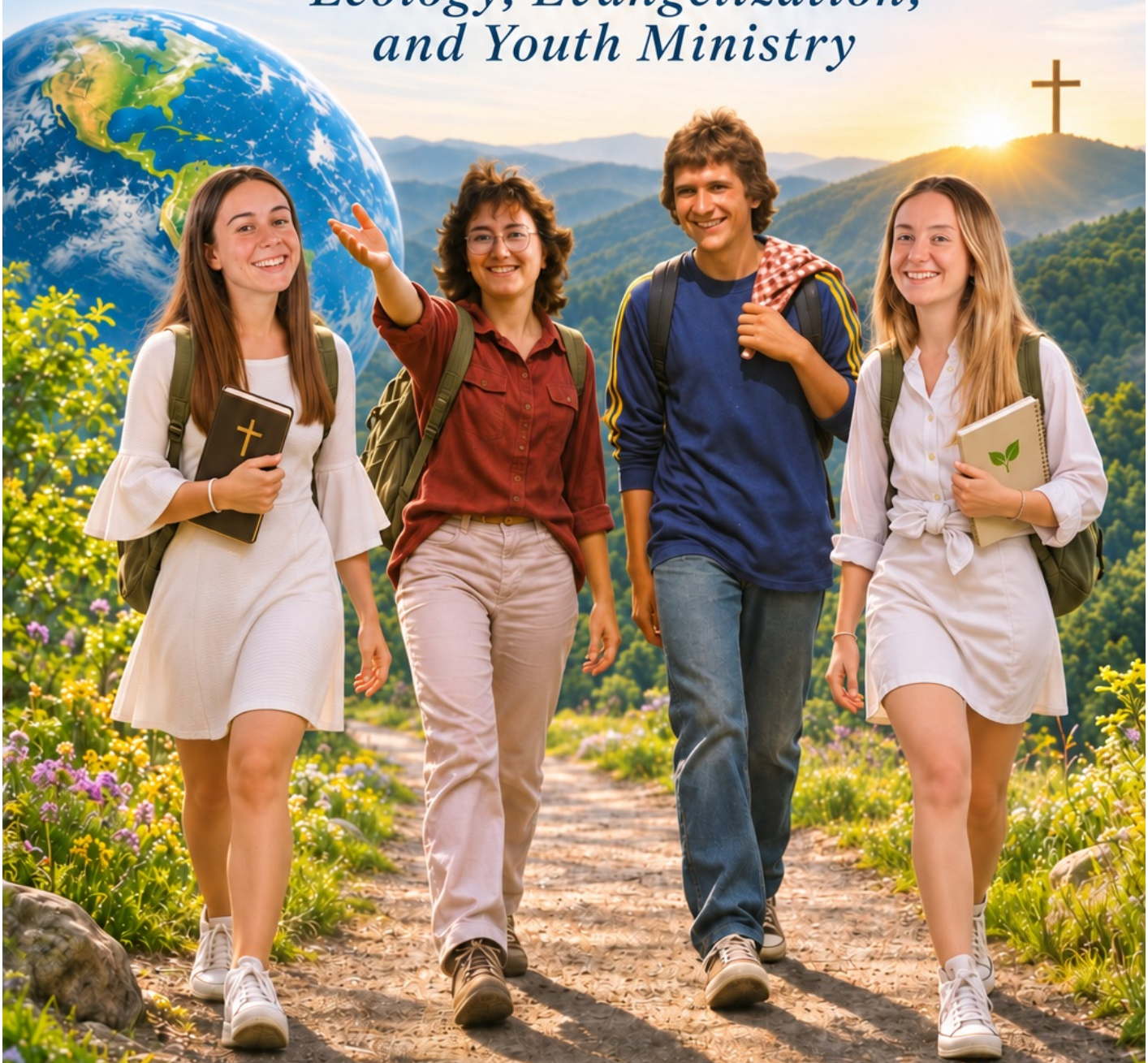
Proclaim the Gospel to All Creation

Ecology, Evangelization, and Youth Ministry



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To all my students in Rome and the United States,
whose enthusiasm for integral ecology has inspired me
and deepened my own commitment to caring for our
common home.

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Abbreviations

1. Biblical Books

1 Cor	1 Corinthians
1 Jn	1 John
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
2 Pt	Second Peter
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel
Eph	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus
Gen	Genesis
Heb	Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Is	Isaiah
Jas	James
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John
Job	Job
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Num	Numbers
Phil	Philippians
Ps	Psalms
Rom	Romans
Wis	Wisdom

2. Magisterium Sources and Institutions

AeN	DDF – DCEd, *Antiqua et nova*
AG	Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, Decree
AL	Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation

CA	John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, Encyclical Letter
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
ChV	Francis, *Christus vivit*, Apostolic Exhortation
CSDC	*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*
CV	Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, Encyclical Letter
DCE	Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, Encyclical Letter
DCEd	Dicastery for Culture and Education
DCom	Dicastery for Communication
DDF	Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith
DIHD	Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
DT	Leo XIV, *Dilexi te*, Apostolic Exhortation
DV	Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution
EG	Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation
EN	Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation
EpC	Francis, *Episcopalis communio*, Apostolic Constitution
EV	John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, Encyclical Letter
FT	Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, Encyclical Letter
GE	Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, Apostolic Exhortation
GS	Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*
IEF	DIHD – Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, *Integral Ecology in the Life of the Family* (2026)
ITC	International Theological Commission
ITC-CC	ITC, *Caring for Our Common Home* (2026)
ITC-CS	ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*
JCH	*Journeying Towards Care for Our Common Home*
LD	Francis, *Laudate Deum*, Apostolic Exhortation

LF	Francis, *Lumen fidei*, Encyclical Letter
LG	Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*
LS	Francis, *Laudato si'*, Encyclical Letter
LSR	DIHD, ed., *Laudato si' Reader*
MH	Leo XIV, *Magnifica humanitas*, Encyclical Letter
NMI	John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, Apostolic Letter
PEGm	Francis, *Message for the Global Compact on Education*
QA	Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, Encyclical Letter
QAz	Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, Apostolic Exhortation
QvH	ITC, *Quo vadis, humanitas?* (2026)
RM	John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, Encyclical Letter
RP	John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*
S18pd	Synod of Bishops (2018), Preparatory Document
S19fd	Amazon Synod, Final Document
S19il	Amazon Synod, Instrumentum laboris
SC	Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*
SCa	Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*
SG3	Synod of Bishops, Study Group 3, *The Mission in the Digital Environment*, Final Report (2026)
SRS	John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Encyclical Letter
TFP	DCom, *Towards Full Presence*
VAM	DDF, *Venite ad me* (2026)
VG	Francis, *Veritatis gaudium*
WCC	World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation
WCD	World Communications Day
WDP	World Day of Peace

3. Writings of St. Francis

1LtaCus	The First Letter to the Custodians

Adm	The Admonitions
CtC	The Canticle of the Creatures (Canticle of Brother Sun)
ER	The Earlier Rule (*Regula non bullata*)
LR	The Later Rule (*Regula bullata*)
LtaA	A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
SalV	A Salutation to Virtues

4. Franciscan Sources and Authors

1Cel	Celano, *The Life of St. Francis* (*Vita Prima*)
2Cel	Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (*Vita Secunda*)
Brevil	Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*
FAED	Armstrong R. J. — Hellmann J. A. W. — Short W. J., eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*
Itin	Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*
Lm	Bonaventure, *The Minor Legend*
OFM	Ordo Fratrum Minorum
Ord	Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* (*Opus Oxoniense*)
Quaracchi	Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, Collegium S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1882–1902

5. Bibliographical and Common Abbreviations

a.	Articulus
AAS	*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
c.	Chapter
cf.	*Confer*, see, compare
CLAR	Latin American Confederation of Religious
CYNESA	Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa
d.	Distinctio, distinctiones

DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
ed.	Editor, publisher, coordinator, editorial
GDP	Gross domestic product
Id	*Idem*, the same
LEV	Libreria Editrice Vaticana
Mercosur	Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur)
n.	Number, numbers
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OR	*L'Osservatore Romano*
p.	*Pars*, page, pages
prol.	Prologus
q.	Quaestio, quaestiones
S.Th	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*
Transl.	My translation
Vol.	Volume, volumes

Introduction

THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY is rooted in God's self-communication throughout history. She is missionary by her very nature, as she originates in the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit and is called to proclaim the Gospel (*AG* 2; cf. *LG* 1). This missionary identity also shapes her ongoing life, as she receives Christ, the incarnate Word, and proclaims him to the world, thereby manifesting her sacramental identity. In doing so, she bears witness to God's saving love, fosters reconciliation within the human family, and promotes renewed communion with the whole of creation.

Care for creation is an integral dimension of this evangelizing mission. The Gospel of Mark concludes with Jesus' command to his disciples: "Proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). Although this proclamation is addressed to human beings, its implications extend to the whole of creation, which "awaits with eager expectation the revelation" of the children of God (Rom 8:19).

Indeed, evangelization "encompasses all dimensions of existence" (*EG* 181), including our relationship with the natural world. Jesus himself proclaimed the Kingdom of God through images drawn from creation and everyday

life, inviting his listeners to recognize the signs of divine love in the world around them (*VAM* 15). Thus, the Good News concerns not only humanity's relationship with God but also the transformation of the relationships through which human life unfolds.

The ecological crisis makes this dimension of evangelization particularly urgent. The cry of the earth is inseparable from the cry of the poor (*LS* 49). Environmental degradation and social injustice are interconnected expressions of a deeper crisis affecting our relationships with God, with one another, and with creation. The prophet Hosea vividly describes this connection between moral disorder and ecological deterioration:

> "There is no fidelity, no loyalty, no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore, the land dries up, and everything that dwells in it languishes: The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea perish" (Hos 4:1–3).

This biblical perspective finds renewed expression in the Church's contemporary social teaching. Pope Francis emphasizes that the climate crisis is also a social question whose consequences fall disproportionately on vulnerable communities (*LD* 3). Likewise, Leo XIV recalls that environmental deterioration and prevailing patterns of development particularly affect the poor (*DT* 96). Consequently, the credibility of ecological evangelization depends not only on proclaiming the goodness of creation but also on defending human dignity, promoting justice, and accompanying those most affected by environmental degradation.

Integral ecology offers a theological and anthropological framework for this mission. The four fundamental relationships of the human person—with God, with oneself, with others, and with nature—are intrinsically interconnected and correspond to the four dimensions of ecological balance: spiritual, interior, social, and natural (*LS* 210). Because "everything is connected" (*LS* 117), these relationships cannot be understood or transformed in isolation. The International Theological Commission describes the Christian perspective as a "situated anthropocentrism," in which human dignity and responsibility are affirmed within the network of relationships that sustains life (*QvH* 19).

The ultimate foundation of this relational vision is the mystery of the Triune God, who creates, sustains, and calls all things to their fulfillment in Christ. Every creature bears the imprint of the Creator, and creation itself reflects, in an analogical way, the relational character of its Trinitarian origin (*LS* 239).

The International Theological Commission emphasizes that the responsibility to care for our common home does not arise solely from the urgency of the present ecological crisis. It is already inscribed in God's original plan for creation (*ITC-CC* 6–8). Ecological responsibility is therefore not merely a temporary response to environmental deterioration, but a permanent dimension of the Christian vocation. To care for creation is to respond with gratitude and responsibility to the gratuitous love of the Creator.

This perspective also challenges the prevailing technocratic paradigm, which tends to evaluate both human beings and nature primarily in terms of utility, efficiency, productivity, and control. As Pope Francis reminds us, "there can be no ecology without an adequate

anthropology" (*LS* 118). The crisis of our common home is therefore inseparable from distorted understandings of the human person, freedom, progress, and the purpose of creation.

In his encyclical *Magnifica humanitas*, Leo XIV develops this relational understanding of human dignity and integral development. Recalling the inseparability of environmental and socioeconomic challenges (*MH* 43), he emphasizes that authentic progress must integrate social justice, care for creation, dignified living conditions, and responsibility toward future generations (cf. *MH* 84). Such progress requires more than technological innovation: it demands ethical discernment concerning the purposes to which human capacities and resources are directed (cf. *MH* 17, 22–25, 45–46).

Particular attention must be given to technological developments that promise unlimited improvement while overlooking the meaning of human finitude and vulnerability. Leo XIV warns against placing our hope in technological "upgrades" that may intensify existing inequalities,[1] or regarding every human limitation merely as a defect to be overcome (*MH* 118). Likewise, the document *Antiqua et nova* recalls that human intelligence and technological creativity must remain oriented toward the common good and the responsible cultivation and protection of creation (*AeN* 1, 24–25). The challenge is not to reject scientific and technological progress, but to place it within a genuinely human and relational vision of development.

This challenge is especially significant for evangelization and youth ministry. Young people are

growing up in a world marked simultaneously by ecological deterioration, rapid technological change, and unprecedented possibilities for communication. Many experience the environmental crisis as a threat to their future, while their daily lives are increasingly shaped by digital technologies and consumerist expectations. Their questions about the meaning of life, the possibility of a sustainable future, and their place in society cannot be separated from their spiritual and vocational discernment.

Youth ministry must therefore do more than transmit information about environmental problems or encourage isolated changes in behavior. It is called to awaken a sense of wonder before creation, facilitate an encounter with Christ, form critical and responsible consciences, and accompany young people toward personal conversion and shared commitment. The aim is not simply to make young people more environmentally aware, but to help them discover their vocation to live in communion with God, with others, and with the whole of creation.

This task requires recognizing young people as active participants in the Church's mission, rather than merely as recipients of pastoral initiatives. In his preface to the *Laudato si' Reader*, Pope Francis insists on the importance of listening seriously to children and young people, whose perspectives can enrich the discernment of the wider community (*LSR*, 13–14). Their creativity, sensitivity to injustice, and willingness to seek alternatives can contribute to renewing both ecclesial life and society.

At the same time, ecological education requires sustained accompaniment within families, schools,

1. "Everything that appears as a 'limit' — incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability — tends to be seen primarily as a defect to be corrected, rather than as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship" *(MH 118)*.

parishes, and other formative communities. The Holy See's practical guidance on integral ecology emphasizes the connection between spiritual formation, education, and concrete responsibility in everyday life (*JCH*, Intro; chaps. I–II). This approach calls for intergenerational dialogue, attentive engagement with scientific knowledge, and opportunities for young people to participate in initiatives that unite contemplation, service, and the pursuit of justice. Evangelization thus becomes a process of reciprocal learning, in which the Church both announces the Gospel and listens to the experiences, questions, and aspirations of the younger generations.

The Franciscan tradition offers a particularly fruitful perspective for integrating these dimensions. Francis of Assisi did not approach creation primarily as an object to be exploited or even merely as a reality to be protected. He encountered creatures as brothers and sisters within the great family brought into being by the Creator. His spirituality united contemplation and action, praise and responsibility, evangelical simplicity and fraternity. In this way, he continues to offer a model of ecological conversion and evangelization capable of inspiring young people today.

The eight chapters develop this argument progressively. Chapter One examines the ethical and anthropological roots of the ecological crisis, with particular attention to consumerism and the technocratic paradigm.

Chapter Two proposes a relational paradigm rooted in Trinitarian theology, the Christian understanding of the person, and the Franciscan tradition.

Chapter Three explores the spiritual, educational, and social dimensions of integral ecology.

Chapter Four considers ecological sin and conversion, including the evangelical counsels and the sacramental dimensions of Christian life.

Chapter Five examines Reconciliation as a path toward restored relationships and ecological responsibility.

Chapter Six responds to polarization by proposing dialogue, fraternity, and a culture of encounter.

Chapter Seven presents the evangelizing implications of integral ecology through inculturation, synodality, contemplation, and responsible communication.

Finally, Chapter Eight applies these perspectives to youth ministry, vocational discernment, ecological conversion, and active hope.

Throughout this study, Francis of Assisi remains a privileged model and source of inspiration. His experience reminds us that ecological responsibility, evangelization, and the formation of young people are not three separate tasks, but interconnected dimensions of the Christian vocation to live and proclaim the Gospel within the great community of creation.[2]

2. The present volume draws upon, expands, and applies to evangelization and youth ministry many of the ideas developed in the author's earlier books: The Universal Fraternity: Franciscan Roots of Fratelli tutti (2023); Everything Is Connected: Integral Ecology and Communication in the Digital Age (2021); Being a Franciscan in the Digital Age: New Challenges, New Life (2021); and Sister Mother Earth: Franciscan Roots of Laudato Si' (2017). All four books are available from TAU Publishing. For a fuller treatment of the theoretical foundations underlying the reflections and pastoral proposals presented here, readers may consult these earlier works.