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"Praise Be to You, Earth-Beings"

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Pope Francis goes on to lament the way that the earth and the poor who are so close to the earth are being systematically burdened and laid waste. He insists 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*". New or freshly reconfigured entities thus enter the formal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, courtesy of the intellectual and political traditions of Latin America: the poor as subjects of systematic oppression and potential liberation; markets and institutions as manifestations of structural sin in their brutal reproduction of historical global inequalities; and the agency and subjectivity of the nonhuman world as worthy of our respect. But at the same time, in its placing of eco-theological themes on the world political stage, we might also see the encyclical as an attempt to introduce new and contentious entities into wider environmental politics. Francis "addresses" and "enters into dialogue with" not just every member of the Catholic Church but "every person living on this planet", and his message is not just the widely recognized need, in the words of the subtitle, to "care for our common home" but also that this must involve a spiritual conversion. While maintaining that characteristic of his papacy of being open to dialogue with people of other faiths and of none—he ends the encyclical with two prayers, a nondenominational "Prayer for our earth" followed by "A Christian prayer in union with creation"—Francis argues in the encyclical that ecological politics needs to draw on religion as well as science, that secular, technological instrumentalism has failed us, and that we should see the world not as a storehouse or a set of problems but as a shining mystery. In effect, he is proposing a new "geo-spiritual formation." (Text from author)

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PDF:

https://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/environmental_humanities-2016-szerszynski-291-7.pdf

Further readings:

- Francis. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home* . Rome: Vatican Press, 2015.

Related links:

- *Environmental Humanities* website http://environmentalhumanities.org/
- *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 2 http://environmentalhumanities.dukejournals.org/content/8/2.toc

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