

LAUDATO SI', JUSTICE, AND MERCY IN THE
CARIBBEAN—SELECTED SESSION

- Title: *Laudato Si'*, Justice, and Mercy in the Caribbean Basin: Seeking the Common Good for Our Common Home
- Convener: Jame Schaefer, Marquette University
- Moderator: Christiana Peppard, Fordham University
- Presenters: Daniel Castillo, Loyola University Maryland
William George, Dominican University
Joshua Snyder, Labouré College
- Posters: Daniel DiLeo, Boston College
James O'Sullivan, Boston College
Daniel Scheid, Duquesne University
Cristina Vanin, University of Waterloo and
Neil Ormerod, Australian Catholic University

In “Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept,” Daniel Castillo reflected on the varied ecological, political, and cultural contexts prevalent in the Caribbean Basin and concluded that Pope Francis’s concept of integral ecology is best interpreted within a liberation theology paradigm. The one constructed by Gustavo Gutiérrez is particularly appropriate because it highlights the obfuscations of developmentalist rhetoric. Arguing that the current rhetoric of “sustainable development” shrouds the unsustainable character of the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the contemporary unjust global system, Castillo insisted that shifts in these spheres of influence are essential for advancing the integral ecology proffered by the pope.

William George found compelling the theological vision in *Laudato Si'* of caring for our common home, but the challenge of implementing Pope Francis’s vision in the Caribbean Basin is immense. International action is needed, George insisted, and hope may be found in international law, which arguably expresses what Bernard Lonergan calls “an emerging religious consciousness” that is congruent with the encyclical. In his “Implementing *Laudato Si'* in the Caribbean Basin: Lessons from the Law of the Sea,” George shared his insights on the Cartagena Convention, one of the offshoots of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea that was adopted by member nations of the Wider Caribbean sector of the Regional Seas Program. Theologians serious about advancing the agenda of *Laudato Si'* in the Caribbean and elsewhere must take international law seriously, and the Law of the Sea is an excellent place to begin.

Joshua Snyder analyzed Pope Francis’s encyclical from the perspective of the injustices and mercilessness that is ongoing in Guatemala. In “Mercy and Justice for Whom? Reading *Laudato Si'* from the Context of Guatemala,” Snyder argued that Guatemala’s untenable land distribution perpetuates a cycle of social sin that exploits both the environment and its rural Mayan *campesinos*. This social sin manifests the vicious tendency to subjugate the common good to individual gain as epitomized by the Ladino minority which has acquired massive land holdings and forced the Mayan majority to serve as indentured servants to agribusiness. Within this context, *Laudato Si'* must be implemented to address dehumanizing structures that foster ecological

injustice and to work at grassroots levels to cultivate mercy and justice as personal virtues.

During the thirty-minute discussion following the paper presentations, questions raised by some of the twenty-two CTSA members present centered around hope for respecting and embracing the positive views of other species and systems that are prevalent among indigenous Caribbean cultures and the role of the Church in facilitating their inclusion in decision-making about ecological concerns. Many obstacles to justice and mercy must be overcome when striving to implement Pope Francis's teachings in *Laudato Si'*.

After the authors and titles of posters were announced, CTSA members proceeded to the atrium for overviews of research conclusions with supportive graphics and pictures that had been taped to the glass overlooking the Koi pond. Cristina Vanin and Neil Ormerod explained "Building an Ecological Culture: Signs of Hope in Costa Rica, Australia, and Canada." James O'Sullivan overviews "Human rights and Sustainable Development: A New Model for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Caribbean Basin." Dan Scheid, in a final poster, highlighted his research on "Rethinking the Myth of Progress in Puerto Rico." Key points made in Dan DiLeo's "*Laudato Si'* and Climate Change: American Opinions, Caribbean Concerns" were noted in his absence. A general consensus emerged that postering better facilitated addressing *Laudato Si'* in more local contexts of the Caribbean Basin than did the usual structure of three papers. Including posters as part of this session also provided an opportunity for more scholars to formally participate by showcasing their research efforts to a greater number of CTSA members throughout the duration of the convention.

JAME SCHAEFER
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin