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**“EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED”
Communication and integral ecology in the light
of the encyclical *Laudato Si’***

**“TODO ESTÁ CONECTADO”
Comunicación y ecología integral a la luz
de la Encíclica *Laudato Si’***

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Abstract: In the light of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*, this paper presents interaction and communication as essential aspects of all that exists. Humans are dialogical beings and “everything is connected”. The first part studies the theological and ethical bases of both communication and integral ecology. Everything has been created through the Word and is ordered to the affectionate and fraternal encounter. The second part asserts the need for ecological conversion and then focuses on the media. They are gifts of God that can contribute decisively to strengthening the bonds of fraternal communication and communion. However, they also present ethical challenges that must be addressed.

Key words: Communication ethics, *Laudato Si’*, Integral ecology, Media, ecological conversion

Resumen: A la luz de la encíclica *Laudato Si’*, este artículo presenta la relación y la comunicación como elementos constitutivos de la realidad. “Todo está conectado”. Todo el ecosistema es una red de relaciones y el hombre, imagen del Dios trinitario, es un ser dialógico y relacional. La primera parte del artículo estudia las bases teológicas y éticas de la comunicación y de la ecología integral. Todo ha sido creado a través de la Palabra y ha sido ordenado al encuentro fraterno y comunicativo. La segunda parte afirma la necesidad de conversión ecológica y después se centra en los medios de comunicación social. Estos son dones de Dios que pueden contribuir grandemente al fortalecimiento de los vínculos de comunicación y comunión. Sin embargo, también presentan desafíos éticos que es preciso abordar.

Palabras clave: Ética, *Laudato Si’*, Ecología integral, Medios de comunicación, Conversión ecológica.

In the light of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, this paper presents interaction and communication as essential aspects of all that exists.¹ “Everything is connected.” [91] The whole ecosystem is a web of relationships and the human person, created in the image of the Trinitarian God, is a dialogic and relational being.

The Means of Social Communication [=MSC] must contribute to communion and integral ecology, strengthening the four fundamental relationships of the human being (God, others, oneself, and creation). Unfortunately, this is not always the case. *Laudato Si'* warns about the risk of using them in a wrong way, because they “have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration.”² They influence our lifestyle and, therefore, the whole ecosystem. We all are immersed in the social environment shaped by the media and have to learn how to inhabit it responsibly.³

Communication is neither an end in itself nor a simple transmission of data. To be authentic, it must be oriented to building up community through communion. “At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love.”⁴

The first part of this paper studies the theological and ethical bases of both communication and integral ecology. Everything has been created through the Word and is ordered to the affectionate and fraternal encounter. The human being, *imago Dei*, has the mission of strengthening the fraternal bonds in the common home. The second part asserts the need for ecological conversion and then focuses on some ethical aspects of the media. They are gifts of God that can contribute decisively to integral ecology and to strengthening the bonds of fraternal communication. However, they also present ethical challenges that must be addressed.

¹ FRANCIS, «Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*» [=LS] May 24, 2015, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, [=AAS] 107 (2015) 847-945. In the body of the text, the quotations of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* will be indicated with just the numbers in brackets. The Italian version of this paper will be published in: *Path* 17/2 (2018)

² JOHN PAUL II, «Encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*» Dec. 7, 1990, [=RM] n. 37, in *AAS*, 83 (1991) 249-340.

³ Media Ecology has been developed in the last decades, taking inspiration from Marshall McLuhan. “Media ecology is the study of media environments, the idea that technology and techniques, modes of information, and codes of communication play a leading role in human affairs.” L. STRATE, «Understanding MEA» in *Medias Res* 7/1 (1999) 1-2. More information in Internet: http://www.media-ecology.org/media_ecology/. [Last visit: July 30, 2018]

⁴ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, [=PCSC] «Pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*» May 23, 1971, [=CP] n. 11, in *AAS* 63 (1971) 593-656.

1. Creation is a web of relationships

All that exists has been “created according to the divine model” and, therefore, “is a web of relationships”⁵ at all levels: “between ecosystems and between the various spheres of social interaction.” [141]

“Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships. [...] Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.” [240]

Laudato Si' “invites us to develop a spirituality” [240] and a mystic that can reopen our eyes, so that we can experience “the intimate connection between God and all beings” [234] and see nature as a joyful mystery of communion and relationships. We are closely connected to all living creatures and share with them the same physical and chemical substrate, as well as “a large part of the genetic information.” [138] Therefore, we need to reinforce the “awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone.” [202]

1.1. Before the *creatio ex nihilo*, communication already existed

Before the *creatio ex nihilo*, communication already existed among the divine persons. Indeed, the Trinitarian God is agape, self-giving, community of three persons.⁶ He is communion in plurality, the source of any unity and diversity.⁷

God is relationship in himself, communion *ad intra* and *ad extra*. “The divine Persons are subsistent relations.” [240] The Father is the Lover, the Son is

⁵ LS 240. A more complete presentation of this first part: M. CARBAJO NÚÑEZ, *A free and fraternal economy. The Franciscan perspective*, Media House, Delhi, 2018; Id., «Franciscan Spirituality and Integral ecology. Relational bases vs the Throwaway culture.» in *Islamochristiana* 43 (2017) 59-78.

⁶ 1Jn 4:8. Cf. AUGUSTINUS, *De Trinitate*, XV, c. 16, in J.-P. MIGNÉ, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, 226 voll., Paris 1841-1864, [=PL] vol. 42.

⁷ La unidad divina “será tanto más evidente cuanto más clara sea la distinción de las personas, y viceversa.” En efecto, la total comunión de las tres personas “no excluye, sino que afirma, la existencia de tres ‘yo’, pero al mismo tiempo elimina radicalmente la posibilidad de un ‘tuyo’ y un ‘mfo.’” Esa unidad se expresa en “la mutua inhabitación o perichóresis de las mismas.” L. F. LADARIA, *La Trinidad, Misterio de Comunión*, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 2002, 128-129.