

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PAPAL TEACHINGS TO GLOBAL PEACE AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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Abstract

The duty of the Church to save souls and its engaging concern to address the needs of the community of faith is quite pivotal. This fact is candidly communicated by Catholic Social Teaching vis-à-vis Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* which is a classic reverence. Pope Leo drafted the encyclical at a time when the world was experiencing a whirlwind of protests among the working class due to dilapidated working conditions, poor wages and a raptured social milieu. Given the situation, the Pope was compelled to address the above issues beginning with just salaries, owning private property, and what is expected of any State by its citizens and the rights of association and Christian fraternity.

Introduction

Majority of the Popes who governed the Church after Vatican II have vehemently attempted to address two globally touted issues that are a threat to humanity. The two issues are: the use of nuclear weapons and environmental conservation and protection. To address the malaise, the Popes have consistently provided timely and relevant insights to mitigate the delicate and life threatening situation. As leaders of the Church, the Popes have engaged in responding to these issues because the Church is basically a sacrament of salvation that strives to make the Kingdom of God in the world both palpable and vivid as proclaimed by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke 4: 18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year of acceptance to the Lord."¹ In this article am going to argue how the Popes after the Second Vatican Council have challenged the use of nuclear arms and strongly underscored the protection and conservation of the environment as a stepping stone to achieve global peace and human development. I begin with Pope John XIII.

The Papal Calling for Peace and the Condemnation of Nuclear Weapons

Pope John XIII

After experiencing both First and Second World Wars, Pope John XIII developed a penchant for peace. His passion for peace was amplified in 1962 when he played a pivotal role in mitigating the Cuban Missile Crisis, “a confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union that was basically brewing to nuclear war. The Pope conveyed his message of peace through his timely encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.¹ For John XIII, human dignity was a *raison d’être*, as far as human life is concerned. The threshold of this encyclical was basically human rights and the duties attached to these rights. What are human rights? According to E. Kamaara and M. Kamaara, “Human rights refer to entitlements (rights and freedom) to which a person has a just and legal claim merely by virtue of his or her being. Human rights are not given to individuals by governments or by any other authority because they are natural.”²

The Ecumenical Trust of Justice and Peace in Kenya stresses that human rights: “...are God given and are therefore, inherent, inviolable, and inalienable. This means that you are born with them, they should not be violated nor should they be taken away from you. These rights are natural to our humanity because they enable us to live like human beings.”³ For Laurenti Magesa, “human rights are principally the God given privileges which are believed to be enjoyed by them equally, solely by virtue of their being human without trait.”⁴ Emile Francis Short comments that,

human rights deal with those claims or entitlements, which enable us as human beings to live our lives in dignity and give expression to our humanness. They speak to the human personality and its attributes. They are universally recognized as fundamental to the dignity of the individual. Indeed, the foundation of all results is the inherent worth and the dignity of the human being.⁵

These rights have to do with rights of the individual in the society, rights of individuals towards the State, rights of states towards each other and finally rights of both individuals and States within the entire world

community.

As stated by the Pope John XIII, “It was the duty of the State to preserve a balance, and not to be concerned about the rights of the group that the rights of another might be sacrificed.”⁶ By human rights, the Pope was referring to the life and the means essential for its proper growth and development with regard to food, clothing shelter, medical care and education. Rights as such have ensuing duties. As social beings, humans have the obligation to contribute towards common good—those conditions that are necessary for people to grow and develop as human beings per se. Pope Leo also addressed himself to public authorities who are responsible for providing basic services like transport, communications, water, public health and housing. Such authorities bear the challenge of ensuring a healthy balance between competing rights and corresponding duties.

Pope John XIII extended his train of thought to touch on the issue of international relations, focusing on truth, justice, solidarity, and liberty. He addresses war and the deploring production of arms with its “vast outlay of intellectual and economic resources (n. 109).” The Pope argues that justice and humanity demand that the arms race should dwindle and come to a pounding halt, “weapon stockpiles reduced equally and simultaneously, and all nuclear weapons banned (n. 112).” In order to achieve this protracted common good, the Pope calls for a public authority with vested worldwide powers and the necessary means to achieve this good. According to John XIII, such an authority should never be imposed. Instead, it should be established and achieved within the tenets of dialogue.

While acknowledging the United Nations as a body that matches the standards of such a body, the Pope vehemently supports its Universal Declaration of Human Rights with high hopes that the UN will operate in a manner that is parallel to the ‘magnitude and nobility’ of its duties and commitments (n. 145). The Popes who came after John XIII with an exception of John I, whose papacy lasted for thirty-three days have strongly supported John XIII’s strong position against nuclear arms and the pronounced need for a genuine powerful political authority in the globe. Following the footsteps of John XIII, Pope Paul VI became a global protagonist of global peace.

Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI lounged his popular encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967. In the encyclical, the Pope provides the roadmap of how peace can be achieved through what he calls integral human development, that is, an approach that focusses on the entire person and all persons yonder the boundaries. In an effort to achieve palpable development, the Pope lobbied for the following: economic support of the economically poor nations by the rich countries, equal trade relations and universal charity. The Pope was deeply convinced that genuine development of people en masse can be a stepping stone towards achieving lasting peace in the entire globe. As argued by the Pope, “Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provoke jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy (n. 76).”

In supporting the views of John XIII, Paul VI said: “Who can fail to see the need and importance of this gradually coming to the establishment of a world authority capable of taking effective action on the juridical political peace? (n. 78).” As soon as the encyclical was complete, Pope Paul established the famous and highly appreciated World Day of Peace which is celebrated each year on January 1st.⁷ In his maiden speech, the Pope was not addressing himself to the Roman Catholic Church but to the entire population of the globe to always remember and celebrate the day at the beginning of each new year. In his move to strengthen support for the World Day of Peace, the Pope came up with ten bold themes. In 1977, the Pope is remembered to have said, “If You Want peace, Defend Life.” Here the Pope revisits the institutions and the various initiatives that championed for peace in the aftermath of World War II. However, the Pope was more concerned about developing global conflicts prompted by the threat of nuclear weapons, with the potential of massive destruction (n.5).

The Pope does not hesitate to articulate how the competition for creating more superior and sophisticated firearms consumes resources from institutions of learning, health, and civic structures. According to the Pope, “the policy of massive armaments is immediately called into question... with forthright boldness of our programme of the “arms race.” (n.15). For Paul VI, working for each person living on this planet. After Paul the VI, John Paul II was also a great supporter of global peace.

John Paul II

John Paul II supported the World Day of Peace with a myriad of corroborating writings within the parameters of peace. Some of these corroborating writings include: “Development and solidarity: Two Keys of Peace; Peace with God the Creator; Peace with All creation; If You Want Peace, Reach Out to the Poor: Women Teachers of Peace; Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace; No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness; Do Not Be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good.”⁸

In tandem with his encyclicals, John Paul II played a pivotal role towards the development of the Catholic Voice as far as war and peace are concerned. The Pope contributed a lot to the Catholic Social Teaching on the issue of non-violence, humanitarian intervention and forgiveness in the realm of international politics. John Paul II championed for interfaith dialogue and intermittently criticized narrow applications of the traditional “Just War Theory.”⁹ A short while before the United States attacked Iraq in 2003, John Paul II’s speech addressed to diplomatic corps recognized by the Holy See was quite moving and insightful. The preamble of the speech was basically touching on the status quo of the world:

I have been personally struck by the feeling of fear, which often dwells in the hearts of our contemporaries. An insidious terrorism capable of striking at anytime and anywhere; the unresolved problem of the Middle East, with the Holy Land and Iraq; the turmoil disrupting South America, particularly Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela; the conflicts preventing numerous African countries from focusing on their development; the diseases spreading contagion and death; the grave problem of famine, especially in Africa; the irresponsible behavior contributing to the depletion of the planet’s resources: all these are so many plagues threatening the survival of humanity, the peace of individuals and the security of societies (n. 2).

In addition, the Pope said, “Yet everything can change (n.3).” Such a pronounced change gravitates around the multiplicity of political leaders.

The Pope enumerated some requirements to be fulfilled to salvage the human race from being obliterated from the face of the earth (n.3). The protracted list of requirements opens up with three main affirmations:

respect for life, respect for law and the duty of solidarity. As argued by the Pope, the enumeration of the conditions suggests that nationals and their leaders should cultivate a culture that challenges death, selfishness, a culture that says not to war mongering. “War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity...I say this as I think of those who still place their trust in nuclear weapons and of all-too-numerous conflicts which continue to hold hostage our brothers and sisters in humanity (n.4).” John Paul II was convinced that it is possible to transform and turn around our attitude towards war with good will and also to support others with the faithfulness of the Gospel to our commitments. Pope Benedict XVI developed further the views of John Paul II regarding global peace through his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*.

Benedict XVI

In his famous encyclical on social justice *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict responds to a myriad of topics vis-à-vis economic issues. As indicated by the Pope, globalization and technology offer great opportunity for authentic human development—but also presents an overwhelming threat. The Pope goes ahead to argue that, human work based in charity and truth and expressed in justice, the common good and a consistent ethic of life can be pivotal in achieving their intended goals. In the encyclical, Benedict talks about peace-building within the parameters of technology. Benedict insists that, “Even peace can run the risk of being a technical product.” Although diplomatic efforts and strategies to address the main sources of terrorism are essential, the Pope suggests that these efforts be based on values rooted in the truth of human life: solidarity, mutual understanding and love (n.72). In his address to the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict underscored the theme of authentic human development as a clear path that propels to peace. Concluding his message of peace, ‘Blessed Are the Peacemakers (2013),’ the Pope wrote: “It is alarming to see hotbeds of tension and conflict caused by growing instances of inequality between rich and poor by the prevalence of a selfish and individualistic mind set which also finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism (n.1).”

In his first address to the World Day of Peace in 2006, ‘In Truth, Peace,’ Benedict spoke directly about nuclear weapons:

What can be said...about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war, there would be no victors, only victims (n. 13).

Likewise, in his 2007 speech, 'The Human Person, the Heart of Peace,' the Pope argues:

Another disturbing issue is the desire recently shown by some States to acquire nuclear weapons. This has heightened even more the widespread climate of uncertainty and fear of a possible atomic catastrophe. We are brought back in time to the profound anxieties of the 'cold war' period... Unfortunately, threatening clouds continue to gather on humanity's horizon. The way to ensure a future of peace for everyone is found not only in international accords for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also in the determined commitment to seek their reduction and definitive dismantling. May every attempt be made to arrive through negotiation at the attainment of these objectives! The fate of the whole human family is at stake! (n.15).

Like John Paul II, Pope Benedict also touched on issues related to nuclear war. He supports progressive disarmament and elimination of all nuclear weapons "whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present generation and of the generations yet to come (n.11)." For Benedict, the protection and conservation of the environment is everyone's mandate, concern and responsibility to establish a peaceful and a harmonized world. Pope Francis too continues to challenge the world to work for lasting peace through the system of non-violence.

Pope Francis

In his message to World Day of Peace in 2017, 'Non-violence- A Style of Politics for Peace,' the Pope condemns the world wars and the glaring threat of nuclear war. In his speech, Francis portrays present-day conflicts as a "horrifying world war bought piecemeal." The Pope enumerates some of the horrors of war which include the following: terrorism, organized crime, unforeseen acts of violence, the abuses experienced by migrants

and victims of human trafficking; and the pollution of the environment. In conclusion, the Pope argues that violence is “not the cure of broken world and leads to the death of many people, “if not all” (n.2).

The Pope articulated the palpable and ubiquitous suffering and pain inflicted by war in his first message to World Day of Peace in 2014. The Pope underscores the emphasis of his papal predecessors on integral human development for each person as a blueprint for lasting peace. In support of this noble ideology, the Pope says, “I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for the disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament (n. 7).” After challenging the deployment of nuclear weapons as a stumbling block and a major threat for peace in the globe, the Popes also championed for environmental conservation and minimal pollution as a conduit for global peace.

THE PAPAL CALLING FOR REDUCTION OF POLLUTION, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

Interestingly, Pope Francis is not the first Pope to raise concern over ecological degradation. In 1971, Paul the VI raised the issue in his apostolic letter, *Octodecimo Adveniens*, while celebrating the eighth anniversary of Pope Leo VIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (the encyclical often articulated as the first of modern Catholic Social Teaching). Most of the Popes after Pope Paul VI generally expressed great concern over environmental degradation and pollution.

Pope Paul VI:

In his encyclical *Octogesima Aveniens* the Pope revisits the remarkable changes that occurred since Pope Leo’s encyclical (in 1891). Paul VI did this in order to expound on the teachings of his predecessors, in response to the new needs of a fast changing world. Some of the hard-core challenges that he responds to include urbanization, the new roles of women, racial and cultural discrimination, immigration and the unbalanced exploitation of the environment. His environmental reflections are quite plausible although not widely explored. According to the Pope,

...another transformation is making itself felt, one which is the

dramatic and unexpected consequence of human activity. Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace...but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable (n.21).

JOHN PAUL II:

In his 1990 message to World Day of Peace, the Pope spoke basically about environmental pollution and degradation. The Pope argues:

In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life (n.1)¹⁰

The Pope vehemently insists that the environment is a moral concern that draws attention to moral values in his address. After candid reflection about the goodness of creation in the Bible, John Paul II came up with vital elements that contribute to environmental degradation and pollution. Such elements include: the indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology, industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs...the burning of fossil fuels [and] unrestricted deforestation (n.6). According to the Pope, all these elements demonstrate a pronounced lack of respect for life (n. 7). In his mitigation to environmental conservation, John Paul II insists that "Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic industrial or scientific progress (n. 7)" The Pope re-echoes Vatican II's emphasis on the universal goal of created realities: "God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples."¹¹

As the Pope suggests, such an idea requires a "more internationally coordinated approach to the management of the earth's goods (n.9)" in tandem with proper response by individual nations to establish tenable measures and in challenging structural forms of poverty. John Paul II focusses his

attention to any form of warfare as a gaping threat—especially chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare. The Pope concludes that, “any form of war on global scale would lead to incalculable ecological damage (n.12),” affecting human life and social structures, destroying crops and vegetation, and contaminating soil and water.

The Pope concludes by underscoring the duties of individuals, nations and international community to search for peace and help restore a balanced ecological milieu (n.15). John Paul II revisited this ideal concern during his 1999 World Day of Peace message on human rights. Upon realizing the possible damage to land and sea, flora and fauna, the Pope argues that the “world’s present and future depend on the safeguarding of creation, because of the endless, interdependence between human beings and the environment.”¹²

BENEDICT XVI

Pope Benedict XVI has been candidly vocal on ecological instability and pollution. His commitment to ecological protection and conservation is evident in his address to the United Nations Summit in 2009 about climate change and also in his popularly known encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) and his message of peace to the World Day of Peace in 2010). The Pope appealed to the United Nations Summit to preserve and protect the environment as a precious gift from God. As indicated by the Pope, “... the economic and social costs of using up shared resources must be recognized with transparency and borne by those who incur them, and not by other peoples or future generations.”¹³ Benedict suggested the following as critical stepping stones towards achieving global environmental conservation and protection: team work (to the leaders of the world), respecting the law, promoting solidarity and also paying attention to the regions of the world that are not economically endowed.

In his encyclical, the Pope candidly states that, “there is a pressing moral need for renewal solidarity especially in relationships between developing countries and those that are highly industrialized (n. 49).” The Pope argues that the way humans relate with the environment is concomitant to the way in which they relate with themselves. Such an approach draws attention to deeper reflection on the way in which modern societies are

organized and structured.

According to Benedict XVI, a large section of the modern world has been largely infiltrated by consumerism and hedonism. In addition to the responsibility of leaders to the environment, the Pope insisted that the Church too has the responsibility over the environment. Benedict XVI said, “The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. By so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction (n. 51). “

In his address to World Day of Peace in 2010, Benedict raised the following question: “can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities of climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions?”¹⁴ As indicated by the Pope, the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees,” and endless conflicts over natural products is propelled by lack of proper environmental care and protection. For the Pope, humanity is subject to what he calls “a complex set of moral crises,” that is, a deep sense of independence and a particular way of living that is less sophisticated, a way of life that calls for integrational solidarity and collective responsibility.

In tandem, Pope Benedict developed a repertoire of responses that would be pivotal in promoting proper human development and simultaneously take good care of environment: “a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion of sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on a realization of our need for a changed life-style and on prudence (n. 9).” Such innovations include technological and scientific research that propels to venturing and exploiting solar energy, management of forests, strengthening the linkage between combating climate change and overcoming poverty’ (n.10) and progressive tutorials on how to achieve and maintain peace. The arduous task of engaging in environmental conservation/protection and reduced pollution calls for a global approach (n.11).

Like John Paul II, Benedict also touched on issues related to nuclear war. He supports progressive disarmament and elimination of all nuclear

weapons “whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present generation and of the generations yet to come (n. 11) For Benedict, the protection and conservation of the environment is everyone’s duty and responsibility towards establishing a peaceful and a green world.

Pope Francis:

In his encyclical *Laudato Si,* Pope Francis argues vehemently that the world (our common home) is like a biological sister sharing the same mother with the rest of the flora and fauna. A loving mother who extends her hands with rare tenderness to embrace all indiscriminately. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through your Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, who produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.”¹⁵ According to Pope Francis, the allegorical sister is currently writhing in pain because of immeasurable harm. Humanity persists in a restless depletion of resources which God endowed her with since the foundations of the universe. Human beings are restless in operating like self-proclaimed Lords and masters possessing intrinsic claims to violate her gifts nonchalantly. Such violence which is candidly visible in our hearts, propelled by sin, is also noticeable in the environmental destruction facing soil, water, and air in various spheres of life. “This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22).¹⁶

In the encyclical, the Pope is appealing to people of all walks of life that is every person living on this planet, to all men and women of good will to engage in dialogue about our common home (n. 3). The prelude of the encyclical embodies a catalogue of themes that dominate the encyclical. Such themes include the close link between the poorest of the poor and the delicate planet, the conviction that everything in the world is closely connected and the inevitable commitment of the international and local policy (n.16). Pope Francis totally supports the idea that global warming is a phenomenon that is particularly fuelled by human activity. As indicated by Pope Francis, “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in

our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades (n. 25).”

Further-more, the Pope talks about the value of water (both quality and quantity, the dwindling of biodiversity, the fragmentation of the society and the diminishing quality of life and global in equality (nn. 27-52). The Pope cites disappointment with the poor political responses to such threats to our common home, expressing that “the most that one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment” (n.54).

In his effort to give a more comprehensive response, Pope Francis draws stamina from the Scripture. He begins by shedding light on creation narratives by affirming that humans have a pronounced responsibility to take good care of the earth (n.66, 77). This brings in the idea of stewardship. Considering the concept of stewardship, we find that God is the creator of everything. Consequently, the Pope proclaims every human individual to be a responsible steward of creation. For B. Mondin, “man is created in the image of God among other reasons, by mandate received from his creator to subject and dominate the earth. In execution of this mandate, every human being reflects the same action of the creator of the universe.”¹⁷

The idea of human beings as stewards is palpable in both the New and the Old Testaments as well as in the parables of Jesus (Lk12: 15-21; 18: 18-30; 19: 11-17). As stewards we are supposed to take care of creation and make sure that it bears good fruits. Biblically speaking, stewardship in this case is geared towards human life in general. Underscoring a similar train of thought, Pope Francis argues that, “Everything is linked together. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to sincere love for our fellow human beings and unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of the society” (n.19).

After concluding his discourse on the human origins of ecological challenges, mainly the dominance of technocratic approach (nn.106-114), Francis argues in support of an “integral ecology,” conforming that we are facing a common crisis that is both social cum environmental. Strategies for a plausible solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the marginalized, downtrodden and coming up with proper structures and policies to ensure environmental protection and

conservation (n. 139). Both common good and intergenerational solidarity are quintessential, “since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us (n. 159).”

Pope Francis does not hesitate to revisit the “paths of dialogues” that can be pivotal in helping us to escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us (n.163). Such destructions seemingly occur internationally hence creating problems/challenges that can only be addressed adequately through international response. Following the footsteps of his contemporaries, Francis argues in support of the “urgent need of a true world political authority (n. 175).” The Pope advocates for both national and local dialogues as major stepping stones towards the emancipation of diverse groups in their struggle to address pertinent challenges.

Pope Francis also champions for dialogue between politics and economics. According to Pope Francis, “...today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life (n.189).” The Pope critically addresses the problem of greed with regard to the maximization of profits. As the Pope indicated, where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythm of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploration, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor (n.190).

The other form of dialogue that the Pope states as quintessential is the dialogue between politics and economics. In view of common good today, there looms a dire need for politics and economics to engage in to a genuine dialogue about the source of life (n.189). Lastly, the Pope recommends dialogue between religion and science. As argued by the Pope, majority of the people who inhabit the planet profess to be believers in one way or the other. This fact should propel the various religions to dialogue among themselves with the goal of galvanizing nature, protecting the poorest of the poor and establishing networks of respect and mutual fraternity. On the other hand, dialogue among the various sciences is likewise quintessential. Otherwise there is a likelihood of these fields to enclose themselves in their

own language while specialization points to a particular isolation and the absolutism of its own field of knowledge (n. 201).

In the final chapter of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis is challenging human beings to transform their minds and ways of doing things. Although many things are bound to change human beings are obliged to initiate this radical change and transformation for the betterment of the world. As indicated by the Pope, "...we lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone (n. 202)." The last chapter of *Laudato Si'* is quite informative, inspiring, insightful, challenging, spiritually moving and profound. The chapter serves as an awakening call for prayerful reflection and commitment to real action. In this very chapter, the Pope raises hard questions with regard to consumerism. The Pope proposes basic education in this regard based on environmental care, protection and conservation. The Pope also provides a variety of examples that can be useful in our ways of living, behaving and relating with the environment around us. An ethos of living that reflects a generous and timely creativity that has the capacity to bring out the best from people's lives. As far as the Pope is concerned, both political and Church institutions have a critical role to play as far as far as creating consciousness about environmental conservation and protection is concerned. A life that is blended with a tinge of simplicity, happiness, witnessing and contemplation is pivotal towards taking good care of the earth as our "common home."

Conclusion

A spot check on Papal contributions towards global peace and environmental conservation gives a clear indication that the two main life threatening issues are nuclear arms and environmental pollution. Both nuclear arms and environmental pollution are deleterious because they bear the capacity to obliterate humanity from the face of the globe. As bona fide inhabitants of the universe, all human beings are called to mitigate the threat posed by nuclear arms and environmental pollution. These two towering challenges can be overcome through solidarity, dialogue and collaboration among the different nationals and nationalities of the world. Second, the pronounced duty to work for peace and to take good care of

the earth as “our common home” is a gospel value that is also shrouded by a cluster of pending challenges and difficulties. However, as individuals and together as a society it is possible to do a comprehensive analysis of our political, social economic settings and come up with strategies that can be instrumental in achieving peace, reducing pollution and come up with formidable policies on environmental protection and conservation. As the famous adage holds, “Where there is the will there is the way.” Each one of us is capable of reflecting and borrowing a leaf from Pope Francis’s prayer at the end of his encyclical: “Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey upon it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction...”

¹ Cf. www.vatican.va

² Eunice Kamaara and Mary Kamaara, *Abortion & HIV/AIDS: A Human Perspective*, African Ecclesial Review, No. 1 &2 (March-June 2005), 48.

³ “*Ecumenical Trust for Justice and Peace, You Are Your Rights*,” Nairobi: The Ecumenical Trust, 1998, 1.

⁴ Laurenti Magesa, “*Some Practical Ethical Considerations for the Promotion of Human Dignity in Africa*,” African Christian Studies, No. 2 (June 1987), 11.

⁵ Emile F. Short, “*Human Rights and Religion; The Christian Perspective*,” in *Conflict: What Has Religion to do With It? An African-European Dialogue*, (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2004), 95.

⁶ Walsh Michael and Daves Brian, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace: Documents From John XXIII to John Paul II*, London: Collin’s Liturgical Publications, 1984, XIV.

⁷ ‘*Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, for the Observance of a Day of Peace*’ (1 January 1968).

⁸ Cf. www.vatican.va

⁹ Drew Christiansen, “*Catholic Peacemaking, 1991-2005: The Legacy of Pope John Paul II*,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 4 (2006), 21-18.

¹⁰ John Paul, “*Peace With God the Creator, Peace With All Creation*” (1 January 1990).

¹¹ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 69.

¹² John Paul II, “*Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace*” (1 January 1999), n. 10.

¹³ Benedict XVI, “*Video statement to the Un Summit on Climate Change*” (24 September 2009).

¹⁴ Benedict XIV, “*If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*,” (1 January 2019), n. 4.

¹⁵ *Canticle of the Creatures, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si,’ On the Care of Our Common Home*, (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015), 9.

¹⁷ Battista, Mondin. *Philosophical Anthropology*, (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985), 189.