I have been a Christian about fifty-eight years. I was first drawn to a simple life after reading Henry David Thoreau's WALDEN in high school. I was aware of the role of simplicity in the Christian monastic tradition, but I doubt that I could have justified the importance of simple living from a faith perspective. I would like to think that the Holy Spirit was nudging me in the right direction. I studied environmental science in college and began to think of myself as an environmentalist. I was concerned about issues such as pollution and extinction, but my rationale was always scientific. I never perceived the connection between such issues and my faith. It was only after the publication of Laudato Si' that I realized that the care of our common home is part of our Christian duty to love our neighbor.

Reading Laudato Si' has moved me to reflect more deeply upon what it means to love my neighbor. To love my neighbor is to promote his or her welfare, avoid doing harm, and to subordinate my interests to his or hers when necessary. Anything that I do that harms my neighbor is a failure to love my neighbor. If I degrade the biosphere that sustains life on this planet, I am not loving my neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Everyone alive today and all those who will live in the future. How should I put loving my neighbor into practice relative to the Laudato Si' goals? In everything I do, I should compare the costs to the benefits, being mindful of how my actions would affect others, both directly and indirectly, short-term and long-term. Am I acting in the service of the Lord? Am I purchasing the necessities of life or merely luxuries? Are the producers of the things I purchase exploiting their workers? Are the goods I purchase sustainably produced? Do I really need to travel by jet aircraft? And so on.

The Laudato Si' goals that resonate most strongly we me are the following:

* Responding to the Cry of the Earth
* Responding to the Cry of the Poor
* Implementing Ecological Economics
* Adopting Sustainable Lifestyles

I would like to conclude this reflection with a brief account of some of the ways I am currently furthering three of these goals.

I have followed a vegan diet since about 1986. About 25% of my food is organically-grown. I eliminated palm oil derivatives from my diet after learning that its cultivation was responsible for massive deforestation, substantial CO2 emissions, and the disruption of indigenous communities. My diet is a response to the Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor, and the Adoption of a Sustainable Lifestyle.

I have been performing volunteer ecological stewardship on public lands since about 2001. Most of my work has consisted of the removal of invasive plant species and rubbish. Since 2011 I have been restoring forest on land of my own. I have been planting trees, shrubs, and herbs in addition to controlling invasive plants. My stewardship activity is a response to the Cry of the Earth.

John Fodi

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