychology, and other related fields into a coherent system.²⁹¹ He proposes that everything that exists is composed of holons, or parts/ whole. Wilber writes the Twenty Tenets which is aimed at summarizing and drawing out some basic conclusions from dynamic systems theory and the contemporary evolutionary sciences. He refers to them “tendencies of evolution” or “propensities of manifestation,” the Twenty Tenets operate throughout the three great domains of evolution: the physiosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere (or matter, life, and mind). One of the tenets, Wilber proposes, is that everything that exists is composed of holons, or parts/ whole. As a result of his experiment, he noticed that it seems every unit and particle, or idea shares a dual role: being both an autonomous, self-reliant unit (whole entity) unto itself, and also a part of one or more other wholes.

²⁸⁷ “*Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development*”, Presbyterian Church USA (1996), 62-63.

²⁸⁸ Leonard Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 31.

²⁸⁹ John Feehan, *The Singing Heart of the World: Creation, Evolution, and Faith* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2012), 104.

²⁹⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 93.

²⁹¹ Cf. Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 98.

A *holon* is a whole that is a part of a greater whole. Its four-fold capacities—self-preservation (agency), self-adaptation (communion), self-transcendence, and self-dissolution, It denotes connectedness, a web of relationships. As *holons*, there exists a tension between self-preservation and self-adaptation in every living being. All *holons* are parts of greater whole and must be capable of adapting, and sometimes limiting their individuality in order to become a functional part of the whole.²⁹² Human beings have the same tendency as they co-exist with other creatures in this world. Cannato further expresses: “In humans this characteristic is expressed as the desire to be in relationship or communion with others. Of necessity we limit or direct our individuality or self-expression in ways that allow for a greater expression to which we belong.”²⁹³

John Zizioulas describes freedom as “lying in the tendency to transcend the limitations of nature to the point of denying nature itself or anything given.”²⁹⁴ Southgate explains that as human beings have evolved to a very pronounced degree, they are therefore capable of having this freedom to attain or deny our creaturely status with the non-human creation thereby making it possible to truer freedom of the self-given, the self freely offered to others and to God.²⁹⁵ Southgate also suggests that we all find the epitome of this self-offering as a fruit of the God-given human freedom. The consciousness of the human person, according to the apostle Paul, makes him or her worthy of being called “children of God”. Hence, the term used by him in Rom. 8:18-23 – “*children of God*” refers to the human person fully evolved and fully conscious of the choices he or she makes.

Summary and Conclusion

The ecological crisis the world is encountering today demands a rethinking of Christian theology of creation. It must be based on the wisdom of the scriptures and must likewise be illumined by a cosmology that is acceptable to the people of the 21st century. This study centers on the notion of “integral redemption” as implied in Rom. 8:18-23. This means that all creation will participate with humanity in the glory of Christ’s offer of salvation through the incarnation-resurrection event.

The interpretative focus of this study is on the *World Before the Text* or the *World of the Reader*, which is the concentration of contemporary hermeneutics. The text was read in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ particularly its five important features that are useful for this study namely: the big bang theory, the theory of evolution, the black hole theory, the theory of morphogenic fields, and the theory of holons.

The apostle Paul does not give a blueprint for action in Rom. 8:18-23 as Christians face the present problem of global warming and climate change. However, Paul presents a theology that, if applied to the present context, will serve as impetus for the transformation of individuals and communities. Through the hermeneutical analysis of the text in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ we were able to develop four main themes of the Christian Theology of Creation namely (1) Salvation is offered

²⁹² Ibid., 99.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 96.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

to all of Creation, (2) there's a need for ecological conversion on the part of human beings, (3) stewardship of creation is an essential component of Christian discipleship, (4) a recognition of the interrelationship of creation. 99

CHAPTER FOUR

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**THE CORRELATION OF THE ECOLOGICAL INITIATIVES
OF THE PHILIPPINE LASALLIAN FAMILY
AND A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF CREATION**

In the second chapter, the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family was presented and critically analyzed in the light of the pressing problem of global warming and climate change. In the next chapter, on the other hand, through a hermeneutical analysis of Rom. 8:18-23 in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ key themes of an intelligible Christian Theology of Creation were propounded. It is the aim of this chapter to present the *correlation* of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family, i.e., the principles that it formulated and/or adapted from the Institute, the programs, and other projects of De La Salle Philippines as a whole and those of the individual Lasallian educational institutions *with* the themes of Christian Theology of Creation that was abstracted from a re-reading of Rom. 8:18-23 in the light of the new cosmology. Four major concerns that arose from the hermeneutical analysis of the Lasallian ecological initiatives that will be correlated from the four themes that resulted from the hermeneutical analysis of Rom. 8:18-23.

1. On the Use of the Sustainable Development Paradigm and Paul’s Concept of ‘Integral Redemption’

It was observed, after careful analysis, that the underlying principles of the ecological initiatives both in the Institute level as well as in the district and country levels, are all based on the ‘sustainable development paradigm’ that is being promoted by the UNESCO. As a congregation of religious men that owns and administers schools in more than 80 countries, the Brothers of Christian Schools, insofar as ecological initiatives are concerned, supports and promotes the vision of UNESCO for Education for Sustainable Development. For UNESCO, education for sustainable development means enabling every human person, regardless of gender, race, or creed, to acquire the knowledge, values, abilities, and mind-sets that would guarantee a sustainable future. To achieve this objective, UNESCO offers the following key strategies, which are also being carried out in La Salle schools and have been part of the FEPM of De La Salle Philippines:

Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ UNESCO, “Education for Sustainable Development” in UNESCO Official Webpage. Accessed on 04 April 2016. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/>.

Aside from the key sustainable development issues mention above, the organization also vows to include into the curriculum other issues like gender equality, health promotion, peace and human security, water, sustainable urbanization and cultural diversity. Likewise, these issues are also present in the Environmental Education Plan of the Institute as well as in the FEPM Manual of De La Salle Philippines. 101

While these issues are indeed necessary components of education for sustainable development, they, nevertheless focus on guaranteeing a sustainable future for humanity and not necessarily for non-human species that co-exist with humanity in our common home – the planet earth. This anthropocentric viewpoint may, in the long run, not only influence our stakeholders in the schools, especially the youth, to adopt an egoistic framework towards a sustainable future for themselves and their immediate community but also to totally disregard the integrity of creation. Leonardo Boff ascertains that anthropocentrism reveals a narrow, atomized view of the human being, torn away from other beings and that is it for human beings other beings exist.²⁹⁷

Other than having indications of anthropocentrism, Brian Henning presents yet another critique of the sustainability paradigm in that it is too often grounded in an uncritical *technophilia* or love of technology. He concurs with many other critics of the sustainability paradigm, and writes that it “encourages the reduction of morality to a social scientific analysis of economic values achievable through technological innovation.”²⁹⁸ Expressing disappointment over the fact the humanity over the years have been so much enthused in developing new technologies of sorts to overcome physical limitations, etc, Henning says that humanity has focused too much on asking the ‘how’ questions, often putting aside the more important “should” questions – the questions that ethics must consider. In the attempt to produce more efficient technology for humans, not only do the lives of other humans in areas that nature is destructed are placed in imminent danger but other life forms are negatively affected too.

In the Philippines for instance, cases of irresponsible mining activities are being done in rural areas – areas that are obviously most vulnerable to climate change are even made more susceptible to man-made calamities because of an individual or corporation or a nation-state’s ravenousness. One clear is example is the mining activities in *Rapu-Rapu*, in the Bicol region. The position paper of the Ateneo de Naga University explains how mining has gravely affected the community and its natural environment: “Eleven rural barangays and the town of *Rapu-Rapu* are dependent on a limited water supply produced by the watershed of the island. At present, some areas of the forest in this watershed are already denuded, thus endangering the availability of water and worsening the present state of the water supply. With mining, competition between the residents and the mining company for the limited water resource becomes even more serious.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 21.

²⁹⁸ Brian G. Henning, *Riders in the Storm: Ethics in an Age of Climate Change* (Minnesota: Anselm Academic, 2015), 111.

²⁹⁹ Ateneo de Naga University, “Position Paper against Mining in Rapu-rapu”. ADNU Website. Accessed on 04 March 2016. Available in <http://www.adnu.edu.ph/institutes/inecar/rapu-rapu/reason03.asp>.

Also related to this issue is the issue of mining in Congo, the place where majority of the minerals that are used in electronic gadgets such as mobile phones and computers come from. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for many years now, has been plagued by regional conflict and a deadly scramble for its vast natural resources, an advocacy group reports.³⁰⁰ It is primarily because mineral trade has become a multi-million dollar industry especially in the eastern part of Congo and armed groups have taken advantage of this. Minerals like the ores that produce tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold are used in electronic devices such as cell phones, portable music players, and computers. The advocacy groups that “Given the lack of a transparent minerals supply chain, American consumers have no way to ensure that their purchases are not financing armed groups that regularly commit atrocities, including mass rape.”³⁰¹

The ‘sustainable development’ paradigm, as suggested by Henning, is also morally neutral. He remarks: “Sustainability offers no insight into what ends are worth sustaining.”³⁰² Sustainability does not ensure a good life for humanity much less does it promise a good life for non-human creatures. The only objective of the paradigm is that the future generations of humanity will have enough resources for their living. On the other hand, practices that are morally unacceptable may have a positive impact on future generations of humanity. With these realities, Henning asserts: “by presupposing rather than engaging in debate over the goals humanity should pursue, the mainstream sustainability paradigm creates a theoretical void that the status quo is more than happy to fill.”³⁰³

In the preceding chapter, it was mentioned that the apostle Paul believes that whereas the children of God will share in the glory of the redemption in Christ Jesus, the rest of creation, too, will reach that point wherein it will emerge as a champion over death and decay. In writing that creation and the ‘children of God’ are co-groaning and co-travailing in the present time, Paul is implying that they are conjoined together in solidarity in the Spirit – they both groan and hope for their glorification. Salvation is also offered to non-human beings through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that brought about a ‘new creation,’ a ‘new ‘life’ for all.

The redemption of non-human beings, according to Paul, is highly dependent of human beings – the ones who have been endowed with the potential of reaching the highest level of consciousness. Humans have been gifted also with the responsibility of participating in God’s creative work in the world. However, due to sin, humanity has destroyed a once harmonious relationship between God the creator and their fellow creatures. Paul refers to this as humanity’s “Adamic” nature – the human tendency to commit sin and be ruled by selfishness and greed. Paul, however, proposes humanity’s ‘incorporation’ into Christ as a response to the sin-story in Adam. Being and acting ‘in Christ’ will bring about grace and redemption not only for humanity. It will bring about a ‘new creation’ that will effect a transformation of the present world and a restoration of right relationships between God, humans, and nature.

³⁰⁰ Raise Hope for Congo, “Conflict Minerals”. Raise Hope for Congo Website. Accessed on April 2, 2016. Available in <http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/initiatives/conflict-minerals>.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid., 111.

³⁰³ Ibid., 112.

Paul also indicates in Rom 8:18-23 that the supreme power of creation belongs to God alone. God is the beginning of the cosmos and the origin of all things, albeit creation is an ongoing process that continues up to the present. Part of God's continuing work of creation is sustaining and nurturing the created order as everything and everyone on earth is totally dependent on him.

Having this principle of 'integral redemption' in mind, a Christian, in this day and age, cannot accept a principle of sustainable development that is devoid of respect for the intrinsic value of the created order. God's grace of redemption in Christ is not only offered to human beings but is freely given to all living beings as well. Secondly, a Christian must recognize the biblical teaching that the entire creation finds its origin and sustaining power in God. Hence, humanity alone could not and will not be able to ensure a favourable future for the succeeding generations. It is only through God's sovereign power and graciousness that a sustainable earth will come into fruition.

Theologically considered, the 'sustainable development' paradigm may be used as a standard for the ecological initiatives provided it does not conform to the ideas that are being promoted by international organizations that only looks after the wellbeing of future generations of humanity but neglects the integrity of non-human creatures. It must be anchored on a Christian principle of 'integral redemption' and that it must recognize the ultimate and creative power of God who continues to actively engage in the work of creation. It must also, as Butkus suggests, be based on the eschatological principle of *responsibility for the future*.³⁰⁴ This principle is also one the bases of Paul's concept of 'integral redemption' in Rom. 8:18-23. Responsibility for the future is built on the biblical vision that at the end of times, there will be a restoration of all creation in Christ. Both the Old and New Testaments recount Israel's hope for redemption although in the New Testament, this hope for a redemptive future is centered on the person of Jesus Christ who has modelled to his disciples how it is to commit oneself to justice and righteousness, to love and compassion to all, including care for God's creation. Butkus remarks: "For Christians, the eschatological hope of cosmic redemption culminates in Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God."³⁰⁵

On the other hand, the 'sustainable development' paradigm must also be based on the idea of transformation in Christ as purported by Jurgen Moltmann in his book, *The Coming of God*. Moltmann argues that that the integral liberation or salvation can be seen in three aspects namely, the personal eschatology, i.e. the experience of eternal life of an individual, which is reflective of the (b) historical eschatology – the experience of the kingdom of God, which through the resurrection of Jesus brought about hope for all that is, thus, there is (c) cosmic eschatology. These three dimensions of eschatology supplements and expends one another. The idea of the resurrection of the dead, if limited to a personal experience and devoid of social and cosmic dimensions of salvation, leads to Gnosticism for it falls into the danger of espousing the idea of a 'salvation from the world' instead of 'salvation of the world'. The resurrection of the dead – God

³⁰⁴ Russel Butkus, "Sustainability: An Eco-Theological Analysis" in Carol J. Dempsey and Russell A. Butkus, *All Creation is Groaning*, 157.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 160.

raising us up in all our connection, our past, and our hopes is more than just a “personal survival”; it is rather “an event belonging to the whole of life.”³⁰⁶ Thus, it involves all in the cosmic order. 104 As implied by the Paul in Rom. 8: 18-23, indeed “Christian eschatology must be broadened out into cosmic eschatology.”³⁰⁷

Conyers, in concurring with the idea that was presented by Moltmann says that Christian hope is most comprehensively articulated as hope for a ‘new heaven and a new earth’³⁰⁸ Paul insists in Rom. 8 18-23 that the world is waiting for the birth of a new creation that it why it is depicted as groaning in pains. However, it waits eagerly with hope. Denis Edwards describes what will happen in the end times as unimaginable: “The new creation is beyond our imagination, beyond our human minds... Our hope for the natural world and for ourselves is based not on what we can see or imagine but on the unbreakable promise of God.”³⁰⁹ In sum, I would like to borrow the words of Packiam: “Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology may be described in three perspectives: it is the end of creation; it is really the new beginning of creation that comes from without and not from within; it is ultimately the completion of creation. Once again, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the interpretive key.”³¹⁰ It is an event where God will completely dwell on his creation.

The apostle Paul in Rom. 8: 18-23, as already discussed in the previous pages of this paper, tackles the topic of redemption in Christ which includes not only humans but also the sub-humans. Clearly, Paul demonstrates the eschatological character of salvation – that one day, creation will fully experience God’s redemption in Christ. By using the image of an expectant mother, Paul describes how the entire creation that was ‘subjected to futility’ (v. 19-22) because of humanity’s sinful nature, anticipates with eagerness ‘the revelation of the children of God (humans).’ Creation relies on the ‘children of God’ for it to experience redemption. In the light of what is happening in our natural ecosystems today, one can conclude that indeed creation or nature is indeed groaning in pains and is calling on the children of God to usher in its full redemption in Christ. Moltmann notes: “To understand ‘nature’ as creation therefore means discerning ‘nature’ as the enslaved creation that hopes for liberty. So by ‘nature’ we can only mean a single act in the great drama of the creation of the world on the way to the kingdom of glory -- the act that is being played out at the present time.”³¹¹ Paul, however, stresses on the virtue of hope that is anchored in Christ Jesus who has redeemed us by his obedience to the will of the Father. The hope for the liberation of creation that Paul expresses in Romans 8 clearly implies that the destiny of the natural world is not

³⁰⁶ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 49 in A.J. Conyers, “The Renewal of All Things”. Books and Culture – Christian Review. Accessed on 20 April 2016. Available at <http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/1999/novdec/9b6025.html?paging=off>.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ A.J. Conyers, “The Renewal of All Things”. Books and Culture – Christian Review. Accessed on 20 April 2016. Available at <http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/1999/novdec/9b6025.html?paging=off>.

³⁰⁹ Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Natural World*, 36.

³¹⁰ Glenn Packiam, “The Presence of a Faithful God: What Jurgen Moltmann and NT Wright Tell Us About Christian Hope” Unpublished Dissertation. Durham University, UK. Accessed on 12 April 2016. Available at https://www.academia.edu/9955608/The_Presence_of_a_Faithful_God_What_Jurgen_Moltmann_and_NT_Wright_Tell_Us_About_Christian_Hope.

³¹¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 39.

destruction but transformation.³¹² Indeed, this hope for the transformation of the world does not come from humanity but from Christ Jesus who, through his rising to new life, brings hope for salvation. In fact, it is from this periscope in the Letter to the Romans that Pope Benedict XVI extracted the title of his second encyclical *Spe Salvi* that deals with Christian hope: “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Rom. 8: 24-25 NRSV)

This Pauline eschatology and the New Testament eschatology in general “is not intended to foster Christian passivity but to encourage God's people actively and vigorously to align their values and behavior with what it is that God is planning to do,”³¹³ Moo argues. He believes that humanity must cooperate with God's will in bringing about renewal on earth and that humanity must not hinder the transformation of all things in Christ at the end of times. He furthers: “Just as, then, believers should be working to bring as many human beings as possible within the scope of God's reconciling act, so they should be working to bring the created world as close to that perfect restoration for which God has destined it.”³¹⁴

The Philippine Lasallian ecological framework therefore must be based on this biblically inspired theme of sustainability and must not easily give in to the ideas presented by organizations that espouses another ideology that until now is a subject of many debates. There is a possibility that if the Philippine Lasallian Family will continue to follow the line of thinking of UNESCO when it comes to education for sustainable development, the intrinsic value of non-human creatures will be disparaged and the natural environment will just be treated as a resource that can be utilized or as a means to ensure a favourable future for humanity.

Another point that is related to the concept of “Integral Redemption” which I would like to discuss at this juncture is the fundamental and essential connection between social ethics and environmental ethics. In explaining the Principles of Social Development of the Philippine Lasallian Family, the document “Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family” echoes Thomas Berry's assertion that a proper ethical framework for the task of protecting the planet has to be rebuilt according to God's original plan, and it must recognize that “human ethics is derivative from the ecological imperative.”³¹⁵ This is highlighted in the document because in the past, ecological movements have not contributed substantially to poverty reduction endeavors.

³¹² Douglas J. Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006) 449-88. Moo discusses the tension between is seem to be an internal contradiction in some New Testament eschatological writings. For instance, while it is clear that in Rom. 8, there is hope for the transformation of the world at the end of times, Moo states, this hope stands in some tension with passages in the NT which appear to announce that the last days will usher in an entirely new world. The most important of these passages are those in 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 that predict the “destruction” (2 Pet 3:10, 11, 12). However, he argues that the entirely new world that the other NT writers are referring to is the “passing away of the sinful form” of this world and that the “destruction” refers to the destruction of the sinful and filthy characteristics of humanity.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Thomas Berry, “Ethics and Ecology”. Unpublished Paper, 1994 as quoted in “Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family”, De La Salle University, Manila website. Accessed on 14 April 2016. Available at www.dlsu.edu.ph/inside/lasallian-guiding-principles/social-development.asp.

They are not cognizant of the impact of humanity's situation of poverty and injustice to the environment.

The document recognizes the interconnectedness of the realities of peace, justice, and integrity of creation. It is an affirmation of humanity and other creature's interrelatedness and interdependence that is grounded on the recognition that all came from one source. Since all humans and all non-human creatures come from one creator, they all share one life, one earth, and one destiny. We live into one another's lives and die into one another's deaths.³¹⁶ Thus, as poverty and injustice continues to proliferate and plague human persons, environmental injustice is here to stay. Forced by the situation of poverty, those who are in the fringes of society will continue to be contributory to the degradation of the natural environment.

Pope Francis, though the encyclical reinforced the Church's support and preferential option for the poor – a message that pope Francis personally took seriously and has lived by – and forcefully suggested that global environmental justice and ecological debts should be at the heart of any global solution, which is a view that had been advocated by many activists for a long time.³¹⁷ In *Laudato Si'*, the pope also took note of the inseparability of working for justice in human society and advocating for ecological justice:

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: 'Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest'. [BOLIVIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, Pastoral Letter on the Environment and Human Development in Bolivia *El universo, don de Dios para la vida* (23 March 2012), 17].³¹⁸

This papal document acknowledges that creation and humanity are both “groaning” and “waiting in hope” for the revelation of the children of God. This acknowledgement of the interconnectedness must bring all Christians to embrace a holistic view that fight for justice for humanity and ecological advocacies are two sides of the same coin. Pope Francis minced no words when he goaded all men and women of goodwill to listen to the “groanings” of both humans and non-human creatures: “Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”³¹⁹ This writing of Francis in *Laudato Si'* is an affirmation of what his predecessor Benedict XVI had earlier pronounced in one of his General Audience catechesis: “The Earth is indeed a precious gift of the Creator who, in designing

³¹⁶ George E. Tinker, “Creation as Kin: An American Indian View,” in *After Nature's Revolt*, 144-53.

³¹⁷ See Ahmed Ragab, “Pope Francis' Message on the Environment, Poverty, and Power” in Harvard Divinity School Website. Accessed on 14 April 2016. Available at hds.harvard.edu/news/2015/06/22/popes-much-anticipated-encyclical-environment-poverty-and-power.

³¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 48.

³¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

its intrinsic order, has given us bearings that guide us as stewards of his creation. Precisely from within this framework, the Church considers matters concerning the environment and its protection intimately linked to the theme of integral human development.”³²⁰ 107

On the other hand, it is the poor and the marginalized in society that are most affected by the ill effects of global warming and climate change. They are the most vulnerable to storms, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters for they lack access to material resources. On a larger scale, as earlier discussed in this study, the developing countries in Asia and Africa are the most vulnerable to the effects of global warming. For this reason, the number of climate migrants in recent years is increasing and more people leave their native lands in order to pitch in a safer physical environment. Pope Francis also took note of this glaring reality: “The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming.”³²¹ In this sense, the earth joins the poor and the oppressed in seeking justice and peace and in appealing to put an end to the systemic disregard for their needs. The pope puts it concisely: “the cries of the Earth join the cries of the abandoned of this world.”³²²

Leonardo Boff had earlier expressed the abovementioned reality especially in his book, “Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor” where Boff systematically presents a critique of a prevailing utilitarian and anthropocentric paradigm and provides an alternative path to humanity especially for those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. The alternative path must be grounded on “solidarity, compassion, caring, communion and loving—such values and inner powers can lay the foundation of a new paradigm of civilization, the civilization of the humanity reunited in the Common House, on the Planet Earth.”³²³ He further stresses that mission of Christians today is to “celebrate the greatness of Creation and connect it again to the Core where it came from and to where it will go, with care, lightness, joy, reverence and love.”³²⁴

Hence, as implied in the Social Development Framework of the Philippine Lasallian Family, a clear connection must be seen between all efforts to reduce poverty in the country and all institutional initiatives to protect the earth as these two realms are connected and related to each other. Reduction in poverty will yield positive results for the protection of the environment. On the other hand, experience tells us that a safe, healthy, and habitable ‘home’ will engender harmony and will limit instances of injustice and unpeace in the human society. With this in mind, the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality tells us that care for the earth encompasses a genuine concern and solidarity with the poor and the outcasts in society. This concern for the poor and the marginalized is also something that is close to the heart of Saint John Baptist de la Salle. His mission centered on making the underprivileged children in Reims experience God’s ‘salvation’ through education and the teaching of catechism to children. It is for them that the Founder risked his future, popularity, and reputation.

³²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, August 26, 2009.

³²¹ Ibid, 51.

³²² Ibid, 53.

³²³ Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 121.

³²⁴ Ibid.

2. On Education as a Means to Protect the Environment *and* Ecological Conversion

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A look back at the documents of the Philippine Lasallian Family regarding care for the environment as well as at the Environmental Education Plan of the Institute, education has been identified as the primary means in which protection of the environment is promoted and nurtured among the various stakeholders in the respective educational establishments. It was also observed, as earlier noted, that in the mind of the Institute, education does not only refer to formal education in the classroom, but it also includes all other opportunities for education, including improvement of organizational structures for better monitoring of day-to-day affairs of the school, ethical fund raising and investments, promotion of good ecological practices between and among stakeholders in the educational unit, establishment of common approaches of mitigating the effects of climate change, and the use of various means of communication, especially social media in advocating the protection of the environment.

This study also have shown that faithful to the vocation and mission entrusted by Saint John Baptist de la Salle, the Brothers and all Lasallian educators today see education, the transmission of knowledge and skill for the protection of the environment, as their way of acting towards the mitigation of the elects of global warming and climate change. It was also presented in the previous pages that Facilities and Environmental Program Management Environmental Education of De La Salle Philippines encourages environmental education that is aimed at enabling individuals to know and recognize how the natural and social environments interact with each other and to know how to address issues arising from the interaction between to the entities.

Theologically considered, education, indeed remains to be an effective tool in the transformation of the self and of the society. It is also an essential component of the evangelizing mission of the Church, which includes, the proclamation of justice, peace, and integrity of creation. Through environmental education or education for sustainability, one could be exposed to new viewpoints, emerging discoveries, and practical ideas on how best to engage the present problem of global warming and climate change. The Church considers education as a participation in the prophetic function of Christ who announced the gospel of salvation, in word and in deed, “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Pope Benedict XVI, in emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive education for peace, said that care for earth must also be given due attention and must not remain within the confines of formal education. He said:

Education for peace must increasingly begin with far-reaching decisions on the part of individuals, families, communities and states. We are all responsible for the protection and care of the environment. This responsibility knows no boundaries. In accordance with the *principle of subsidiarity* it is important for everyone to be committed at his or her proper level, working to overcome the prevalence of particular interests. A special role in raising awareness and in formation belongs to the different groups present in civil society and to the non-governmental organizations which work with determination and generosity for the spread of

ecological responsibility, responsibility which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for “human ecology.”³²⁵

However, as Pope Benedict XVI implied in his letter, education must not only be limited to the provision of knowledge and honing of skills, thus being mere ‘orientational’ in its approach. The approach to education rather must be ‘formative’ in that it gives premium to the formation of ecological values and to the engendering of a new lifestyle, new attitudes, and new perspectives among the stakeholders. Thus, education must lead to the transformation of individual outlooks and societal convictions on care for the environment. Pope Francis speaks of the need for change and change indeed will come from educating ourselves about our common origins and shared future but awareness must “enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life.”³²⁶ Moreover, speaking about the formative and transformative dimensions of education, the pope writes:

Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the “myths” of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mind set (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.³²⁷

The Holy Father speaks of a restoration of broken relationships between humans and fellow humans, humans and nature, and humanity and God. In the previous chapter, it was presented that it is sin of humanity that caused the imbalance in the relationships thereby having a ripple effect on the created order. Thus, creation, Paul says in v. 20, was subjected to futility not on its own accord but by the ‘one’ who subjected it. Creation groans with humanity as it waits for them to be transformed and renewed in and through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Having these thoughts in mind, it can be concluded transformation of individuals may only happen through education if there is authentic renewal or conversion that will take place in the hearts of persons. The Church, through the XXIII Synod of Bishops of the ‘New Evangelization,’ has already recognized this when it called for a renewal in how education, especially religious education must be done in Catholic educational institutions. Pope Francis, using the example of Saint John Bosco’s system of education, exhorted educators on how education must be conducted in Catholic schools today. He said: “There are three languages: the language of the head, the language of the heart, and the language of the hands; education must go forward by these three

³²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, 11.

³²⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 202.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 210.

ways; instructing in how to think, helping students to feel well; accompanying students as they do [what they have learned or are learning to do].”³²⁸

An effective ecological education does not terminate with the instruction on what the students must know or do to prevent further degradation of the environment; it must lead to ecological conversion. Pope Francis notes:

Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity.³²⁹

Lasallian ecological education must therefore not be limited to the transmission of information about the science of climate change and what must be done to avoid its effects. It must, above all, inspire the students and other stakeholders to reflect on how, in one way or the other, have contributed to the destruction of the ecosystems, and acknowledging one’s culpability towards nature, gear towards ecological conversion. It was earlier noted that ecological conversion is the key to the healing of the relationships between humanity and God and with the rest of creation. Pope Francis have discussed this in *Laudato Si’* and was discussed in the previous chapter. Dionisio Miranda explicates that these and other values which can add or provide a framework and a value proposition that gives the Catholic university (or school) its distinctive character and witness value.³³⁰ Moreover, he states that “these values can and should guide curriculum formation, program development and the formation of students. Taken together, they constitute an antidote to the often nihilistic and cynical approach of the post--- modern academic.”³³¹

3. On the Use of Cutting-Edge Scientific Findings in the Development of Ecological Policies and Programs and Stewardship As an Essential Component of Christian Discipleship

Another observation that we have noted earlier in this study is that the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family are based on the latest and up-to-date scientific findings. This

³²⁸ Pope Francis, Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for Catholic Education as quoted in Radio Vaticana, “Pope Francis: educate Openness to Transcendence, Practice of Mercy”, Accessed on 04 April 2016. The Pope’s address is available at the website of the Vatican Radio:

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/21/pope_francis_educate_openness_to_transcendence,_mercy/1188569.

³²⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 211.

³³⁰ Dionisio Miranda, SVD, “The Role of Christian Formation in Transformative Education in the Light of *Laudato Si’*”, Keynote Address delivered during the CEAP Christian Formation Summit, August 6, 2015. DepEd Ecotech Center, Cebu City.

³³¹ Ibid.

study also pointed out the in the documents that tackles ecological programs such as the Facilities and Environment Programs Management of De La Salle Philippines, due attention is given to scientific data from the research projects conducted by the faculty from different Lasallian institutions in the country and also from various experts in the different scientific areas, but most especially environmental science in order to come up with an action plan that is both practical and research-based. On the other hand, the Environmental Education Plan of the institute is a product of a study of a brother who used scientific data in order to arrive at a sound and workable environmental plan for the entire Institute.

On the level of ecological programs of De La Salle Philippines, every program is carefully studied by a team composed of environmental champions as well as experts in the field wither of biology, chemistry, physics, botany – depending on the type of program that will be implemented. Not only in the planning stage are these experts and practitioners in the field of science involved; many of them, who are also faculty members of our schools, take part in the actual implementation and carrying out of the programs. As such, they also have something to contribute to the evaluation and planning for future programs and projects.

This study earlier highlighted the inevitability of relying on cutting-edge scientific findings in order of understand and ultimately to come up with possible solutions to the effects of the ecological crisis we are experiencing today. Pope Francis even approached the issue of global warming and climate change (which can be best understood in terms of scientific dimension) by first considering the scientific data in order to draw forth implications to Christian theology and praxis in *Laudato Si'*. Aware of the ongoing debate among scientists regarding the ecological crisis, Pope Francis, however, clarifies that the Church does not claim authority over the field of science: “There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. Here I would state once more that the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good.”³³² Pope Francis, however, emphasizes the need for open dialogue between the two realms in order to find a common path towards the protection of the planet: “Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well.”³³³

In the issue of global warming, science provides information that would enable Christians to make moral discernments. Ian Barbour explains that for religion to be relevant today, it must lend its listening ear to science, with its new discoveries especially as we live in what he calls the ‘scientific age.’³³⁴ Miranda, on the other hand, believes that any scientific activity must be carried out in consonance with the values of the gospel. He notes further: “Scientific epistemology is at

³³² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 188.

³³³ Ibid, 200.

³³⁴ Barbour, Ian. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. (USA: Hymns Ancient & Modern Limited, 1998), 167.

its most dangerous when severed from an ethical framework, such as faith provides – which, incidentally, is one of the Pope’s principal observations in *Laudato Si’*.³³⁵

In the previous chapter, it was stated that in Rom. 8:18-23, Paul implies that the responsibility of ushering in the salvation of all creation lies upon the hands of humans who have been entrusted by God to “till the earth and subdue it” – to take good care of it and ensure its growth and fruitfulness according to the plan of God. Even if every living being on earth originates from God and are dependent on God’s sustaining and creative power, humanity has been tasked by the Creator, as their way of participating in his creative work, to be stewards of other creatures. Thus, it is a human and Christian vocation to be stewards of creation. As good and responsible stewards, humanity is called upon to be wise and righteous in protecting and nurturing the created order always in view of their inherent value. The vocation to be stewards of creation entails the abandonment of a life of sin and an embracing of a life in Christ.

The recent scientific discoveries and the Christian faith both communicate the truth that humanity has a responsibility for the earth, our common home, and everything that dwells in it. Science articulates that the global warming or climate change is human induced or is aggravated by human activity. The apostle Paul also asserts that ‘creation’ was subjected to futility because of humanity’s attachment to sin. Science is telling us that humanity must change its lifestyle so that the effects of the ecological crisis will be diminished. Paul writes in Rom. 8:18-23 that the future of creation will depend of the ‘revelation of the children of God.’ Pope Francis expresses this hope also in *Laudato Si’*: “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.”³³⁶ The two stories – the story of science and the story of the Christian faith converge in awakening humanity to their responsibility to be stewards and caretakers of the earth. In reflecting on the ecological crisis, matters of science and matters of faith were brought into a space where “they no longer collide, but complement each other and render a fuller picture of what is true.”³³⁷

It is possible for scientist to be a person of faith and it is also equally possible for a person of faith to agree with scientific propositions. In this present study, we have realized that science and religion are two different realms that are really not at odds with each other but they can actually be converge to aid us in solving our world’s most pressing concerns. Indeed, as Henry Garon explains, scientific discoveries, properly verbalized within the framework of science, are never in disagreement with properly formed religious discernments focusing on the wondrous. He continues: “Whereas religion addresses the wonders of the spirit expressed in the context of the wonder. Scientists, after all, are persons who are fascinated, although perhaps very quietly, by the wondrous ways of the world. Thus, genuine religion and good science are both concerned with wondrous ways and the appeal of truth, but from different directions.”³³⁸

³³⁵ Dionisio Miranda, SVD, “The Role of Christian Formation in Transformative Education in the Light of *Laudato Si’*”, Keynote Address delivered during the CEAP Christian Formation Summit, August 6, 2015. DepEd Ecotech Center, Cebu City.

³³⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 205.

³³⁷ Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2010), 16.

³³⁸ Henry A. Garon, *The Cosmic Mystique*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 181.

In trying to present how science and religion or theology could be in harmony with each other, 113 Ted Peters utilizes the interesting imagery: “Hypothetical consonance... recognizes where we are at the outset: theology sings one song and science another. Nevertheless, it gives us something to listen for. We can listen for those measures where both make sound at the same frequency, where we hear a momentary bar of harmony. Then we can at least ask if this might someday lead to a shared melody.”³³⁹

The world is not a witness to the realization of this dream of Ted Peters for no longer do science and religion sing different songs but with the re-reading of Rom. 8: 18-23 in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ we hear just one song sang in different voices. The ‘new cosmology’ sings the song using the voice of the recent scientific discoveries while Rom. 8:18-23 sings the same song using the voice of faith and theology.

The one who orchestrates and directs the singing is no other than but God himself who was and is responsible for the creation of the entire universe. He is the same God who created human beings and found them to be very good, and who commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen 1:28) He is the God who love everything that exists; you do not despise anything that you have made. (cf. Wisdom 11:24) He is the same God who sent us Jesus Christ that we might have eternal life (cf. John 3:16), and in Jesus Christ we experience the fullness of revelation of this God who will bring us to the fullness of life.

4. On the Lack of Reference to the “Ethnic Wisdom” from Filipino Indigenous communities and the Theological Concept of Interrelatedness

This study also previously took notice of the absence of reference to the wisdom of the indigenous communities or tribal groups in the Philippines. It was emphasized that as “sons and daughters” of the earth, the tribal folks are ‘masters’ in communicating with Mother Nature. In their own unique but reliable ways, they are able to determine time and acquire treasures from the earth, and get natural cure for ailments through the promptings of nature itself. The ethnic groups’ respect for and reverence of other living beings on earth speak of how they value humanity’s cordial relationship with the earth. Their closeness with nature is expressed in their day-to-day language and in their songs, as Pope observes:

The sounds and movement of birds, insect and other animals, of wind and waves and other natural phenomena, are often represented in the music, dance, and stories of indigenous peoples. Moreover, the materials for making indigenous musical instruments come originally from the natural environment. Thus the sounds of instruments and the process of making them, as well as the content of songs, stories and dances, connect people’s daily lives to the diversity of plants and animals around them. Traditional performers express the value and diversity of their natural

³³⁹ Ted Peters, *Cosmos as Creation* (USA: Abingdon Press, 1989), 16 in Mary Lou Van Rossum, *Reinhabiting the Earth*, 21.

environments through sound and movement, and in this way they help to maintain the environmental consciousness of their cultures³⁴⁰

Regarding the indigenous peoples and the indigenous cultural communities as the ‘traditional managers’ of nature, the Foundation for the Philippine Environment says there is a need to preserve their culture and identity.³⁴¹ Furthermore, they also believe that they are experts of human-nature relationship:

They have survived throughout generations hand-in-hand with their environment, depending heavily on the capacities of their immediate resources while still living within the limits thereof. These experiences have spanned millennia, and from them, they have drawn a level of understanding that have enabled them to anticipate when and how to maximize nature’s abundance without being excessive or abusive, while also being able to adapt with and adjust to it during more difficult times. Through this relationship, IPs and ICCs have learned to recognize and respect land, water, and all of nature around them as sacred.³⁴²

There is more to the discussion of sustainability and stewardship of the earth than science. Recognizing the wisdom of tribal peoples, we begin to accept that science does not monopolize the truth, and scientific pronouncements are not without flaws as today, even scientists would admit that science still has many limitations. Ethnic wisdom and religion can also lead humanity to the truth. Albeit it carries a social stigma today, there is a necessity to interact with and learn from the wisdom of these people who from one generation to another have passed on an ethic of love and care and solicitude for nature.

Not only are these communities and peoples historically rich but they are also rich in spirituality, especially a spirituality of creation. Pope John Paul II spoke of the beauty of their tradition when he met with the indigenous communities of Canada: “For untold generations, you, the Native peoples, have lived in a relationship of trust with the Creator, seeing the beauty and the richness of the land as coming from His bountiful hands and as deserving wise use and conservation. Today, you are working to preserve your traditions and consolidate your rights...”³⁴³ In another occasion, this time in Australia, John Paul II affirms their closeness with and reverence for nature, which, for the pontiff, is express of their love for God:

³⁴⁰ E. W. Pope, Importance of Songs and Dances in the Indigenous People’s Summit. <http://www.for.aichi-pu.ac.jp/tabunka/journal/journal5/5-3-1.pdf>.

³⁴¹ Foundation for the Philippine Environment, “Stewards of the Sacred Land: Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Areas” in Foundation for the Philippine Environment Website. Accessed on 04 April 2016. Available at <http://fpe.ph/indigenous-communities.html/view/stewards-of-the-sacred-land-indigenous-peoples-and-community-conserved-areas/all/0>.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Pope John Paul II “Homily at Mass for the Native Peoples of Canada” Fort Simposon, September 20, 1987 in Marybeth Lorbiecki, *Following St. Francis: John Paul II’s Call for Ecological Action*, (New York: Rizzoli International Press, 2014), 251.

For thousands of years this culture of yours was free to grow without interference by people from other places. You lived your lives in spiritual closeness to the land, with its animals, birds, fishes, waterholes, rivers, hills and mountains. Through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of man's relationship with God, for the land was the proof of a power in life greater than yourselves... You did not spoil the land, use it up, exhaust it, and then walk away from it. You realized that your land was related to the source of life."³⁴⁴

Theologically considered, these communities communicate a lesson that biblical recognition that everything in the world is connected. It was stressed in the previous chapter that this conviction calls for a redefinition of humanity's role and place in the context of the created order. Human beings therefore are not 'above,' 'superior,' 'lords' but are co-existing and co-dependent with the rest in the earth's biosphere. Pope Francis states: "Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it."³⁴⁵ 'Civilized' people have lost the sense of oneness with creation but the indigenous communities have kept their sacred regard for creation. In the age of the 'new evangelization,' hence, indigenous peoples and communities are not to be seen only as recipients of the gospel proclamation but they also proclaim to the us who have lost the sense of ecological equilibrium, the scriptural truth that everything is interrelated.

This theological concept of interrelatedness which serves as the foundation of integral ecology is a main theme in *Laudato Si'*. "We need to recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about,"³⁴⁶ Pope Francis emphasizes.

In Rom. 8:18-23, Paul speaks of hope that springs forth from humanity's identification with Christ. Creation has been subjected to futility and death eventually. But the apostle insists that all must remain hopeful amidst the reality of selfishness and greed. Today, in the light of the ecological crisis, the Filipino indigenous peoples and communities give hope to the world because of their oneness with nature and respect for its integrity. Reflecting on his personal experience with the *Pulangiyan* community that is situated in a mountainous area in Southern Philippines, Walpole notes: "The integrity of indigenous traditional communities, often scattered and dispersed, is also a source of hope – although many are gravely embattled today by a concept, and a reality of 'development,' that is alien to them."³⁴⁷ Contrary to the prevailing notion that it is the people in the urban areas who will should provide them with basic necessities and skills and knowledge that are needed for development, it is how they live and relate with one another and with nature that provides the people in complex and complicated metropolis an ancient wisdom that they have lost

³⁴⁴ Pope John Paul II "Address to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Alice Springs, Australia, November 29, 1986.

³⁴⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 139.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 140.

³⁴⁷ Pedro Walpole, SJ, "Do not be Afraid: Laudato Si' and Integral Ecology", *The Way: A Review of Christian Spirituality Published by the British Jesuits*. Vol. 54. No. 4. October 2015. 9-22, 17.

over time. Walpole furthers: “The way they work on the land is very integrated, their knowledge is shared and they sustain each other. They acknowledge the Creator in everything they do; they have said their prayers long before the food reaches the table; they have toiled and suffered; they are humble yet shrewd; and they share a vision of the world that societies elsewhere have lost. Their sense of welcome and blessing can awaken inner strength for those who make the journey to work with them and learn from them.”³⁴⁸ 116

This study recommends that the efforts to save and protect the natural ecosystems should lead those who are engaged in it to be work for the preservation of the culture and tradition of Filipino Indigenous communities. These communities must not only be the subject of research activities but we must look after their welfare and ensure the stability of the future of their communities.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, a correlation of the four major concerns that arose from the hermeneutical analysis of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family were correlated with the four themes that resulted from a Christian theology of creation based on a hermeneutical analysis of Rom. 8:18-23 in the light of the ‘new cosmology.’

The Philippine Lasallian Family’s use of the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm was correlated with the apostle Paul’s concept of ‘Integral Redemption,’ resulting to the acceptance of the ‘sustainable development’ perspective on condition that that it does not carry with it an anthropocentric mentality and that the term ought to be based on the interrelatedness of creation including humanity. Likewise, the ‘sustainable development’ perspective needs to be based on two biblical eschatological principles namely, restoration and humanity’s responsibility for the future. Secondly, as the Philippine Lasallian Family has identified education as a potent means for protecting the earth, Rom. 8:18-23 suggests that metanoia or conversion is needed to effect a change in attitudes and lifestyle of people. With these in mind, education for sustainable development must always be preceded or must result in a change in values of people. Education must not remain orientational in its approach; it must change hearts and lead people to ecological conversion.

The third correlation is between the cutting-edge scientific basis of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family and Paul’s insistence that it is incumbent upon humanity to care for creation. As a result of the correlation, it was concluded in this study that both science and the Christian faith are pointing to one direction, i.e., as humanity is mainly to be blamed for the suffering of creation, it is also in the hands of humanity that lies the liberation of creation from its pitiful condition. As science goads humans to be responsible inhabitants of the earth, Christianity tells us that it is our vocation to be stewards of our common home.

³⁴⁸Pedro Walpole, SJ, ‘Welcome and Blessing: A Transformative Learning Encounter with Indigenous People’, in *Humankind and Nature: An Endangered System of Interdependence in Today’s Globalizing World*, edited by Albert Wong and Artur K. Wardega (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014) in *Ibid.*, 17-18.

The absence of reference to the wisdom of the Filipino indigenous peoples and communities in the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family was correlated with the idea of interrelatedness and communion of creation. It is the tribal communities in the Philippines that bring hope to the human and sub-human creatures for what Saint Paul refers to as the ‘revelation of the children of God.’ These communities have much to teach people who live in highly urbanized areas that have lost the sense of respect and unity with sub-human creatures.

With the abovementioned evaluation of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family in the light of the Christian faith, it can be concluded that these initiatives indeed are motivated by a realization of the Christian ecological vocation. The environmental initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family, first and foremost, are borne out of a reflection on the role of Lasallians as stewards of God’s creation during the District Synod of 1999. This reflection, as stated in Chapter Two, resulted to the establishment of the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE). This idea of stewardship of God’s creation surfaces in LIFE’s vision-mission as well as in many Lasallian documents pertaining to environmental sustainability.

Although the Philippine Lasallian Family has been recognized locally and internationally as one of the lead faith-based educational networks in the country that champions the cause of protecting the environment from further degradation, and while the documents illustrate that the initiatives are crafted in response to the call to be stewards of God’s creation, the review and assessment made in this study reveals the following:

(1) The ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family have an anthropocentric stance. Highly influenced by the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm of UNESCO, the Lasallian ecological practices are aimed at ensuring a sustainable future for humanity, i.e., preserving natural resources for the future generations of humanity. This ‘utilitarian view’ of creation contradicts the notion of ‘integrity of creation’ in the sense that sub-human creatures are treated merely as resources to be utilized by humanity. This study argues that if the Philippine Lasallian Family will continue to espouse UNESCO’s perspective on ‘sustainable development,’ the inherent value of all life forms on earth will be violated even if the programs are geared towards preserving and protecting them from further harm and violence. Therefore, the Philippine Lasallian Family has to redefine ‘sustainability’ in the light of the Christian understanding of creation.

Corollary to the anthropocentric standpoint of the Philippine Lasallian Family insofar as the ecological initiatives are concerned, some existing policies and practices in various Lasallian educational institutions in the country, whether institutional, departmental, or individual, and of De La Salle Philippines as a whole, are not in keeping with the idea of the ‘integrity of creation,’ particularly, the ‘intrinsic value’ of all of creation, as propounded in the Principle of Social Development of the Philippine Lasallian Family.

(2) Understandably, De La Salle Philippines, as a network of Lasallian educational institutions in the country, considers ecological education as a catalyst for the transformation of mind-sets, attitudes, lifestyles, etc., of the stakeholders and other partners. While certainly, until the present times, education remains to be an effective tool in effecting change in the society, education, as it is defined in the Facilities and Environmental Programs Management Manual of

De La Salle Philippines, will not be able to effect a lasting change. In the document mentioned above and in other documents of the Philippine Lasallian Family that were reviewed in the course of this study, the emphasis is always on the ‘education of the mind’, i.e., the cognitive dimension of education. Very little emphasis is given to the formation of consciences and the instilling values on individuals and communities (affective and behavioural aspects of the learning process). This paper argues that for genuine personal, communal, and societal transformation to happen, a holistic approach to education involving the three dimensions – cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects must be in place. This also implies that synergy of resources and collaboration between and among offices, departments, and units in the school must be engaged in this ministry of education.

(3) The ecological principles, policies, and programs, are products of researches and experiments conducted by some faculty and students of the Lasallian educational institutions in the country. Every program is thoroughly examined by a team composed of environmental advocates and experts in the scientific realm – biologists, chemists, environmental scientists, physicists, botanists, etc. The rootedness of the ecological efforts of the Philippine Lasallian Family in cutting-edge scientific findings is what sets them apart from other non-tested and flawed attempts to save the environment. The Lasallian Family believes that since the global warming and climate change are scientific concerns, these issues must also be addressed employing up-to-date scientific findings.

(4) On the other hand, I would like to argue that the issue of global warming is not only a scientific concern but a moral and a spiritual issue. It is for this reason that this study earlier cited the pronouncements not only of theologians and other Church leaders and spiritual writers regarding the role of Christianity (and of other religions and faith communities) in making this natural world into what God has intended it to be as well as in rallying the world community to unite in mitigating the effects of the ecological crisis by appealing to the consciences of individuals, communities, and nation-states.

The documents of the Philippine Lasallian Family on ecological concerns, albeit motivated by concern for God’s creation, are lacking in theological basis. Pope Francis among others underscored the importance of an ecological spirituality in the pursuit of a societal transformation. In *Laudato Si’*, the pontiff begins with an exposition of the scientific findings conducted by reputable institutions but concludes with an exhortation and a strong encouragement to individuals and institutions to espouse an ecological spirituality according to one’s situation and calling.

(5) The ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family do not have any reference to the ethnic wisdom of the Filipino indigenous peoples and communities. In the course of correlating the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family with the Christian theology of creation, one of the insights from the idea of ‘integral redemption’ as implied by the apostle Paul in Rom. 8: 18-23 is the communion and interrelatedness of creation, including humanity. In the earlier part of this study, it was stated that it is the indigenous communities who are considered ‘masters’ of relating with the earth and every life form that dwells on it. Because of their physical closeness and interaction with nature, they have developed a keen sense of communion with them – something that the people living in highly urbanized areas have lost.

It is surprising to realize therefore that with the many indigenous communities that several Lasallian educational institutions have partnered with, the Philippine Lasallian Family have unheeded their voice in the development of the ecological principles, policies, programs, and projects.

In relation to this, there is also an absence of an effort to support the preservation of the culture and tradition of these communities. There is a common tendency for people in the academe to use these peoples and communities as ‘objects’ of their research endeavors or to make them ‘subjects’ of a community engagement program by enabling them to think, feel, and act like them who live in complex and complicated urban communities. These academicians do not give value to what they have to share insofar as relating with the natural world is concerned. On the contrary, some of those who conduct community engagement activities become instrumental to the obliteration of their culture and traditions.

CHAPTER FIVE

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LASALLIAN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY: A PROPOSAL TO THE PHILIPPINE LASALLIAN FAMILY

The primary objective of this research work is to provide an evaluation of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family in the light of the Christian faith. This objective was accomplished in the preceding chapter, yielding to four major observations/ critiques.

The ecological crisis that the earth is facing today elicits a proactive response from all of humanity. The Catholic Church, as it enters into the phase of the ‘new evangelization’ has identified care for the earth, our common home, as an integral part of following Jesus Christ in this day and age. Not only does the Catholic Church consider it as an option for Christians but regards it as an imperative, a demand of the gospel. Catholic educational institutions have a critical role in the formation and education of people, especially the youth. Two pivotal ecclesial documents highlight the Catholic schools’ role in molding the hearts and minds, character and spirit, of today’s youth. Both *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Vatican II is declaration on Catholic Education and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II’s exhortation on the role of Catholic universities, require Catholic educational institutions to “place themselves at the service of the common good and especially those who are marginalized and poor and must become a community dedicated to its purpose, just as it is dedicated to the search for truth.”³⁴⁹

De La Salle Philippines, as a network of 16 Lasallian academic institutions in the Philippines sees the “building up of educational communities that demonstrate commitment to young people, especially those who are poor, by providing them with access to a human and Christian education that enables them to participate in the transformation of society”³⁵⁰ as a response to the invitation to be at the service of the society, especially to the last, the lost, and the least. De La Salle Philippines’ commitment to make accessible quality education to the poor and underserved youth is a continuation of Saint John Baptist de La Salle’s evangelizing mission of bringing the gospel to them and thus transforms the society.

As earlier noted, part of the commitment of the Philippine Lasallian Family to transform the society is to create a healthy environment sustained by a society conversant about and aware of their environment, through education. This was conceived in view of the ecological crises that are dawning upon the world. More than just identifying ecological principles, enforcing policies, and executing programs and projects that are intended to protect the environment and help communities that share the same convictions and ideals, this present study, after correlating the Lasallian ecological initiatives with the Christian theology of Creation, would like to propose a spirituality for all the ecological efforts of De La Salle Philippines. An ecological spirituality would not only serve as a catalyst or inspiration for the members of the Philippine Lasallian family

³⁴⁹ Dionisio Miranda, SVD, “The Role of Christian Formation in the Transformative Education in Light of Laudato Si’”. Keynote Address at the CEAP Christian Formation Summit. August 6, 2015. DepEd Ecotech Center, Cebu City.

³⁵⁰ De La Salle Philippines, “Our Mission”. Accessed on 29 March 2016. <http://delasalle.ph/identity-mission/>.

to work for the protection of the environment but it will also help provide a framework for embodying the ethico-spiritual values, with which all stakeholders will be able to fulfil the vocation to be stewards of God's creation. 121

It is a spirituality that is firmly rooted in the Christian theology of creation but also finds its basis in the convictions and current practices of the community that is informed by science and other related fields. An old dictum puts it succinctly: “Lex orandi, Lex credendi, lex vivendi” – “The Law of prayer is the law of belief and the law of belief is the law of life.” The proposed ecological spirituality is a proposal on how to ‘live’ an ecological life based on the theological findings in this paper. It proposes a framework for the Philippine Lasallian Family on how to life as stewards of God's creation, and not simply focus on the ‘doing’ of ecological activities.

Through this humble work hopefully, the Philippine Lasallian Family will be able to find the connection between their current ecological initiatives and the Christian faith. In doing so, they will be conscious that caring for the earth is not only a civic duty but a Christian vocation. Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as a “conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives,”³⁵¹ this ecological spirituality is geared towards the total liberation of not only the humanity but of all the created order.

Theological Foundations for the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality

As a result of the correlation of the current ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family and a Christian Theology of Creation based on Rom. 8:18-23, this paper proposes that the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must be anchored on the following theological themes:

The Hope for the Complete Dwelling of God in Creation

In Rom. 8:18-23, Paul speaks of a hope for the future glory not only of the ‘children of God’ but of all of creation. It is a hope for the transformation of humanity and of the natural world into something that God had originally intended them to be. In the earlier pages of this paper, Moltmann's eschatological principles were used to argue that indeed there is a basis for the hope not only for humanity but for the entire cosmos. Moltmann proposes that eschatology must not only be understood in terms of a personal redemption but also has its historical and cosmic dimensions. This paper subscribes to Moltmann's idea that the eschaton must be understood as God's complete indwelling (Shekinah) in creation (cf. Rev. 21:3).³⁵² The Spirit of God lives in each and every human person and also with every living creature and breathes life to us who form part of God's creation. This implies that God lives not only in every individual person but in each and every creature. God has found a dwelling in his creation, and at the end of times, God will dwell fully in his creation and there will be the renewal of the earth. Moltmann explains further: “If we ask about creation's goal and future, we ultimately arrive at the transfiguring indwelling of

³⁵¹ Sandra M. Schneiders, ‘Christian Spirituality: Definitions, Methods, and Types’, in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake; (Louisville, KY: 2005.), 189.

³⁵² Cf. Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 288.

the triune God in his creation, which through that indwelling becomes a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21)... The divine secret of creation is the Shekinah, God's indwelling and the purpose of the Shekinah is to make the whole creation the house of God."³⁵³ 122

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'* also affirms this belief in the Spirit's indwelling in creation. This recognition of the divine indwelling in creation moves humanity to restore broken relationship with God. The pope notes: "When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them."³⁵⁴ He furthers: "This sentiment finds magnificent expression in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi: Praised be you, my Lord..."³⁵⁵ The pontiff does not end with the restoration of humanity's broken relationship with God, he moves on to challenge humanity to re-establish a bond of communion with sub-human creatures:

The bishops of Brazil have pointed out that nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him.[Cf. National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil, *A Igreja e a Questão Ecológica*, 1992, 53-54] *Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the "ecological virtues."*[Ibid., 61]³⁵⁶

The New Testament specifically proclaims Jesus Christ as the redeemer of all that there is. We Christians profess that Jesus Christ is the concretization of God's presence in his creation. His resurrection from the dead has brought forth a promise of a new life not only for humanity but for the all the created order. Pope John Paul II explains this theology of 'integral redemption' clearly:

Christians believe that the death and resurrection of Christ accomplish the work of reconciling humanity to the Father, who "was pleased... through (Christ) to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood on the cross" (Col. 1:19-22). Creation was thus made new (cf. Rev. 21:5). Once subjected to the bondage of sin and decay (cf. Rom. 8:21), it has now received new life while "we await for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). Thus, the Father "has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery... which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, all things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10)"³⁵⁷

The late pontiff expresses the biblical truth that humanity, through their stewardship of creation participates in the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ. It was to humanity that God had entrusted the care of his creation and through humanity too that redemption of non-human creatures will be

³⁵³ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, 283.

³⁵⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 87.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 88.

³⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility," in *"And God Saw that It was Good..."*, 216.

accomplished in Christ. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the non-human creatures do not possess a fundamental dignity; they do have an intrinsic value because like human beings, they originated from the creative power of God and they too are redeemed. 123

Therefore, every human person must recognize the intrinsic value of creation. Respect for the integrity of creation is also a recognition that every living being originates from God. Cajes points out: “Every creature of God, including humans, has its own intrinsic value, which means that we love, care, protect, and conserve each of them because God, in creating them gives them their own value, regardless of whether there are humans in the universe or none.”³⁵⁸ Disregard for the integrity of creation, may “lead to the utilitarian valuation of the world.”³⁵⁹

Secondly, humanity must recognize the biblical teaching that the entire creation finds its origin and sustaining power in God. Human ability alone could not and will not be able to ensure a favourable future for the succeeding generations. It is only through God’s sovereign power and graciousness that a sustainable earth will come into fruition. Humanity only shares in God’s work of creation and redemption.

The Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must be imbedded in the belief that God dwells in each living creature on earth. Every ecological endeavor that Lasallians carry out – whether a tree planting, management of water sheds, or a biodiversity project – must be done out of concern for and respect for the inherent value of every living creature on earth and because we would like to enter into a loving relationship with God in his creation. Additionally, a Lasallian’s understanding of ‘ecological sustainability’ must be based on this theological principle and must be characterized by two biblical eschatological categories namely: *the hope for the transformation of the world* and *responsibility for the future*. ‘Transformation of the world’ means putting one’s hope for the renewal of all creation i.e., in the promise of God of a “new heaven and a new earth” where God will dwell completely with his creation. ‘Responsibility for the future’ implies commitment on the part of Lasallians to the ideals of the kingdom – justice and righteousness, to love and peace, which are not only directed at humanity but extended to all who belong to the created order. A Lasallian believes that their ecological efforts will not be put to waste as it is their participation in the work of redemption of all because at the end, there will be a total renewal of the cosmic order and there will be a “new heavens and a new earth” (cf. Rev. 21:1).

This study proposes that the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must also stand on the biblical recognition that ecological sustainability will only come about through God’ power and graciousness. Every Lasallian must keep in mind that no amount of knowledge, effort, and resources will be able to ensure a sustainable future unless God blesses and sustains it, as the psalmist puts it: “Unless the LORD build the house, they labor in vain who build. Unless the LORD guards the city, in vain does the guard keep watch.” (Ps. 127: 1 NAB)

Lastly, this research work proposes that Lasallians must see the connection between the ecological initiatives and the work for justice, peace, and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized in

³⁵⁸ Prisco A. Cajes, OFM, *Anitism and Perichoresis*, 137.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

society. At this point, I would like to reiterate the point I have made in the previous chapter that as Lasallians who care for the earth, our common home cannot and must not turn a blind eye towards our fellow ‘dwellers’ in our common home. As the earth must be liberated from its present suffering condition, so must our poor brethren be likewise set free from anything and everything that enslaves them. As earlier noted, Pope Francis points only to one common cause of the suffering of creation and the poor – it is the greed and selfishness of some human beings that place the lives of the poor and of the entire creation at risk. Acquiescing with Pope Francis’ summons to all people of good will in *Laudato Si’*, listening to both the “cries of the poor” and the “cries of the earth” are necessary to create a just, peaceful, and humane society. Saint John Baptist de la Salle’s attentiveness to the ‘signs of the times’ and his holistic approach to transformative education must guide our steps towards the realization of our vision of a transformed society through education and formation of the young. The Lasallian Ecological Spirituality recognizes that the poor are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and on the other hand, injustice to the poor will have a grave effect also on the physical environment. 124

Ecological Conversion

In the hermeneutical analysis of Rom. 8:18-23, the apostle to the Gentiles exposes that it is the reality of sin that destroys humanity’s relationship with God and with the rest of creation. Sin hinders these three to continually live in harmony and peace. From a traditional view of sin that is limited to the personal and human societal realm, a Christian’s understanding of sin must extend to a more inclusive perspective – a cosmic standpoint. It is in this light that this study also assents to Joshtrom Kureethadam’s interpretations: “... any human action that damages our common home and engenders the life and survival of our common household becomes a sin. On a collective level, ecological sin is irresponsible stewardship of our home planet and its biosphere... The current ecological crisis is a consequence of our own values, beliefs, and conscious choices—and our sinful behavior.”³⁶⁰

In relation this the abovementioned analysis, a little over a century ago, the Catholic Church together with some other Christian churches acknowledged that the pressing issue of global climate change is not only and simply a political, economic, or technological problem. Above all, these Christian churches stated that the ecological crisis is above all a moral and spiritual one. In their joint statement, Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I accepted the fact that a *metanoia* is needed – on the part of individual Christians and as members of the Body of Christ that we call “Church.”

What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an inner change of heart, which can lead to a change in lifestyle and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and

³⁶⁰ Joshtrom Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis*, 338

production. A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act.³⁶¹

Pope Francis expresses the same view in *Laudato Si'*, and, quoting his predecessor, prods Christians to self-introspection and a change of heart: “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast,” [Benedict XVI, Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 710]... For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.”³⁶²

It was earlier expounded that ecological conversion is the key to the healing of the relationship between humanity and God and with the rest of creation. Ecological conversion, coming from the Greek work *metanoia* means “going away” and “turning towards.” The apostle Paul in Rom. 8:18-23 exhorts Christians to turn away from our ‘Adamic personality’ and turn towards Jesus Christ, who will lead all to fullness of life. It is in this context that Pope Francis notes that “the effects of their (Christians) encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”³⁶³

The Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must acknowledge that the root of the ecological crisis is the human tendency to be egoistic and self-conceited. Alongside with the implementation of ecological practices, the Lasallian Ecological spirituality must encourage and engender an admission that in one way or the other, each one of us has contributed to the degradation of the environment that has resulted to what it has become today. Environmental education in Lasallian institutions must not only be limited to the provision of knowledge and honing of skills. The Lasallian educational approach is always ‘formative’ and ‘transformative.’ Hence, it must put a premium on the formation of ecological values and the promotion of a new lifestyle, new attitudes, and new perspectives among the members of the Philippine Lasallian Family.

Science and Faith are partners in understanding and caring for our common home

One of the greatest scientists of all time, Albert Einstein once acclaimed: “Religion without science is blind. Science without religion is lame.” In our day and age, it is becoming clearer, that religion and science are not really opponents but two realities that not only can co-exist harmoniously with each other but can also converge in order to bring to humanity the awareness that the responsibility to care for the earth and everything that lives in the universe lies in their hands. This insight has already seeped into the consciousness of a theologian cum scientist in the person of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In his notable work, *The Phenomenon of Man*, he expressed disappointment that fact that the warfare between Science and Religion had taken centuries of futile hurling of accusations against each other, saying: “After close to two centuries of passionate struggles, neither science

³⁶¹ “God has not Abandoned the World”, A Joint Statement of Pope John Paul II of Rome and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. *Saint Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church Website*. Accessed on 12 December 2015. <http://www.stpaulsirvine.org/html/abandoned.htm>.

³⁶² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 217.

³⁶³ Ibid.

nor faith has succeeded in discrediting its adversary. On the contrary, it becomes obvious that neither can develop normally without the other. And the reason is simple: the same life animates both.”³⁶⁴ Moreover, the Jesuit priest-scientist proposes an end to the seemingly endless dispute and states: “Religion and science are the two conjugated faces or phases of one and the same complete act of knowledge—the only one which can embrace the past and future of evolution so as to contemplate, measure and fulfill them.”³⁶⁵ Thomas Berry accedes to this saying that in his lifetime, he has endeavored to inculcate a new mode of thinking—one that is appreciative of the developments that is introduced by recent scientific discoveries and at the same time find its implications to our faith in a God who continues to be at work in this universe.

This dialogue between science and faith has already been acknowledged and advocated during the papacy of John Paul II who has held the conviction that “Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes, and that each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.”³⁶⁶ During his pontificate, which is characterized by a spirit of dialogue and ‘critical openness’ to engagement with the realms of science and technology, Catholic positions on certain emerging scientific discoveries have gradually evolved and have encouraged scholars to conduct interdisciplinary researches. The pope, however, warns against a false integration between the two realms, which might lead to scientism:

The Church does not propose that science should become religion or religion science. On the contrary, unity always presupposes the diversity and the integrity of its elements. Each of these members should become not less itself but more itself in a dynamic interchange, for a unity in which one of the elements is reduced to the other is destructive, false in its promises of harmony, and ruinous of the integrity of its components. We are asked to become one. We are not asked to become each other.³⁶⁷

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, following the lead of his predecessor, also calls for a renewed and more urgent dialogue with science but this time, in view of the ecological crisis that is plaguing some parts of the globe. For Pope Francis, as both science and religion attempt to identify solutions to the present problem of global warming, their solutions will be both powerless unless both illumine each other – science providing technical solutions, and faith giving the right motivations for caring for the earth. Elaborating on this, the pope minced no words by stating the following in his encyclical:

Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us

³⁶⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. English Translation by Bernard Wall. (NY: Harper and Row, 1959), 283.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 285.

³⁶⁶ Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Fr. George V. Coyne, SJ, Director of the Vatican Observatory”, 01 June 1988.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which requires patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that “realities are greater than ideas.”[*Evangelii Gaudium* 231]³⁶⁸

In the previous chapter, I presented the eschatological dimension of redemption in Christ in Rom. 8: 18-23. In fact, the whole chapter 8 talks about hope in Jesus Christ who will bring about renewal of all things. Humanity’s engagement therefore in ecological initiatives will not be put to waste as we are given assurance that one day, our efforts will bear fruit. Because of this hope that springs forth from a deep faith in Jesus Christ, Christians are given a strong guarantee that creation, through our participation in God’s work of creation and redemption, will be liberated from its present state.

On the other hand, several scientists today send the same message of hope for the future to humanity. Johan Rockstrom, an environmental science professor at Stockholm University, and who once was pessimistic about the condition of the earth due to climate change in 2009 said: “We have a paradox unique to our era. On a scientific basis, there is more reason to be nervous than ever before. But at the same time, there has never before been so much reason for hope.”³⁶⁹ The professor’s hope is based on the prompt speed of innovation in wind and solar power in the past few years as well as the rapid improvements in energy efficiency, along with the commitment of individuals and organizations to reduce carbon emissions, which are the main contributors to the increase in the average temperature of the globe.

Both faith and science therefore present to us a hope that this world has a better chance of saving itself from the calamitous effects of global warming if only humanity will rise up and heed the call of both realms to be responsible stewards of the environment. For those who are also engaged in the work of protecting the earth, both faith and science provides an affirmation that what they are currently doing will yield positive fruits which may not be experience in the here and now but in the future.

It is noteworthy that the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family as well as that of the Institute are based on the emerging scientific discoveries of the 21st century. Likewise the documents and programs are all based on the researches done by the faculty members of the Lasallian educational institutions, both on their own initiative or as commissioned by the Lasallian family.

The Lasallian ecological spirituality, following the tradition set by Pope John Paul II and subsequently continued by his predecessors, especially by Pope Francis, must be a fruit of a critical

³⁶⁸ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 202.

³⁶⁹ “The Most Pessimistic Climate Change Scientists has had a Sudden Change of Heart”. Independent News. Accessed on 14 April 2016. Available at www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change-measures-to-combat-global-warming-are-paying-off-scientist-says-a6689211.html.

engagement and mutual interaction between the realms of science and faith. This spirituality must always be inspired by a faith that maintains a dialogue with other fields such as science, technology, culture, economics, politics, and other relevant fields that are seen to contribute to the betterment of our physical environment. 128

Interrelatedness and Communion of All of Creation

In the first part of this paper, I presented a critique of the 1988 Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the Philippines on Ecology titled “What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?” It appears that the call of the Philippine bishops for the protection of natural ecosystems in the country is borne out of a concern for future generations of humanity. Although the pastoral letter is one of the landmark ecological documents that came from a local bishops’ conference, it is indicative of an anthropocentric paradigm. This anthropocentric mentality gives assent to humanity’s utilitarian view of nature and their wanton disregard for the innate value creation has.

In relation to this, Cajes exposes a critique of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines’ theology of stewardship. It is clear in the documents of PCP II, he points out, that the emphasis of the theology of stewardship is only on the aspect of *diakonia*, “it only talks about human roles, functions, and obligations in relation to the natural world.”³⁷⁰ The document only preoccupies what must be done to protect the ecosystems and what structures must be in place to ensure an effective implementation of ecological programs. What is lacking, according to Cajes, is the other equally important dimension of a correct theology of stewardship that is too often taken for granted – the *koinonia* aspect. *Diakonia* includes the correct appreciation of the intrinsic value of each creature and its interrelationships and communion with other creatures as essential parts of the whole creation.³⁷¹ Cajes also argues that PCP II’s deficient theology of stewardship stemmed from an inadequate analysis of the roots of the ecological crisis, something that Pope Francis has analysed deeply and which he dealt with in great length, in *Laudato Si’*. The entire third chapter of the encyclical discusses that a certain way of understanding human life and activity—the dominant technocratic paradigm, and the modern anthropocentric paradigm—has gone roundabout, to the serious detriment of the earth, our common home. Arguing against modern anthropocentrism, Pope Francis has this to say:

Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since “the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given,’ as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference.”[Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, 63] The intrinsic dignity of the world is thus compromised. When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves: “Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but, man too is God’s gift to man. He must therefore respect the

³⁷⁰ Prisco Cajes, OFM, *Anitism and Perichoresis*, 141.

³⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed” [John Paul II, Centesimus Annus 38].³⁷²

With these words, Christians are goaded to shun an anthropocentric mind-set, to be critical of technocratic paradigm and to respect the intrinsic value the each creature on earth has.

In the Philippines and in many parts of the world, especially in the Asia-Oceania region, it is the indigenous persons and communities that have the mastery of the *koinonia* dimension of the stewardship of creation. In the previous chapter, I argued that the ethnic groups’ respect for and reverence of other living beings on earth speak of how they value humanity’s cordial relationship with the earth and recognizing the wisdom of tribal peoples, we begin to accept that science does not monopolize the truth, and scientific pronouncements are not without limitations. The tribal communities’ way of life challenges us who live in the cities to look deeper at the human roots of the ecological crisis. They invite us to look into not how we have contributed to the obliteration of the earth and its resource but also at the way we perceive ourselves in relation to other non-human creatures. Their mystical view of the world also summons us to what modern ecological advocates have expressed – a need to return to the tradition of the mystics – to acknowledge the presence of the divine in nature.

To be in communion with nature is another value that we, people who live in complex situations, have lost. From our understanding of the ‘integrity of creation,’ we can presume that there is a constitutive communion in creation. This study accedes to Cajés’ proposal that there are two aspects of the theological aspect of communion of all creation namely, the *fraternitas* aspect – the responsibility for everyone or everything that one has communion with, and the *haecceitas* aspect – the distinction or the “otherness” of every creature is an important essential element to constitute a true and genuine communion.³⁷³ These concepts imply that we must treat sub-human creatures as a ‘brother’ or a ‘sister’ and respect must be accorded to the intrinsic value of every creature founded in God’s purpose of creating the creature. This intrinsic value posits that God is not playing a game in creating – He has a purpose in creating His creatures and even pronounced everything He created as “good.”

Therefore, this paper suggests that the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must usher in a change in attitudes and mind-sets about how people regard themselves in the created order but it also entails a greater sensibility and responsiveness to the presence of the divine in the world and in the universe. Learning from the wisdom of the indigenous peoples and communities in the Philippines and elsewhere in the world, this ecological spirituality must see nature as a ‘sacrament’ of the divine, a manifestation of God’s goodness and wisdom. Our recognition of the intrinsic value of each creature must lead us all to be in communion with them. Following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, we must be able to treat them like brothers and sisters.

³⁷² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 115.

³⁷³ Cf. Prisco A. Cajés, OFM, “Does God Take a Break? Caring for the Integrity of Creation”. Talk Delivered During the Celebration of the Lasallian Mission Week 2013. De La Salle University, Manila. November 22, 2013.

Essential Features of the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality

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It is the recommendation of this study that the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must likewise be characterized by the essential elements in the life and mission of Saint John Baptist de la Salle which have become the distinguishing characteristics of Lasallian education today. These values are not only compatible with the ecological values emanating from the eco-theological themes mentioned above but these may also sustain and enhance the proposed Lasallian ecological spirituality.

Spirit of Faith

Earlier in this study, it was mentioned that Saint John Baptist de La Salle's spirituality and mission were highly influenced by many spiritual and theological writings of the 17th- to 18th century France. While his spirituality is considered unique and original in a number of characteristics, André Rayez notes the eclecticism of the sources of John Baptist de la Salle's spirituality:

He moved freely from Olier to the Carmelite Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, from Saint Francis de Sales to Bernières, from Saint Teresa [of Avila] to Rancé, from the Jesuit Busée to Buevelet, the disciple of Bourdoise, or yet again, from Tronson to the Minim Barré, from the Capuchin Jean-François de Reims to Canon Roland, from Maurist Claude Bretagne to the Archdeacon Boudon.³⁷⁴

Because of the influences of these great theologians and spiritual thinkers who shape the French school of spirituality in the 17th-18th century, Saint La Salle's put great emphasis on the ever-abiding presence of God in his spirituality. In all his writings, the most dominant theme and probably the most important component of his mission is what he referred to as the "spirit of faith." For instance, in his *Meditations*, Saint John Baptist de la Salle wrote: "The spirit of faith is a sharing in the Spirit of God who dwells in us, which leads us to regulate our conduct in all things by the sentiments and truths that faith teaches us."³⁷⁵ It is what kept him secure and serene in the midst of difficulties in and opposition to his mission. His deep and profound recognition of the loving and active presence in God in his life and ministry moved him to work for the salvation of the disadvantaged children of his hometown, a ministry that has evolved and continues to be carried out by those who believe and share in the mission of Christian education. Brother Gerard Rummery notes: "When De La Salle formulated his original Rule he saw that faithful membership of this community depended first of all on what he called a 'spirit of faith:' 'The spirit of this community is, first, a spirit of faith, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to

³⁷⁴ André Rayez, "The Spirituality of Self-Abandonment: Saint John Baptist de La Salle," *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. Robert C. Berger and trans. Philip Smith (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), 134.

³⁷⁵ Augustine Loes, FSC, Ed. *The Letters of John Baptist de la Salle* (USA: Christian Brothers' Conference, 1988), 217.

God.’ (cf. Rule of the Brothers, 1718) ³⁷⁶ For De La Salle, there must be a constant awareness of God’s presence as we accomplish our day-to-day affairs.

Lasallians today are invited to have the same conviction and to ‘see’ things in the light of this faith in an imminent God. As Saint John Baptist de la Salle found strength and reason for his mission in his faith in God, Lasallians in the present day must put faith at the very core of all their endeavors. One of the documents of the 44th General Chapter of the Brothers of Christian Schools succinctly reminds the Brothers and all Lasallians of the primacy of the spirit of faith in the mission of education:

St. John Baptist de La Salle was a man who permitted himself to be touched and moved by the situation of abandonment of the children of the artisans and the poor when he contemplated God’s plan of salvation (cf. Rule 11). It is this same spirituality of eyes open that our Institute needs to cultivate today at the beginning of the 21st century. It is a spirituality that understands that the world, all cultures, sciences and arts, the lives of nations and of persons, particularly if they are poor, are all words that God is using to call to us, to challenge us, to pursue us and show himself to us. ³⁷⁷

Inspired by Saint John Baptist de la Salle, a Lasallian must always use the ‘lens of faith’ in all of his or her undertakings. In accomplishing our ecological efforts, there must be the faith in a Triune God – in the Father, who created the world out of his goodness and love, in Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom in this world and through, with, and in him, redemption all will be redeemed, and in the Holy Spirit who sustains this world with his love and providence, that must inspire Lasallians to engage in ecological sustainability programs. Realizing that humanity is called by the Triune God to be stewards of creation, Lasallians must see in every creature a living reminder of God’s continuing work of creation and redemption and that we are called to participate in this work by living our vocation to be stewards of this earth by being the voice of the earth that is groaning in pains to our society. Let Pope Benedict XVI’s exhortation be an everyday reminder to the Lasallian family: “We are to be humble stewards before God. We are told ‘to cultivate and take care’ of what God has gifted.” (Gen 2:15)

Zeal for Service

Saint John Baptist de La Salle has always believed that faith must be translated into concrete acts of service and compassion. In his lifetime, he gave up many things – from the luxury of his family home to being a highly regarded priest and Canon at the Cathedral of Reims in order to offer his own life for the poor children of his time, because he thought then that they are the most in need of his paternal guidance, spiritual help, and material support. Together with the first band of Brothers, he established schools, using a rather radical and innovative approach to education such as the use

³⁷⁶ Gerard Rummery, ‘Lasallian Spirituality’, http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/lasallian_spirit_en.pdf.

³⁷⁷ ‘Interior Life’, The Documents of the 44th General Chapter “Being Brothers Today: Open Eyes, Burning Hearts” (Rome: Brothers of Christian Schools, 2007), 11.

of the vernacular and the curriculum that they themselves developed based on their own experiences as educators and formators of the young. It was his zeal for the educational mission, which he deems as his particular vocation and humble service to the evangelizing ministry of the Church. It was also this zeal that kept him going about amidst disapproval from ecclesiastical leaders and civic authorities as well as tensions that arose from the community of the Brothers. This distinguishing mark of Saint La Salle became also one of the core values of the Institute of the Brothers and of Lasallian education in general. Zeal for service implies the whole-hearted giving of oneself to the service of others, in gratuity and generosity, in creativity and fortitude, in compassion and commitment.³⁷⁸ 132

This paper contends that a Lasallian's participation in ecological initiatives must always be seen as a concretization of the value of Zeal for Service. Our fellow human being for the longest time has almost always become the subjects of our service and outreach programs. This is laudable and indeed, we should work for justice and equality for all people, especially economic equality. In our country and in many parts of the world, it is poverty or economic deprivation that is identified as the major cause of environmental degradation and the ecological crisis.

While there is a pressing need to continue service and outreach programs directed to humanity, Lasallians must not forget that non-human creatures are part of the larger society. As they 'groan in pains' with humanity, there is a need to be in solidarity with them through our participation in and support of the ecological programs of De La Salle Philippines and of other cause-oriented individuals and groups.

Communion in Mission

"Indivisa Manent" – these are the words inscribed in the coat-of-arms of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. It is the motto of the Institute and of the worldwide Lasallian family. Literally translated as "permanently indivisible," it can be traced back to the family of Saint John Baptist de la Salle who has always believed that they must be united and bonded together as one. This value of togetherness that the young John Baptist imbibed at home made an indelible mark on his person and has motivated his first community of Brothers to live in unity in spite of differing backgrounds and opinions.

Taking the cue from Saint John Baptist de la Salle, the phrase 'together and by association' has become part of the Lasallian phonology. The 1987 Rule of the Brothers state that "together and by association we labor to accomplish God's saving work in a profession where "the poor have the gospel preached to them" and where young people grow as human persons and children of God."³⁷⁹ The phrase signifies the reason for the unity and oneness that Saint John Baptist de la Salle had asked the brothers to live by. Communion in mission means solidarity, co-responsibility

³⁷⁸ Guiding Principles for the Philippine Lasallian Family" De La Salle University Website. Accessed on 04 April 2016. <http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/brothers/mission-partners.asp>.

³⁷⁹ Rule of the Brother of Christian Schools, Accessed on 07 April 2016. Available at <http://www.lasalle.org/en/resources/publications/rule/>.

and collaboration directed towards the fulfilment of a common mission.³⁸⁰ It means fostering relationships that are driven by a shared dream and aspiration and marked by mutual respect and a common set of values. Brother Miguel Campos writes: “Fidelity to the Founder is achieved in terms that are relational... fidelity is lived and realized only in a community effort and in the determination of people to respond to the call of the present needs of our time. Only in this way can we share in the spirit that moved the Founder in his response in his time.”³⁸¹

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This paper recommends that the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must be promoted and lived in the spirit of community. The community must be affirming of each member’s strive to go through ecological conversion and strive to live in the spirit of ecological consciousness. Pope Francis already recognized in *Laudato Si’* that although change starts from within, no one person can do it alone. Every individual effort must be gathered, improved, and shared by the community. The community supports, encourages, and affirms every ecological effort and prompts other members to join hands in making the earth, our common home a truly a reflection of God’s loving presence in the world.

The Framework of the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality

We have argued in the previous pages of this study that the Philippine Lasallian Family is one of the pioneers and remains to be the lead network of Catholic schools in the country that has institutionalized a collective and proactive response to the present problem of global warming. Through its ecological efforts too, several partner-communities and groups have been trained and educated to facilitate the safeguarding of our natural ecosystems. In place also are network-wide principles on facilities and environment programs management that seeks to provide a basis for the formulation of ecological policies in the different Lasallian educational institutions.

These initiatives, however, this study contends, are not enough foundation for a steadfast and lifelong commitment of Lasallians to protect and preserve our natural environment that must arise from a deeper conviction. Rather than having simply a set of principles that gives directions to what must be done and what must be avoided, and having merely a line-up of projects and programs that one can chose to be involved in, there must be a core belief, an inner impetus, an *raison d’être* for their participation in the ecological movement. From just “doing” ecological practices, Lasallians must move to “being” stewards of God’s creation.

Being stewards of God’s creation begins with the recognition of the ecological crisis and its impact to our society today. Through common and individual reflections and discernment, each and every member of the Philippine Lasallian Family must go through the process of ecological conversion and renewal, which involves the formation of all stakeholders in the Lasallian academic communities. Conversion, as discussed in the preceding chapters is an ongoing process which

³⁸⁰ De La Salle Philippines, “Guiding Principles for the Philippine Lasallian Family” De La Salle University Website. Accessed on 04 April 2016. <http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/brothers/mission-partners.asp>.

³⁸¹ Miguel A. Campos, FSC, S.T.D, “Fidelity to the Movement of the Spirit: Criteria for Discernment”, *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota: 2012), 34.

does not happen in an instant. Mere involvement in the ecological initiatives does not guarantee that a person has been ecologically converted.

The process of ecological conversion, which will happen through a conscious formation of individuals and groups, will in turn lead to the embodiment of the Christian vocation to be stewards of God's creation. Once embodied and imbued by the Lasallian values of faith, service, and communion and enlightened by the documents of the Philippine Lasallian Family, it will naturally flow into an active participation and immersion in various ecological programs and activities. As a Lasallian goes through this process, a Lasallian continues to go through ecological conversion until finally, with all of humanity, all shall attain the dream of ecological equilibrium where all of humanity, together with the rest of creation, experience fully God's gift of redemption in Christ Jesus.

In this study, spirituality is defined not as a doctrine or a set of practices but an ongoing experience or life project. Schneider puts it succinctly: "Spirituality is a lived experience is a conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value."³⁸² The following diagram shows how all members of the Philippine Lasallian Family could live the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality as they consciously engage in the ecological practices – initiatives that are grounded on a common vocation to be stewards of God's creation. The framework therefore is a proposal to the Philippine Lasallian Family on how to live the ecological spirituality as they find themselves engaged in protecting the environment.

Summary and Conclusion

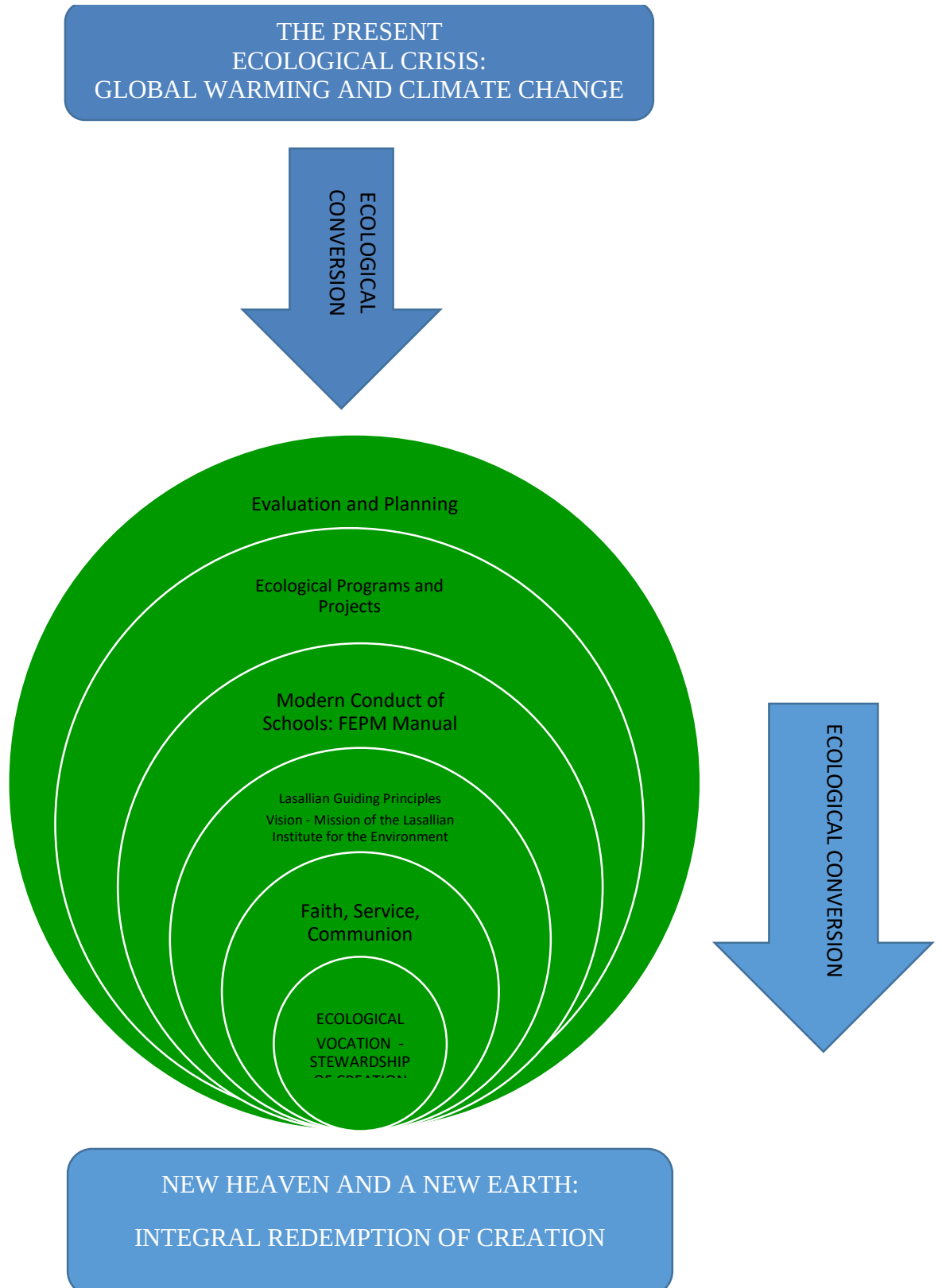
The ecological crisis that the earth is facing today elicits a proactive response from humanity. As the Catholic Church embarks into the era of the 'new evangelization,' where evangelizers are called to espouse "new fervor, new methods and new expressions," has identified care for the earth, as an integral part of Christian discipleship. Two important church documents – *Gravissimum Educationis* and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, require Catholic educational institutions to be at the forefront of the service for the common good. De La Salle Philippines, as a network of 16 Lasallian academic institutions in the Philippines responds to this summons by committing itself to making accessible quality education for the poor and underserved youth which DLSP also sees as a continuation of Saint John Baptist de La Salle's evangelizing mission of bringing the gospel to them and thus transform the society. Part of its commitment to societal change is to create a healthy environment sustained by a society conversant with and aware of issues in their environment, through education.

This present study proposes a spiritual/ theological basis for all the ecological efforts of De La Salle Philippines. An ecological spirituality would not only serve as a catalyst or inspiration for the members of the Philippine Lasallian family to work on the protection of the environment but it will also help provide a framework for embodying the ethico-spiritual values, with which all stakeholders will be able to fulfil the vocation to be stewards of God's creation. As a result of the

³⁸² Sandra M. Schneiders, 'Christian Spirituality: Definitions, Methods and Types', in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (ed. Philip Sheldrake; Louisville, KY:2005).

correlation of the current ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family and a Christian Theology of Creation based on Rom. 8:18-23, the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality may be anchored on the following theological themes: (1) Jesus Christ's gift of redemption is offered to all of creation, (2) the need for ecological conversion, (3) the acknowledgement that science and faith are partners in caring for our common home, and (4) and the appreciation of interrelatedness and communion of Creation. The Lasallian Ecological Spirituality also must be characterized by the distinguishing marks of the Lasallian education which is the *spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission*.

**PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR THE LIVING
OF THE LASALLIAN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY**



CHAPTER SIX

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SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the beginning of this study, it was mentioned that the main objective is to help develop a better ecological sustainability program by articulating a Lasallian Ecological Spirituality that will serve as a faith foundation by making a critical assessment of the current ecological practices and programs of the Philippine Lasallian Family and the Christian Theology of Creation, using the Method of Correlation. This is in the light of the present problem of global warming that resulted to a change in climate patterns which has gravely affected millions of people in the world but most especially in developing countries such as the Philippines. The scientific community has concluded that the ecological crisis we are experiencing today is due mainly or aggravated by human activity. The Catholic Church joins other nation-states and organizations in advocating for the protection of the environment and the conservation of the natural resources.

Responding to the call of the Church and the call of the scientific community, the Philippine Lasallian Family encourages Lasallians not to remain indifferent to the many abuses inflicted upon the environment or to slumber in apathy in the midst of rampant destruction of our natural resources that threaten their very future. A number of ecological initiatives have been identified to help mitigate the effects of global warming and climate change and to support the society to adapting with the “new norm” – stronger typhoons, new paths of storms, rising temperatures, etc. The Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE) was formed to gather the existing efforts to save the environment from further degradation. Right from its inception, it organized two main projects: The One Million Trees and Beyond (OMTB) project which, up to the present, is being carried out by various stakeholders in all La Salle schools in the country; the other one is the Watershed Management Process, a joint effort of the LIFE and the then La Salle Institute of Governance (LSIG) of De La Salle University, Manila.

As the years went by and as the world experienced the grave effects of climate change, the Philippine Lasallian Family’s commitment to protect the environment takes prominence. One of the principles of social involvement that the Philippine Lasallian Family developed is that schools must strive to develop among its members greater recognition of the realities of human suffering and the stewardship role. The Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Rome came up with the, “Environmental Educational Plan for Sustainable Development” which is aimed at laying the principles for the Lasallian family’s ecological actions. On the other hand, De La Salle Philippines spearheaded the development of a manual for running Lasallian educational institutions in the Philippines. Titled “Modern Conduct of Schools,” the manual is an adaptation of Saint La Salle’s own guidebook which he wrote for the first batch of brothers. Part of that manual is the Facilities and Environmental Program Management (FEPM), which was formed to assist the schools to a more efficient and environmental performance towards sustainability in all areas of the educational ministry. Several other projects and activities that facilitate awareness and spur interests among various stakeholders to actively get involved in the advocacy are being done in the Lasallian educational establishments in the country.

After careful analysis of the documents and after observing some of the programs, we can conclude that the ecological principles, programs, and projects of the Philippine Lasallian Family are among other given factors, are characterized by three things, namely: it is highly influenced by the “Sustainable development” paradigm being promoted by some nation-states and by international organization such as the UN’s UNESCO, et, al., it harps on education as an effective tool towards creating an attitude of solicitude for the environment; all principles and action plans are crafted based on up-to-date scientific data; and the need to listen to the wisdom of the Filipino indigenous communities. 138

Noticeable, however, is that the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family is action-oriented and less attention or no attention at all is given to the deeper reason for engaging in the work of protecting the environment. The ecological crisis the world is encountering today demands a new way of life and it must be based on the wisdom of the scriptures and must likewise be illumined by a cosmology that is acceptable to the people of the 21st century. This study centers on the notion of “integral redemption” as implied in Rom. 8:18-23. This means that all creation will participate with humanity in the glory of Christ’s offer of salvation through the incarnation-resurrection event. The interpretative focus of this study is on the World Before the Text or the World of the Reader, which is the concentration of contemporary hermeneutics. The text was read in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ particularly its five important features that are useful for this study namely: the big bang theory, the theory of evolution, the black hole theory, the theory of morphogenic fields, and the theory of holons.

Through the hermeneutical analysis of the text in the light of the ‘new cosmology,’ we were able to develop four main themes of the Christian Theology of Creation namely (1) humanity and the rest of creation are locked in a common destiny, (2) there’s a need for ecological conversion on the part of human beings, (3) stewardship of creation is an essential component of Christian discipleship, (4) a recognition of the interrelationship of creation.

In the fourth chapter, a correlation of the four major concerns that arose from the hermeneutical analysis of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family was correlated with the four themes that resulted from the hermeneutical analysis of Rom. 8:18-23 in the light of the ‘new cosmology.’

The Philippine Lasallian Family’s use of the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm was correlated with the apostle Paul’s concept of ‘Integral Redemption,’ resulting to the acceptance of the ‘sustainable development’ perspective provided that it does not carry with it an anthropocentric mentality and that it must be based on the interrelatedness of creation including humanity. Likewise, the ‘sustainable development’ perspective must be based on two biblical eschatological principles namely, restoration and humanity’s responsibility for the future. Secondly, as the Philippine Lasallian Family has identified education as a potent means for protecting the earth, Rom. 8:18-23 suggests that *metanoia* or conversion is needed to effect a change in attitudes and lifestyle of people. With these in mind, education for sustainable development must always be preceded or must result in a change in values of people. Education must not remain orientational in its approach; it must change hearts and lead people to ecological conversion.

The third correlation is between the cutting-edge scientific basis of the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family and Paul's insistence that it is incumbent upon humanity to care for creation. As a result of the correlation, it was concluded in this study that both science and the Christian faith are pointing to one direction, i.e., as humanity is mainly to be blamed for the suffering of creation, it is also in the hands of humanity that lies the liberation of creation from its pitiful condition. As science goads humans to be responsible inhabitants of the earth, Christianity tells us that it is our vocation to be stewards of our common home.

The absence of reference to the wisdom of the Filipino indigenous peoples and communities in the ecological initiatives of the Philippine Lasallian Family was correlated with the idea of interrelatedness and communion of creation. It is the tribal communities in the Philippines that bring hope to the human and sub-human creatures for what Saint Paul refers to as the 'revelation of the children of God.' These communities have much to teach people who live in highly urbanized areas that have lost the sense of respect and unity with sub-human creatures.

As a network of Catholic educational institutions, De La Salle Philippines, responding to the challenge of renewed integral evangelization commits itself to providing quality education for the poor and underserved youth. This is also the Lasallian Family's concrete contribution to nation-building and the transformation of society, including the physical environment. Part of the measures that were identified to achieve this goal is to protect the environment. Hence, a concrete proposal was presented for the Philippine Lasallian Family – a Lasallian Ecological Spirituality. It is a spirituality that will enable Lasallians in the Philippines to not only be action-oriented but to have a firm faith basis for their ecological initiatives. The theological bases are the results of the correlation between the current ecological practices of the Philippine Lasallian Family. These are: (1) Jesus Christ's gift of redemption is offered to all of creation, (2) there is a need for ecological conversion, (3) science and faith are partners in caring for our common home, and (4) interrelatedness and communion of creation.

Moreover, driven by the life and spirit of Saint John Baptist de la Salle, the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality for the Philippine Lasallian Family must be characterized by the spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission – the distinguishing marks of Lasallian education today. A framework for the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality that begins with the realization of the global ecological crisis and the ultimate goal is the salvation of all sub-human creatures along with humanity who lives in the life of Christ Jesus.

Aside from the proposals made in the previous chapter, the following are the recommendations to the Philippine Lasallian Family:

1. To redefine 'sustainable development' in the light of the biblical recognition of 'integral redemption' in Jesus Christ. The ecological initiatives of the Philippines must respect the intrinsic value of sub-human creatures and must not treat them simply as 'resources' to be utilized to attain the sustainability of future generations of humankind. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the brand of 'sustainable development' paradigm that Lasallian must espouse is one that looks forward to the restoration of all things according to God's original design and it must promote

responsible stewardship of all creation because it is to human beings that God has entrusted the care of this earth and all who dwell in it.

2. To include, as one of the sub-categories of the Facilities and Environment Programs Management (FEPM) of the Modern Conduct of Schools of De La Salle Philippines a section on Lasallian Formation which includes the three pivotal aspects of Christian formation namely, Religious Education (Catechesis), Campus Ministry (Liturgy, Retreats, Animation of Student Clubs/ Organizations), and Social Action (Service Learning, Outreach and Immersion programs). Through the inclusion of Lasallian Formation, the Lasallian family will realize more clearly that it is a Christian vocation to be stewards of creation and that it is an integral part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ today. Development of ecological retreats and designing liturgies that promote the care for the integrity of creation will definitely create a positive impact and will usher in a change of attitudes, lifestyles, and perspectives.
3. The efforts to protect the environment and to care for the earth must not be limited to the implementation of ecological policies, programs and projects. As a way of life, the Lasallian Ecological Spirituality must penetrate all areas of the academic life of Lasallian education institutions. It is recommended therefore that those entrusted with leadership and management positions in La Salle schools be more discerning in selecting members of the board of trustees, advisers to academic programs, and benefactors and donors to other school programs and activities. Accepting donations or grants from individuals, firms, and organizations that do not share our vision of a sustainable earth and are known to take part in activities that contribute to the degradation of the environment will send a contradictory signal to the Lasallian community and will sacrifice the authenticity of all the efforts of the Philippine Lasallian Family to create a just and humane society.
4. That in La Salle schools, the students, who are the future decision makers in various areas of societal life, be formed to become responsible stewards, by integrating care for the earth in all subject areas. Corollary to this, academic departments may rethink the use of animals in experiments as there are already other alternatives available today.
5. Not only in the formal curriculum must stewardship of creation be promoted but also in co-curricular activities of students. Formators must exemplify and guide the students in the planning and execution of various student activities and programs. They must see to it that students will keep in mind the impact of their actions to the environment. Excessive use of paper and other materials that come from nature or that harm it must be prevented. The use of fireworks in celebrations also must be ceased as it is contrary to the Carbon Neutral program of De La Salle Philippines.

The proposed Lasallian Ecological Spirituality as well as the recommendations mentioned above are humbly offered to the Philippine Lasallian Family so that together and by association, imbued by the values of faith, service, and communion, Lasallians in the Philippines will be able to fulfil its vocation as stewards of God’s creation, thereby ushering humanity and sub-human creatures to the realization of our common dream of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1, NRSV).

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