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Chapter Three of the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis; Laudato Si'. (Analysis)

Chapter three of 'Laudato Si' could be described as a clarion call by The Pope to all human inhabitants of the Earth to shotgun the signs and symptoms that all is not well with our communal earthly dwelling. This call is to move all to examine the deeper causes of that crisis; thus, he captions it: 'THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS.'

In this Chapter, The Pope observes that within two centuries now, humanity is going through a time of significant technological advancement in so many areas such as medicine, automotive, communication, and electricity, and also most recently in the digital revolution, biotechnology, robotics, and nanotechnology.

The Pope acknowledges these advancements as coming from God-given talents to human beings. Therefore, they are all welcomed phenomena helping to enhance human life and the environment. Through technology, many evils, health, and environmental challenges that threatened humanity in the past have been entirely averted or incredibly put to check, and continual efforts give hope that more breakthroughs through technology will be made in the future. These are tremendous and laudable achievements towards the improvement of the living conditions of humanity.

Nonetheless, in this chapter, Pope Francis also critically explores the side effects of the technological advancements that the successes seem to have exceedingly clouded, pointing to our individual and collective actions and inactions on the Earth, which leads to the current ecological crises. He substantially traces the human roots of the unwavering challenges of our earthly dwelling in the following expressions: Excessive Anthropocentrism, Dominion Mentality, Human

and Environmental Exploitation, and Degradation, Relativism, Throw-Away Culture to mention but a few. Francis also proffers possible solutions to control the menace.

Pope Francis advocates for a collective effort and dialogue to create an ethical framework and principles to guide individual and general actions to check the eco-challenges.

The Pope further reiterates the ethical imperative for us at this generation not to destroy the Earth but to care for it, understanding that future generations will live in it too. This chapter clarifies that future generations will inhabit the Earth and that every generation is obliged to maintain the Earth and leave it better for the generations to come. The Pope intends that such awareness or alarm that he is raising should lead to a dialogue and concrete steps towards taking responsibility for the good of our common earthly home.

However, despite the undesirable products of technological advancements mentioned above, Pope Francis maintains an attitude of gratitude for the great efforts and contributions of different persons and human societies leading to various technological advancements.

In his words, the Pope adds, 'how can we not feel gratitude and appreciation for this progress, especially in the fields of medicine, engineering, and communications... how could we not acknowledge the work of many scientists and engineers who have provided alternatives to make development sustainable?

Pope Francis firmly maintains that Technoscience, if properly directed, will lead to beautiful achievements towards the well-being of humanity. However, if the contrary is the case, challenges resulting from the development and application of the technology would be calamitous and retardational. Thus he adds: "A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress."

Suffices it to mention here that the foundation of the great concern, as portrayed by the lines of chapter three of the encyclical letter, has technology being portrayed as a god for the human person who tends to think of achieving all solutions to basically every problem through the use of technology. Furthermore, it appears that humanity today is consciously or unconsciously helpless, to the fear that technology that is expected to be at the service of human beings may turn humankind into a slave to it.

The 'promise' of technology to solve immediate problems and concerns may create future challenging conditions, and a continual gaze at the visible successes through technology blindfolds humanity to subsequent and untold risks that could come with the successes. Thus, while the human person, for the most part focuses on the resolution of a present predicament, there are unplanned and unimaginable possible side-outcomes, some of which have led to the current environmental crisis. Hence, The Pope calls all to sober and integral reflection on where the power of technology is leading the Earth's inhabitants.

Substantially, the Pope notes that the current technological field continues to manifest substantial progress in material resources. However, it is yet to manifest commensurate growth in developing good human qualities such as conscience, responsibility to one another, and other physical human values. The Pope enumerates some of the critical sides of what he terms the technocratic paradigm to include the following:

*Aim at gaining control over several portals of the human physical development, to gain more economic advantage and absolute power over others. It is becoming more evident that the greater the control society has over technology, the greater the domination society has over others. Many societies are continually seeking domination of others through technology.

*The enthronement of technology is that people believe that application and reliance on technology will care for all human concerns and challenges. Humankind tends to relegate some of the 'traditional' human collegiality to procuring solutions.

*Humans hasten to exploit the environmental resources as though they are unlimited, or they need to grab those resources from the radar of other inhabitants, towards monopolistic ideology.

*Focus on economic and material profit instead of the essence of humanity's quest for meaning and fulfillment, the well-being of the poor and subsequent generations, thus leaving humanity vulnerable to various ecological crises.

Science, technology, and monetary wealth are needed for people to flourish. Nevertheless, undue attachment and dependence on the lead to the incessant quest by people to get hold of them, yet no one should ignore the ethical reflections and conversation concerning the common good and welfare of humanity in general, including that of the future generations.

It is worthy of note that the Pope is not advocating for a return to the primitive age; instead, he invites humans to have the freedom to limit, control, and direct technology to a moderate and lasting service. They are to find humanity's proper place on Earth, maintain it, and not live and act against one another or engage in things that will ultimately turn back to haunt them.

This paper appreciates the views of Pope Francis in that "... economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impacts on human beings." However, it also exposes the reality that the undue quest and continual struggle for domination in technology, economics, and monetary wealth are foundational to the reasons of the very ecological crisis under discussion, as well as the exploitation and consequent destruction of peoples and nature.

Pope Francis further links the growing global poverty to the environmental degradation, which has led to a steady increase in the number of migrants leaving their countries and seeking a place or another country of refuge, where they can possibly hope for the safety of their lives, food, shelter, and clothing. A rethink and actions for possible redress beginning with individuals and communities, to the societies, would be crucial to meet the fundamental sense of responsibility for fellow humans upon which every civil society is established.

Humanity's blindness or laissez-faire attitude to the present challenges and failures mentioned above and failing to engage the root causes of the present global predicament would be linked to the undue quest for domination over others. Subsequently, the causes of the environmental predicaments are within the areas of the individual/societal behaviors and activities, especially with the direction and connection of technological and economic upturn.

Pope Francis believes that creating awareness and educating all peoples and nations through conferences and other media avenues on this topic would help. Furthermore, he envisages setting up a committee on the global level to investigate the issues around this topic would be a good way to initiate the solution while involving many societies would imply having many societies assume responsibility.

The Pope understands that technology and its products condition our human mentality, dictate our lifestyle while regulating our social possibilities and actions. 'Life gradually becomes a surrender to situations conditioned by technology....' Ipso facto, the human person knowingly or unknowingly becomes dependent on technology for what can be taken care of without it, consequently creating an environment of crisis within and outside the person.

This paper evaluates the situation that humanity is living for today, with such mentality as 'I have crossed, the bridge can break up' or such misconstrued ethical principle of what works- for

me/us today goes and let tomorrow take care of itself. Similar maxim for the fortunate class as 'whatever takes care of my present desires is seen as worth engaging', with no care or concern for the less privileged, the poor, and the vulnerable, including the unborn.

While maintaining an unwavering position on the care of the mother earth in the vegetation, the natural habitat, the animals, Pope Francis believes that we cannot fail to protect the human embryo through which humanity continues to exist, even when the presence of the embryo is uncomfortable or undesirable. All are called to respect and care for human life from inception to the natural end.

Notably, the Papal call for an 'ecology with adequate anthropology' could be understood as a call for the restoration, appreciation, and respect of human dignity and respect and care for the environment. The Pope teaches that 'our dominion over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship, which ultimately remains for the good of humanity.

Questions

1. How can the US check the human roots of the ecological crises, knowing that competing countries might not, but would take it as an advantage to pursue their course?
2. What might be the nation's attitude to the poor who contribute least to the global crises but are most impacted by crises?
3. How would an individual respond to the ecological crisis: based on one's faith, or culture?