

Integral Ecology and Learning from Below: Care for the Earth and for the Poor



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Be The Difference.

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Introduction

1. Francis's Method of Dialogue and Encounter
2. Encounter and Learn from the Poor
3. Integral Ecology: The Earth and the Poor
4. Application: Environment - the Poor - Health



1. Francis's Method of Dialogue and Encounter

One of the aspects of Francis' pontificate is collegiality and goes to meet people.

- ▶ College of Cardinals
- ▶ People's Participation - Synodal Consultation

▶ Dialogue:

- ▶ Vatican II - *Gaudium et Spes*
- ▶ CELAM - Conference of Latin American Bishops (Medellín, Puebla. Aparecida)
- ▶ National Episcopal Conferences
- ▶ Grassroots - social movements
- ▶ Indigenous peoples
- ▶ Scientists
- ▶ Secular and non-Christian thinkers

Pope Francis:

- ▶ “Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. For the Church today, three areas of dialogue stand out where she needs to be present in order to promote full human development and to pursue the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society - including dialogue with cultures and the sciences - and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church.” *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 238.
- ▶ “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, especially human life.” *Laudato Si'*, no. 189.
- ▶ “The Amazon regions ought to be a place of social dialogue, especially between the various original peoples, for the sake of developing forms of fellowship and joint struggles.. If we wish to dialogue we should do this in the first place with the poor... They are our principal dialogue partners, those from whom we have the most to learn, to whom we need to listen out of a duty of justice, from whom we must ask permission before presenting our proposals.” “Dialogue must not only favor the preferential option on behalf of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, but also respect them as having a leading role to play.” *Querida Amazonia*, no. 26 and 27.



2. The Encounter and the Learning from the Poor

Francis proposes an Integral ecology because he sees the faces of those who are the most vulnerable to suffer the negative impact of the ecological crisis: the poor. Hence, the preferential option for the poor becomes central in Francis' perspective.

Francis does not see the ecological crisis separated from the socioeconomic crisis (LS no. 139)

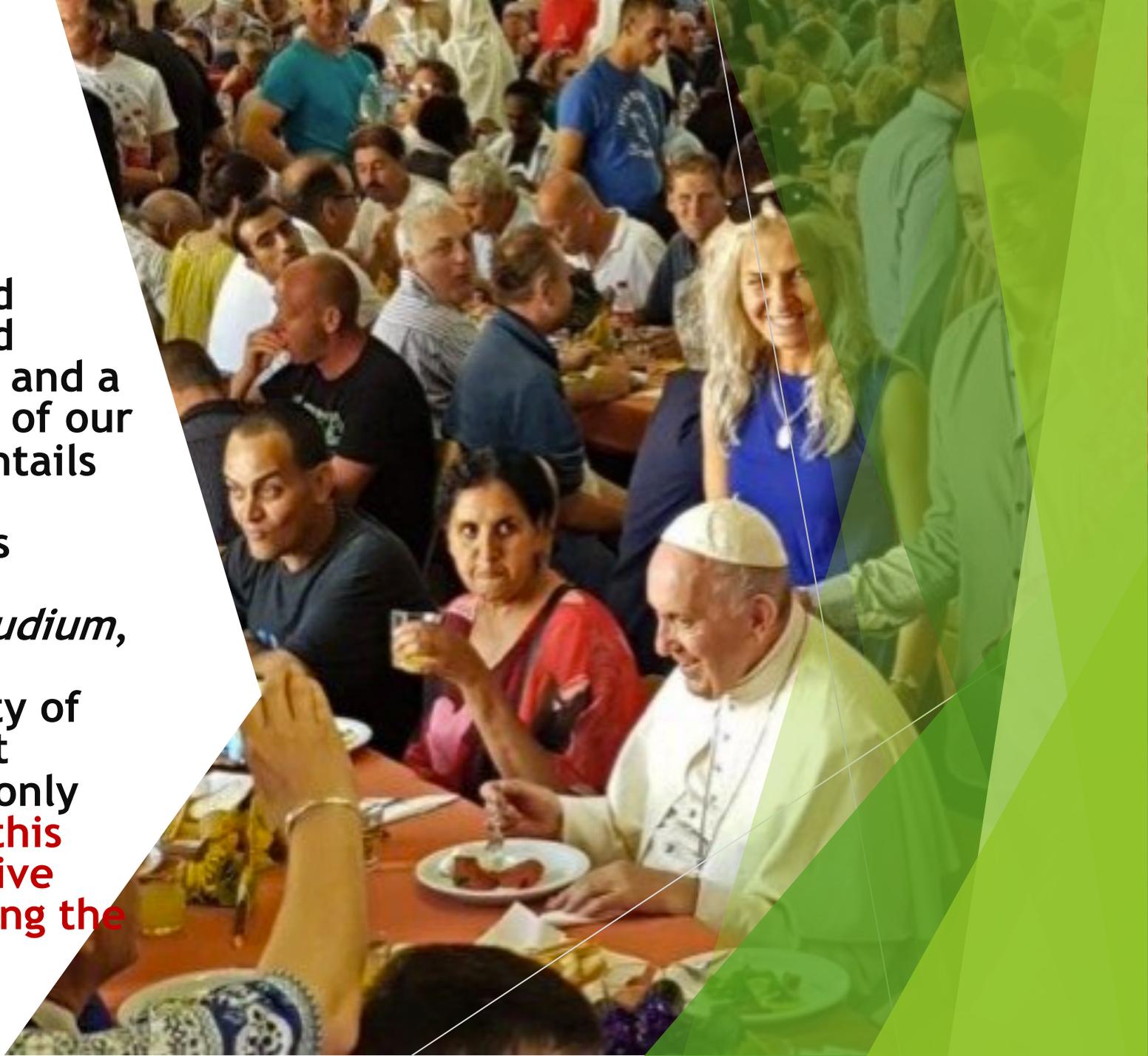
Learning from

- the limits of the earth as a living-reality
- the poor living in the earth



Option for the Poor: Ethical Imperative

“The principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world’s good, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, **this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for the effectively attaining the common good.**” LS, no. 158.



Contemplation of the Crucified Poor

- ▶ Personal Historical Encounter that changes our lives and way of seeing the world
 - ▶ Faith in Jesus - personal encounter with Him (*Deus caritas est*, no. 1)
 - ▶ Encounter with the poor - Christological faith (*Evangelii gaudium*, no. 185)
 - ▶ Encounter with the Earth - Living-reality that is suffering (*Querida Amazonia*, no. 42)

The poor:

Is the Earth (LS, no. 22)

Is the socially poor (LS,
no. 158)

Is Jesus (LS, no. 98)

The Crucified

we are invited to CONTEMPLATE

Krenak, sobreviventes do vale



One Nature

There is no the nature and us, but only the nature as a living-reality which we are a part of it.





It seems that in Pope Francis' thought and ministry, any social transformation must include a new paradigm of caring for the Earth and for the poor. This must begin from below, with an experience of encounter, and incorporate anyone who wants to contribute in this process. The poor, in their diversity of races, cultures, beliefs, traditions, and in their creativity, have an important role in this movement for an integral ecology, not only as recipients of justice, but as agents of transformation.

3. Integral Ecology: The Cry of the Earth and The Cry of the Poor

- ▶ Pope Francis' encyclical is not a “green document,” but it is integral because it recognizes the cry of the Earth and its most suffering children, the poor.
- ▶ “Today [...] we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.” (LS, no. 49).
- ▶ This union between the suffering of the Earth and the suffering of the poor is what makes his proposal to be an integral ecology, as “one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.” (LS, no. 137).
- ▶ A transformation in the model of productions: from a consumerist-exploratory model to a caring-sustainable model of a living-reality

► Pascal's notions of *spirit of geometry* and *spirit of finesse* (Leonardo Boff)

- The modern capitalist world is led by a spirit of geometry.
- The spirit of finesse rises from contemplating the harmonic beauty of creation. It is a spirit of tenderness, caring, humility, and community. It is a wisdom that comes from the heart.

► Mother-Earth - *Pachamama*





Full Tenderness and Beauty

- ▶ Pope Francis defends an integral ecology in which he invites us to assume values of “great sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land.” And he adds: “These values are deeply rooted in indigenous peoples.” (LS, no. 179).
- ▶ Francis calls for an ecological and communitarian conversion. “This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness.” (LS., no. 220).
- ▶ “Popular poets, enamored of its immense beauty, have tried to express the feeling this river evokes and the life that it bestows as it passes amid a dance of dolphins, anacondas, trees, and canoes. Yet they also lament the dangers that menace it. Those poets, contemplative and prophets, help free us from the technocratic and consumerist paradigm that destroys nature and robs us of a truly dignified existence.” (QA, no. 46)



4. Application of Francis's Integral Ecology in the Context of Environmental Issues and the Health of the Poor



A. Reality: Studies and Narratives

HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS OUR HEALTH

People are exposed to risk factors in their homes, work places and communities through:



Ecological Crisis

- ▶ Climate Change
- ▶ Global Warming
- ▶ Extreme Weather Events
- ▶ Water Contamination
- ▶ Exposure to Chemicals
- ▶ Air Pollution
- ▶ Food Shortage
- ▶ Unsafe housing
- ▶

- ▶ “In many parts of the world, climate change will jeopardize the fundamental requirements for health, including clean air, safe and sufficient drinking-water, safe excreta management, decent work, a secure and nutritious food supply, protection from extreme weather events, and adequate shelter”
- ▶ “The poorest and most vulnerable populations are likely to experience the most severe impacts”

WHO, 2016

According to World Bank:

- ▶ Climate change could see more than **100 million people return to extreme poverty** by 2030 unless concerted action is taken. The negative impacts of climate change on people's health could play a major role in this reversal.
- ▶ Warming of 2-3 °C is estimated to increase the number of people at **risk of malaria** by up to 5 percent globally, or more than **150 million people**.
- ▶ Climate change is also closely linked with **increased incidence of dengue** - a mosquito-borne disease whose transmissibility has increased by between 3% and 6% due to climate change since 1990.
- ▶ Climate change could increase **the burden of diarrhea** by up to 10 percent by 2030 in susceptible regions, such as South-East Asia.
- ▶ **Undernutrition** has been identified as the largest health impact of climate change in the 21st century.
- ▶ **The frequency of weather-related disasters has increased by 46% from 2007-2016** (compared to the 1990s) due to climate change.
- ▶ Environment disasters result in over **60,000 deaths annually**, mainly in developing countries.

- ▶ A growing literature on the links between **climate change and mental health** has begun to examine the direct and indirect causal pathways that impact mental health, including the psychological consequence of disasters and economic losses on mental health, drought and farmer suicide, migration and forced displacement, and physical illness.
- ▶ In 2013, 87% of the world's population lived in areas that exceed the World Health Organization's air quality guidelines.
- ▶ **Air pollution** is already responsible for more than **7 million premature deaths each year**; 1 in 10 deaths is attributable to air pollution exposure.
- ▶ While pollution-related **deaths mainly strike children and the elderly**, pollution also results in lost labor income for working-age men and women.
- ▶ Climate change exacerbates social, economic, and demographic inequalities by straining the social and environmental systems that support good health.
- ▶ The number of vulnerable people exposed to heatwave events increased by 125 million between 2000 and 2016.

Water Pollution and Contamination

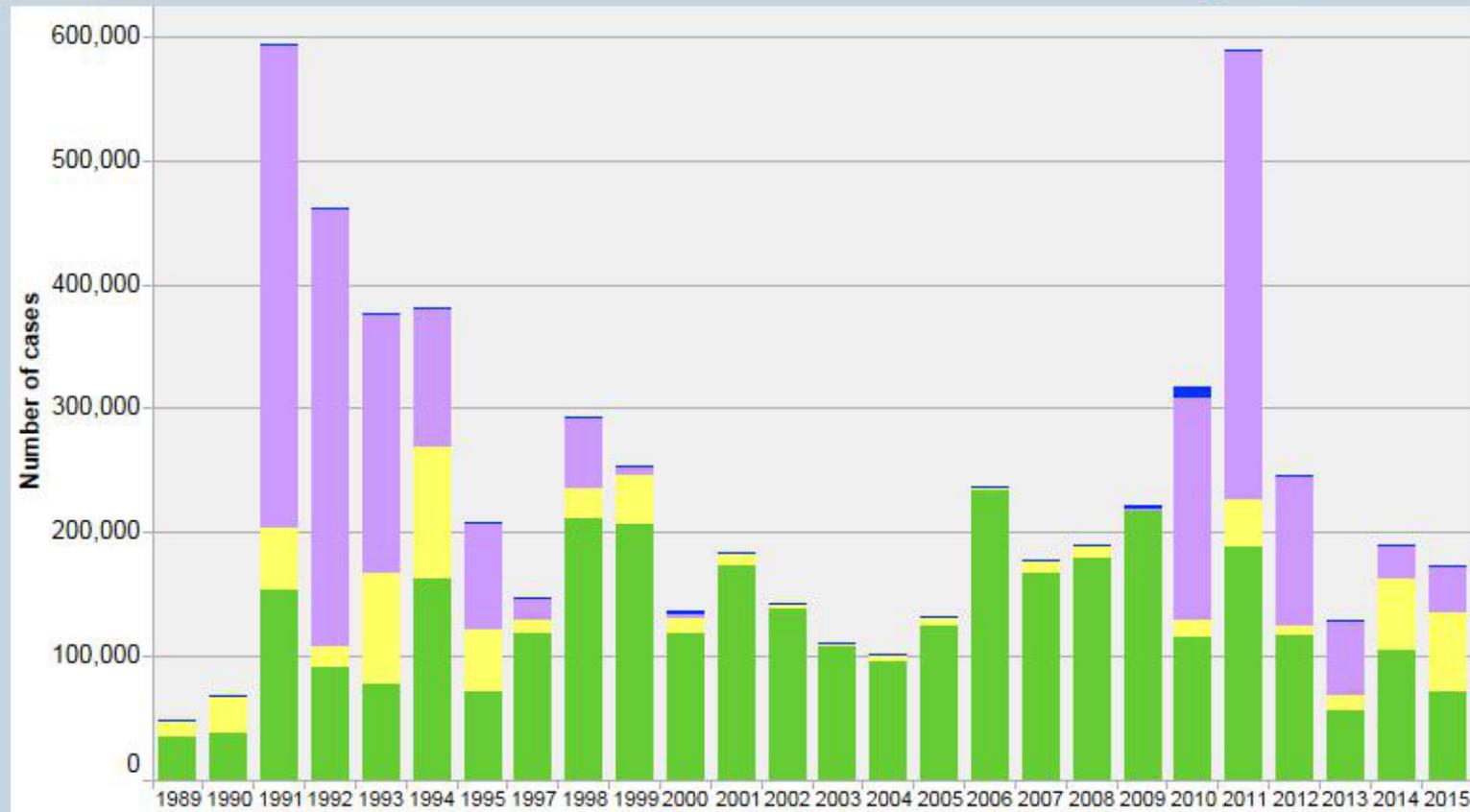
- ▶ “The main health impact of water pollution and contamination are associated with increased levels of mortality due to waterborne diseases, most notably **diarrheal diseases** which are associated with 1.5 million deaths every year.” (WHO)



Cholera

- ▶ Cholera is an acute diarrhoea caused by infection due to ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is **endemic in more than 50 countries**, mostly in Africa and Asia, and may also cause epidemics. More than 1 billion people are at risk of cholera in endemic countries, with an estimated 2.9 million cholera cases and **95 000 deaths per year**.
- ▶ The most recent major cholera epidemic occurred in Haiti in 2010-2011, following an earthquake, causing over 7000 deaths in Haiti and neighbouring Dominican Republic.
- ▶ Environmental factors are critical in the epidemiology of cholera. Climate change, war, natural disasters, population movement and urbanization are complicating efforts to control the disease.

Cholera cases reported to WHO by year and by continent 1989–2015



Source: Weekly Epidemiological Record, 2016, 91(35)

■ Oceania ■ Americas ■ Asia ■ Africa

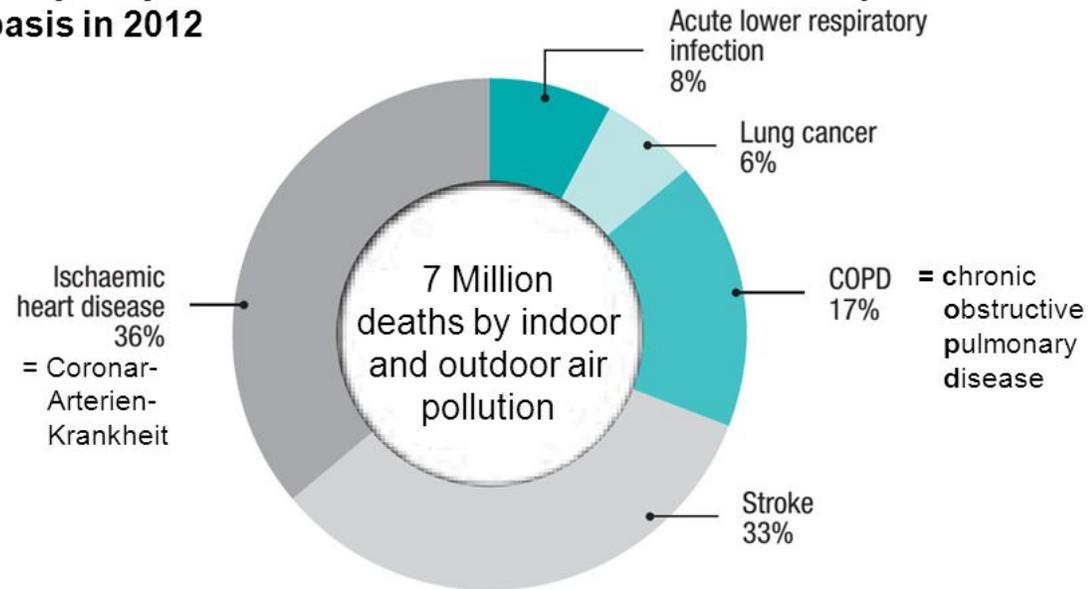
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Air Pollution

Exposure to indoor (household, due to burning of solid fuels such as wood and charcoal) and outdoor (ambient) air pollution is a major risk factor for NCDs such as heart disease, stroke, COPD and lung cancer. Exposure to indoor air pollution is particularly high among women and young children, who spend the most time near the domestic hearth



Diseases by the joint effects of household and ambient air pollution on a global basis in 2012



Worldwide, indoor and outdoor air pollution are jointly responsible for ~7 million premature deaths annually, the vast majority occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Worldwide, 3.7 million premature deaths were attributable to outdoor pollution in 2012. ~88% of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries, which represent 82% of the world population. South-East Asia Region 936 000 deaths, Western Pacific Region: 1.74 million deaths by outdoor air pollution.

WHO (2015): Health in 2015: from MDGs, Millennium Development Goals to SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals. p. 143. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/200009/1/9789241565110_eng.pdf?ua=1 (8.12.2015)

Narratives



- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30v7ebf8ACU>



JUNTOS
POR BRUMADINHO



Haiti: Cholera, TB, Heart Diseases...



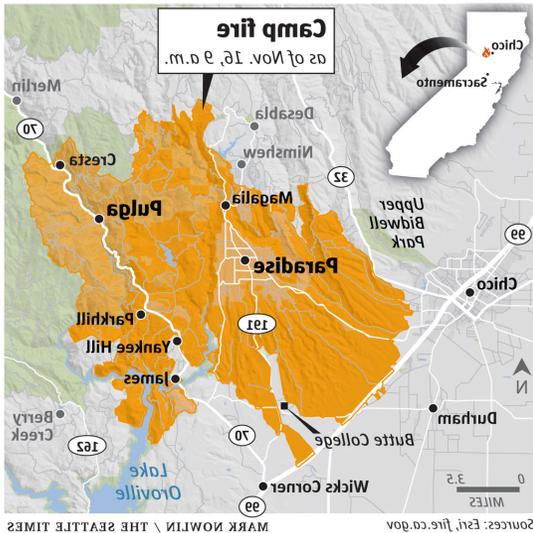
Bolivia: Chronical Malnutrition





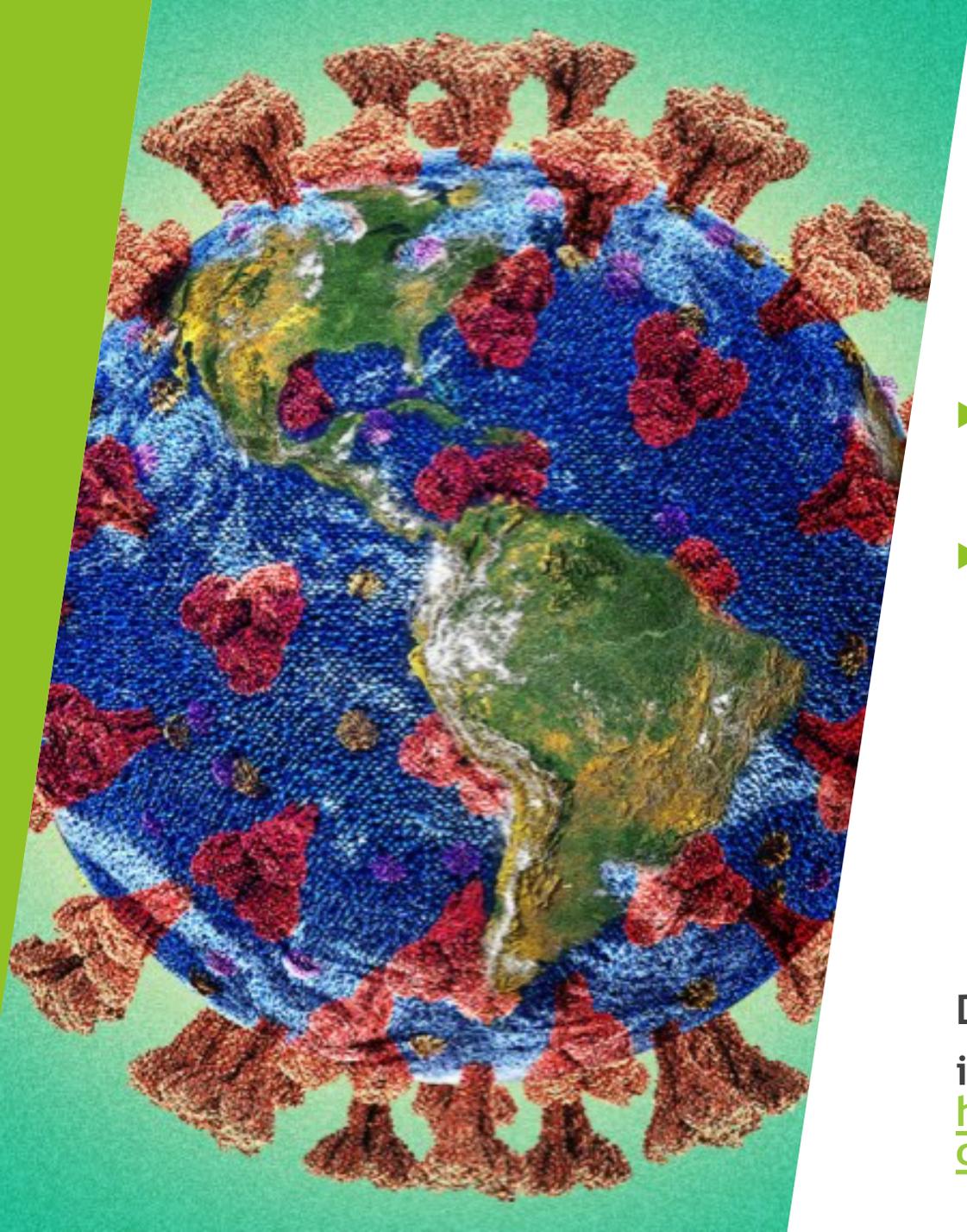
Fires around the World

“I think it’s a bit of a misnomer that exposure to outdoor-air pollutants only causes health effects after chronic or long-term exposure. The reality is that short-term exposures on the order of days to weeks are linked with serious adverse health effects, like increases in **premature mortality, aggravation of existing respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and increases in asthma exacerbation**. And you see these manifested in things like missed school days, missed work days, and **increases in hospitalizations**.” ([Joe Allen](#) is an assistant professor of exposure science and the head of the [Healthy Buildings Program](#) at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.)



Who are More Affected:

- ▶ **People who have heart or lung diseases**, like heart disease, chest pain, lung disease, or asthma, are at higher risk from wildfire smoke.
- ▶ **Older adults** are more likely to be affected by smoke. This may be due to their increased risk of heart and lung diseases.
- ▶ **Children** are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke. Children’s airways are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Also, children often spend more time outdoors engaged in activity and play.

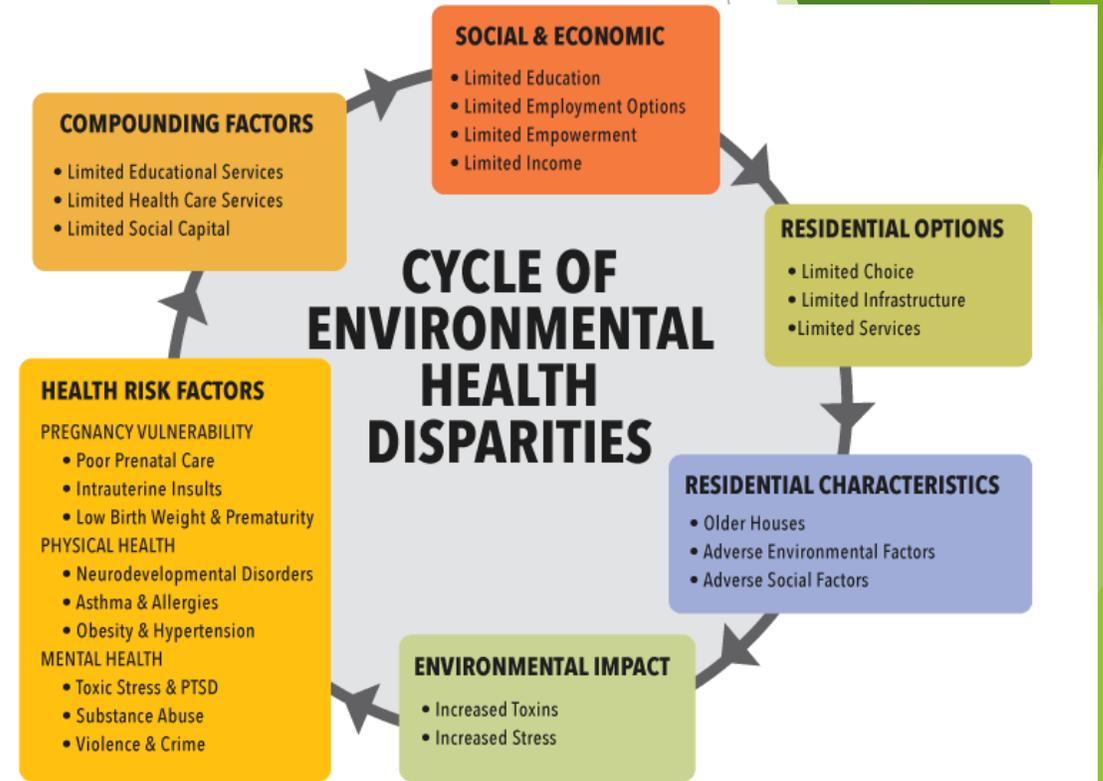


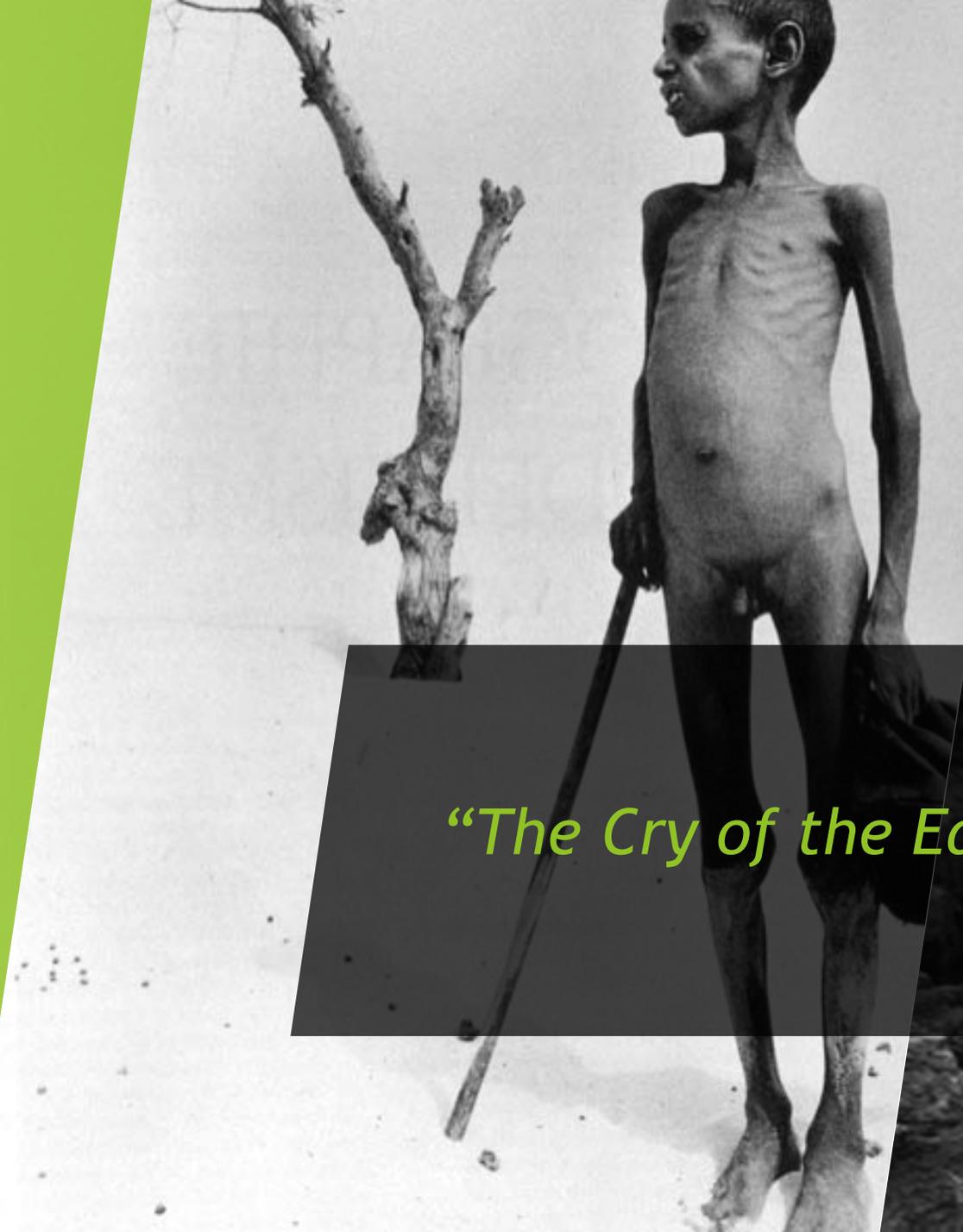
Epidemics, Pandemics and Climate Change

- ▶ “Climate change alters how we relate to other species on Earth and that matters to our health and our risk for infections”
- ▶ “Many of the root causes of climate change also increase the risk of pandemics. Deforestation, which occurs mostly for agricultural purposes, is the largest cause of habitat loss worldwide. Loss of habitat forces animals to migrate and potentially contact other animals or people and share germs. Large livestock farms can also serve as a source for spillover of infections from animals to people. Less demand for animal meat and more sustainable animal husbandry could decrease emerging infectious disease risk and lower greenhouse gas emissions”.

Dr. Aaron Bernstein, Director of Harvard Chan C-CHANGE
in: Coronavirus and Climate Change,
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-climate-change/>

B. Reflection: Integral Ecology





“The Cry of the Earth and The Cry of the Poor”



Integral Ecology and Learning from Below

Laudato si' (2015) and *Querida Amazonia* (2020)

Integral Ecology

Laudato si'

- ▶ Earth is “among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (n.2)
- ▶ Dialogue with all for the good of our common home (n.3)
- ▶ Intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet (16)
- ▶ Globalization of Indifference (n.49)
- ▶ Consumerism of the rich countries creates consequences in the lives of the poor (n.51)
- ▶ Market Fundamentalism: “The market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion” (n.109)

- ▶ **Dialogical perspective** for a sustainable and integral development (ns. 13; 62)
- ▶ **Ecological and social issues are connected** (n. 46)
- ▶ Global Inequality affects the most vulnerable people on the planet (n.48)
- ▶ Mutual respect between humans and nature (n.53)
- ▶ Overcome the lack of tenderness and compassion (n.91)
- ▶ Every ecological concern must **incorporate the fundamental rights of the poor** (n. 93)
- ▶ The right of private property is subordinated to the universal destination of goods (n. 95)
- ▶ Integral ecology respects all social dimensions of human organization (n.137)
- ▶ **Comprehensive solutions: natural systems and social systems** (n.139)
- ▶ **Full participation** of communities and involvement of local people (n. 144)
- ▶ Spiritual care (n.146) Learning from indigenous
- ▶ Sense of community (n.149)
- ▶ Interdisciplinary (n.150)
- ▶ “Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics” (n.156)
- ▶ Intergenerational Solidarity is not an option, but rather a basic questions of justice (n.159)

Learning from Below

Querida Amazonia

- ▶ Colonialism and globalization (no. 14)
- ▶ Social dialogue, the poor are dialogue partners (no. 33)
- ▶ People's roots and traditions (no. 33)
- ▶ Identity in the dialogue; co-responsibility for diversity (no 37)
- ▶ Abuse the nature is also abuse people and God (no. 42)
- ▶ The beauty and poetry to save us (no. 46)
- ▶ Internationalization of the Amazon is not the answer (no. 50)
- ▶ The need of legal framework (no. 52)
- ▶ Learn to contemplate the Amazon from the original peoples (no. 55)
- ▶ The Amazon region is a theological locus (no. 57)
- ▶ Option for the poor and their faith (no. 63)
- ▶ The Church constantly reshapes her identity (no. 66)
- ▶ The Church learns the simplicity, the austerity and the joyful sobriety of the original peoples (no. 71)
- ▶ The poor and inculturation with work for justice (no. 75)



C. Action: Community-Based Approach

- ▶ **Ecological-Social Conversion**
 - ▶ **Personal - individuals' choices and daily life**
 - ▶ **Communitarian - social responsibility and participatory actions**

What Can you Do
Beginning from our
Community to Be
the Difference?



**BE THE
DIFFERENCE**

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