**Reflection by “THETERTIARY SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS (TSSF)FOR LIFE” on Ecological Conversion”**

Recently more than ever before there is bewildering diversity of views on ecology and the natural environment; but that of Pope Francis outlined in his encyclical *Laudato Si* takes on a holistic approach to some of the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental problems that plague our world today.

The TSSF Congregation Known as “**TSSF FOR LIFE**” after deep reflection have come out with the envisaged goals of *Laudato Si* Goals to make our world a better place to be in the phrase “**Ecological Conversion**”. The main objective is rooted in Care of our Common Home with observable and measurable indicators being:

* Protecting our homes for the good of all as we jointly engage in addressing climate crisis, biodiversity loss and economic sustainability heeding to the cry of the Earth by engaging in renewable energies, enhancing carbon neutrality, protection of biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.
* Heeding to the cry of the poor by promoting eco-justice as it is incumbent on us all to accept, protect and respect life which is sacred from conception till death as well as all forms of life on earth. This is more concretely done by coming to the assistance of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) because of socio-political crisis, promotion of solidarity with the vulnerable, refugees, children at risk of being sexually abused or trafficked. And above all fighting covid-19 pandemic by providing education on how to prevent the scourge through preventive measures put in place, actively taking care of the sick in our various religious houses and in our Hospitals. TSSF FOR LIFE stands up as voice of the voiceless to denounce structures of oppression and against land grabbing which has placed the rich over the poor.
* In our Common Home, economy is the sub-system of human society. TSSF FOR LIFE seeks to foster sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments and divestments from fossil fuel and any other activity harmful to plants, animals and humans, and protecting dignity of workers.
* To adopt a sustainable lifestyle, the TSSF FOR LIFE seeks to reduce waste and adopt sustainable dietary habits by going green encouraging and educating people to limit meat intake, doing footing walks as exercise to keep the body healthy and limiting the use of non-biodegradable material such as plastics which render the soil infertile as well as hampering of plant growth, and refraining from the use of pesticides, herbicides and other pollutants harmful to the environment
* To enhance ecological awareness and transformative actions such as affordable education for all, provision of school basic needs, prompting human rights, fostering *Laudato Si* themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership are done through ecological education.
* Through ecological spirituality, a religious vision of God’s creation is recovered and a greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude is encouraged by “creation centred” liturgical celebrations, retreats, days of recollection, praying with nature and a constant formation programme for people of all walks of life.
* To develop cultures and policies that protect our Common Home and all that is therein, community Engagement and Participatory Actions are fostered through actions of Advocacy, Engagement with decision makers, and encouragement of a sense of belonging in local communities and neighbourhood ecosystems.

All the above indicators provide the moral and spiritual compass we need to build a better future for the future generation. By so doing we are involved in Ecological Conversion which entails an Integral Ecology.

**TSSF FOR LIFE and Integral Ecology:**

The former views it as “*taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us whose presence must not be contrived but found uncovered*” (LS225).

A deepening reflection has encouraged collaborators and the TSSF to embark on radical changes in our relationships and ways of living, moving away from harmful and destructive technocratic paradigms and toward the Loving embrace of God as found in Eucharistic Prayer IV “………. We give you praise Father Most Holy for you are great and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and love. You formed humankind in your own image and entrusted the whole world to our care so that in serving you alone, the Creator we might have dominion over all creatures”.

**Resolution by Integral Ecology:**

According to the words of Sean Esbjorn*“Integral Ecology weaves together the myriad approaches to the natural world in an effort to respond as effectively and timely as possible to the complex ecological problems, that face ourselves, our communities and our world in an evolving universe*”. TSSF FOR LIFE has taken this mission timely as deforestation is fought by afforestation: use of artificial fertilizers by use of organic manure, burning of natural vegetation by tree planting, drying up of water sources by fencing and planting of water friendly trees, managing waste by composting food scraps and yard waste, since it keeps a huge amount of trash out of the waste stream. This composted waste helps to produce free rich soil for use in gardens and farms. Going in for re-useable items rather than disposable items.

Buying and eating of locally produced food crops than genetically modified food (GMF) or imported canned food. TSSF FOR LIFE avoids consumption and use of chemicals on gardens and farms for these have long term negative effects on human bodies and plants. TSSF gardens and farms are chemical free with wide use of organic manure.

Members of TSSF FOR LIFE daily take healthy doses of exercise by walking and trekking. Judicious management and use of water is highly recommended. The Congregation practices wise use of money on goods and services that leave smaller carbon footprint. By so doing one’s purchasing power is used for the good of the earth. Solar panels are highly recommended for use than diesel driven generators.

Taking initiatives has become a hallmark of the Congregation of the TSSF such as volunteering to dispose waste and garbage, cleaning water sources and preference for re-useable over single use-items.

**Ecological Conversion:**

By this term implies a change of how we look at, interact and behave, to care for our Common Home. This is a change for the betterment or improvement of all creation and its creatures.

A person ecologically converted acts like a human being in the image of God, where he or she seeks to live in harmony with nature (humans included) a steward rather than one who dominates.

**Features of Ecological Conversion:**

* There is a sense of gratitude
* There is the awareness that each person is also part of the book of creation
* There is the awareness that every creature reflects something of who God is
* There is an acknowledgement of order and harmony in creation
* Through Ecological Conversion, humanity is call in a particular way to look at creation in the face prompting a change of heart
* It is a new way of living our life in deeper harmony with the people around us, with the creatures we live with and with God.
* It is a choosing to have little in life but living more of life to ensure that all, including future generations benefit equally from the resources of the Earth.
* It is the transformation of hearts and minds towards greater love of God, each other and creation.
* It is a process of acknowledging our contribution to the social and ecological crisis and acting in ways that nurture communion, healing and renewing our Common Home.

**Conclusion:**

This essay is the brainchild of workshops, submitted periodic Reports from various Departments of TSSF FOR LIFE under a visionary leadership that works on the belief that everyone is a bundle of possibilities and has something to contribute despite their SWOT. Members are an inspiration to one another. The *Laudato Si* is the Congregation’s working Document. Decision making, relationship building, listening, collaboration, spiritual guidance, education, policies, use of resources and services for the good of the community, congregational set-up in the model of Integral Ecology are fanned by the belief that everything is interconnected and we are only responsible stewards at the service of the creator to renew the face of the earth as the spirit directs.

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