



A Catholic reflection on true ecology, respect for creation, and the danger of worshipping the created

Introduction: The urgency of speaking clearly

We live in a time where ecological awareness has — rightfully — taken a prominent place in social, political, and spiritual agendas. Environmental degradation, ocean pollution, deforestation, climate change... these are realities that call for human responsibility. However, alongside a legitimate concern for caring for the planet, there has also emerged an increasingly influential current of thought we might call *radical environmentalism*. This movement goes beyond proper stewardship of creation and, in many cases, falls into the error of divinizing nature — bordering on, and at times fully embracing, pantheism.

From a Catholic perspective, it is urgent to draw a clear line between the true care of our common home — which stems from God’s command to man — and a confused ecological spirituality that replaces the Creator with creation. This article aims to be a theological, spiritual, and pastoral guide to help discern, educate, and live out an authentic Christian ecology.

1. Biblical Foundation: To Subdue the Earth Responsibly

Sacred Scripture provides a key foundation for understanding humanity’s relationship with creation. In the book of Genesis we read:

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”
(Genesis 2:15)

This verse is essential. God entrusts creation to the human being, not to exploit it recklessly, but to till it (*abad*, in Hebrew: to work it) and to keep it (*shamar*: to guard, to protect). This is not despotic dominion but responsible stewardship. Man is a guardian, not an absolute owner.



But this role includes a clear hierarchy: man is above animals, plants, and the natural elements because he has been created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:27). Creation is not divine but the work of God, and therefore it must be respected — not worshiped.

2. The Error of Radical Environmentalism: Creature in the Place of the Creator

One of the great dangers of radical environmentalism is the inversion of the natural order of things. Saint Paul warns clearly:

“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”
(Romans 1:25)

This warning seems written for our times. Certain environmental discourses — though they arise from legitimate concerns — end up sacralizing nature. We hear of “Mother Earth” as if she were a conscious entity. Rituals are performed for the elements. A plant’s value is equated with that of a human life. Even energies and natural spirits are invoked in the name of a supposed cosmic connection.

This worldview is not only foreign to Christianity — it is contrary to it. It is a modern form of neopaganism and pantheism, where everything is god and god is everything, denying the transcendence of the Creator. Environmentalism, thus understood, becomes a new religion, with its own dogmas, liturgies, and cultural excommunications for those who do not conform.

3. Authentic Christian Ecology: *Laudato Si'* and the Theology of Creation

In contrast to the excesses of radical environmentalism, the Catholic Church proposes an



integral ecology, as presented by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), in continuity with the magisterium of his predecessors. This ecology does not idolize nature but recognizes its value as a gift from God and as the space where human life unfolds.

“Christian thought has demythologized nature. But it insists that nature responds to a plan, that it is an expression of a design of love and truth.”
(Laudato Si', no. 235)

Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI had already warned against a Godless ecology, which ends up becoming an anti-human ideology. True Christian environmentalism begins with a grateful contemplation of creation as a sign of God's love. Every tree, animal, and river is a testimony to divine wisdom — but none of them is God.

4. Theological and Pastoral Practical Guide: How to Live a Christian Ecology

a) Rediscover the Sense of Creation as a Gift

Everything created is good because it has come from God's hands. The earth, water, air, animals — all are goods we must care for respectfully, not because they are divine, but because they are gifts from the Creator.

Practical Application:

Before consuming something, ask yourself if it's necessary. Reduce waste. Give thanks in prayer for the gifts of nature. Teach children to respect animals and plants — not out of ecological fear, but out of gratitude to God.

b) Avoid Despotic Anthropocentrism... But Also Anti-Humanism

The human being has a privileged place in creation. He is not a plague or a virus, as some radical ideologues claim. He is made in God's image. But he is called to exercise his dominion



with humility and service.

Practical Application:

Value human dignity above any other created being. Defend human life (born and unborn) as sacred. Participate in actions that protect the environment — but without abandoning Gospel principles.

c) Discern the Spiritual Language of Environmentalism

Many modern discourses speak of “connection with the Earth,” “universal energy,” or “ancestral wisdom of the elements.” This language may seem harmless, but it hides a spirituality incompatible with the Christian faith.

Practical Application:

If you participate in ecological groups, critically examine their principles. Avoid prayers or rituals that invoke “Mother Earth” or “natural spirits.” Use Christian language: speak of the “Creator,” of “creation,” of “Providence” — not of natural gods.

d) Pray *With* Nature, Not *To* Nature

Creation can and should be a space for spiritual contemplation. Many saints, like Saint Francis of Assisi, found in nature a reason to praise God. But they never confused the Creator with the creature.

Practical Application:

Go for a walk and pray outdoors. Praise God for the beauty of the world. Read Psalm 104 or the Canticle of the Creatures by Saint Francis. Teach young people to bless God for every flower, bird, and sunset.

5. Conclusion: Restoring the Order of Love

Saint Augustine said that sin is disordered love — loving what should not be loved, or loving wrongly what should be loved rightly. Radical environmentalism sins in precisely this way: it



loves creation in a disordered manner, to the point of placing it above the Creator.

Catholic faith, on the other hand, invites us to love creation with order, responsibility, and hope. The earth is our common home — but not our god. It is a gift — not an idol. Only when we place God at the center can we care for creation as true sons and daughters — not as worshipers of false green gods.

Suggested Final Prayer

*Lord God,
Creator of heaven and earth,
teach us to see your fingerprint in every flower and every breeze.
Deliver us from idolizing the work of your hands,
and make us faithful stewards of your creation.
May the beauty of the world never let us forget your face,
but instead move us to praise you with all that we are.
Amen.*