



Reconciling God, Creation and Humanity: An Ignatian Ecological Examen - **Actions**

From On Care for Our Common Home, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter

"I urgently appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet...Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions...

As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: **Everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation."**

What is Yours to Do?

In her recent book *Abounding in Kindness*, theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ divides actions into three "responses": the contemplative; the ascetic; and the prophetic. With those categories for inspiration, here are a few ideas for you to consider.

Contemplative response:

It is said that you will not save what you do not love. So, **spend time in nature**, not using it for recreation or work, but reverencing it and letting it teach you. Be silent. Observe. Listen.

Seek to connect an "Earth ethic" with your Catholic faith. Resources abound, beginning with Pope Francis' encyclical. Here are two other authors to consider:

Ilia Delio, OSF – Theology professor at Villanova University. Her 17 books include, *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth* which won two Catholic Press Association awards. <http://idelio.classit.org>

Elizabeth A. Johnson, CSJ – Distinguished Professor Emerita of Theology at Fordham University. Her books include *Quest for the Living God; Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love; She Who Is, and Abounding in Kindness*.

Ascetic response:

End thoughtless consumption. View all that you use and consume through a new lens. Ask: how do my choices impact the environment? How do they affect other animal species? How do they affect the poor, who are most harmed by environmental destruction?

What lifestyle changes will help the most? A massive scientific project and book called *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* (ed. by Paul Hawken) ranks 100 solutions which, if brought to global scale, would be most effective at reducing and removing heat-trapping carbon dioxide from Earth's atmosphere. While many fall within the purview of government, industry and commerce, many also involve personal choice.

1. **Retreat from meat (especially beef)** – the more you can move to a plant-rich diet, the healthier both you and the planet will be. Amazingly, this solution ranks #4. As the book says: “The Western diet comes with a steep climate price tag.” Also consider: the massive amounts of grain fed to cows, while people around the world go hungry.
2. **Stop wasting food** – Ranks a surprising #3. “A fundamental equation is off-kilter: people who need food are not getting it and food that is not consumed is heating up the planet.” By the way, composting helps – ranking #60 of the solutions.
3. **Reduce energy usage** – For greater impact, move beyond the thermostat. Rooftop solar ranks #10. Driving an electric vehicle ranks #26. Cut back air conditioning – chemical refrigerants are being phased out because they destroy the ozone layer, but they remain an environmental menace.
4. **Save water** - #46 in the rankings. Two technologies are effective: low-flow toilets and water-efficient washing machines. Outside, consider using a rain barrel, drip irrigation, or best of all, replace all or part of your thirsty lawn with plants such as native grasses that don't need supplemental water.
5. **Recycle** – Ranks #55. Up your recycling game. Reduce single-use plastics. Of plastics, Rumpke takes only bottles. Nothing else. Buy in bulk and bring your own containers. Avoid throw-away grocery bags, water bottles, or coffee cups. Use your own. You can recycle grocery bags and other plastic bags and film at many grocery stores. See www.plasticfilmrecycling.org. Also, see www.HamiltonCountyRecycles.org.

Prophetic response: Speak out against the powerful political and economic forces that exploit the environment, animals, the land and poor people as a source of profit. You can do this through direct activism and/or by supporting organizations such as the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the Nature Conservancy and countless others.

Here's an action that may surprise you: in *Drawdown*, #6 in effective solutions is Educating Girls. Women with more years of education have fewer, healthier children (reducing population growth). They are less likely to marry as children or against their will. They are more able to break cycles of generational poverty and contribute to economic well-being of themselves and their societies. See the book, *What Works in Girls' Education* by Gene Sperling, founder of the Center for Universal Education and Rebecca Winthrop, its director.

Finally – consider joining Bellarmine's Healthy Earth Team as we work to engage the parish in activities that help us “care for our common home.” Contact Tim Severyn at severynte@xavier.edu.