

LAUDATO SI': CHAPTER THREE

THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS



OCTOBER 2025

PART 2: THE CRISIS AND EFFECTS OF MODERN ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Last month we examined how the **Globalization of the Technocratic Paradigm** is at the roots of the ecological crisis. This month we will examine how modern anthropocentrism contributes to the ecological crisis.

The Crises and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism: the mindset that places human beings at the centre of all meaning, value and purpose..

Fundamental to all relationships is knowing who we are and what our responsibilities are. If we lose the sense of who we are in relation to others, to God and/or to creation, much harm can result. Today, there is a prevalent worldview that places human beings at the centre of all meaning, value and purpose – modern anthropocentrism. While we do not necessarily go around saying it is all about me (or about my people, my tribe, my nation, etc.), all too often we can find many examples of this behaviour in our own lives. Instead of being good stewards and tending to all relationships, we are tempted to believe that others and creation are to serve me and my pleasures.

“ONCE THE HUMAN BEING DECLARES INDEPENDENCE FROM REALITY AND BEHAVES WITH ABSOLUTE DOMINION, THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF OUR LIFE BEGIN TO CRUMBLE, FOR INSTEAD OF CARRYING OUT HIS ROLE AS A COOPERATOR WITH GOD IN THE WORK OF CREATION, MAN SETS HIMSELF UP IN PLACE OF GOD AND THUS ENDS UP PROVOKING A REBELLION ON THE PART OF NATURE (LS, 117).

The attitude that it is all about me, that I am (and ‘my people’ are) the centre of all meaning has led us to believe that what serves me should be enjoyed and consumed, and that which I do not want, is disposable. Unfortunately, those people whose presence is uncomfortable to us and those who are seen to create difficulties for others are seen as disposable (120). This is the way our society often treats those who are poor, elderly, sick and the unborn.

We need to renew our relationship with nature but at the same time we need a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology (118).



JOIN US AS WE TAKE ACTION FOR OUR PLANET & THE POOR.
DOL.CA/LAUDATO-SI

[W]E CANNOT PRESUME TO HEAL OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT WITHOUT HEALING ALL FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT CAN NEVER BE ISOLATED FROM OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS AND WITH GOD. OTHERWISE, IT WOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN ROMANTIC INDIVIDUALISM DRESSED UP IN ECOLOGICAL GARB, LOCKING US INTO A STIFLING IMMANENCE (119).

Misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle which often manifests as Practical Relativism. If I am (or my nation is) the centre of all things, then we start to put our wants first and we start to measure things “as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests” (122). As a result, we take advantage of others, treating “others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts” (123).

“WHEN HUMAN BEINGS PLACE THEMSELVES AT THE CENTRE, THEY GIVE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY TO IMMEDIATE CONVENIENCE AND ALL ELSE BECOMES RELATIVE” (122).

Pope Francis reminds us “If we reflect on the proper relationship between human beings and the world around us, we see the need for a correct understanding of work” (125). We need to protect employment and to rediscover the proper relationship between human beings. Reflecting on our need to work and its benefits, Pope Francis notes (125–6):

- We were created with a vocation to work
- Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment (moral, spiritual and social)
- We should allow all, especially those who are poor, a dignified life through work
- We should not favour a kind of technological progress in which the cost of production are reduced by laying off workers or replacing them with machines

TO STOP INVESTING IN PEOPLE, IN ORDER TO GAIN GREATER SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL GAIN, IS BAD BUSINESS FOR SOCIETY (128).

ACTION PLAN:

1. A healthy anthropology helps us to respect the dignity of all people and our relationship to God, others and all of creation. Take a moment to reflect on the ways we can better promote and protect the dignity of all people. This reflection tool may be of assistance.
2. Do I see my work and the work of others as participating in God’s creativity? Do I choose employers, companies and products that respect human dignity and the environment?
3. Do I look at things from only a financial perspective ... what will it cost, what will I gain? Do I consider the long-term effects of my purchases – how it affects others, the environment?