If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our at­titude will be that of masters, consumers, ruth­less exploiters, unable to set limits on their im­mediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and aus­terity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled. (n. 11)

When we speak of the “environment,” what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. 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….it is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (n. 39)

When our hearts are authentical­ly open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretch­edness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people…. Everything is related, and 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 unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (n. 92)

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.”152 For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion….Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue. (n. 217)

152 Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry* (April 24, 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 710.

Isolated individuals can lose their ability and freedom to escape the utilitarian mindset, and end up prey to an unethical consumerism bereft of social or ecological awareness. Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds…. The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion. (n. 219)

It also entails a loving awareness that we are not dis­connected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believ­ers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems and in offering ourselves to God. “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable” (*Rom* 12:1). (n. 220)

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For Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation. Saint Bonaven­ture….teaches us that *each creature bears in it­self a specifically Trinitarian structure*, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile. In this way, he points out to us the challenge of trying to read reality in a Trinitarian key. (n. 239)

The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (n. 240)

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