

LONERGAN—CONSULTATION

Topic: Lonergan and Ecology
Convener: Mark T. Miller, University of San Francisco
Moderator: Brian Bajzek, University of Toronto
Presenters: Jen Sanders, Boston College
Cristina Vanin, St Jerome's University,
Chris Jacobs-Vandegeer, Australian Catholic University

In her paper entitled “A Non-Violent, Trinitarian Transformation of Ecological Values,” Jen Sanders explores non-violent resistance to the ecological crisis using Lonergan’s scale of values and Trinitarian theology. Sanders argues that people become non-violent persons in imitation of trinitarian relations of the divine persons. Non-violent responses to ecological issues are sublated into religious values in the same way that food moves beyond its ordinary and vital value to religious value in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Cristina Vanin develops the notion of “ecological conversion” toward an ecological culture in her paper “Developing an Ecological Culture: Ecological Conversion, Moral Conversion, and Integral Ecology.” Like Sanders, Vanin explores the importance of the scale of values, and particularly cultural values, toward the development of an ecological culture described in *Laudato Si’*. To this end, Vanin resources the work of Robert Doran to argue that a key component of an ecological culture is the restoration of the dialectic between anthropological and cosmological cultures and the place of soteriological culture in maintaining a healthy tension in that dialectic.

In his paper “*Laudato Si’* and Ecological Conversion: Will Anything Happen?” Chris Jacobs-Vandegeer claims that the encyclical’s call for renewed education, spirituality, dialogue, and action implies changes to Catholic, and perhaps even Christian, identity. However, Jacobs-Vandegeer maintains that “change” remains difficult for the church. Resourcing the thought of Lonergan and Neil Ormerod, Jacobs-Vandegeer argues that only an explanatory account of change in the church can make the ecological conversion envisioned in *Laudato Si’* possible.

A lively conversation followed. The question was raised of how the encyclical would change both individual and collective choices in the wake of the seemingly overwhelming magnitude of the ecological crisis. On the one hand, people seem to be aware of the crisis and yet patterns of consumption remain, on the other hand, a significant portion of the American population does not necessarily believe in climate change or the seriousness of this reality. Further, while Pope Francis is a very popular figure and underscores the urgency of the ecological crisis, it remains to be seen how this popularity effects the profound change that he calls for in order to meet the ecological crisis. The discussion led to deeper questions about the need for our own conversion to ecological practices as individual theologians and even as the CTSA.

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