

7 Deadly Sins: Murder of Mother Nature

By Fabian. A. Oliver

“What came first, the chicken or the egg?” Okay, here’s one that will assist our discussion: ‘who came first, humans or nature?’

The ecological crisis is one of the biggest challenges to modern society. The scientific evidence that proves humans negatively contribute to climate change is overwhelming. Many young activists and indigenous people have taken a stance against climate injustice. What about us Christians? What is our say in this matter?

Murder she wrote

Fortunately, one of the prophetic books written about the ecological crisis comes from the Church, i.e. *Laudato Si*. Pope Francis gets to the heart of the matter by emphasizing how human beings, in our quest for dominance and profits, have exploited Mother Nature. We have killed many species of plants and animals all in the name of making money. Christians were taught that humans are superior to animals and plants, and therefore, we can take, kill and destroy as we will. Pope Francis likens the cry of the poor to that of the earth. The poor have been exploited and marginalized in the same way that the earth has been robbed of its life. The truth is that Greed has led to us murdering parts of Mother Nature. It is murder because Mother Nature is not an abstract thing but a system of living creatures made by God.

We are all implicated in this murder

Climate change is the result of the vast amount of carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere. It blocks heat from escaping our system and as a result the earth warms up, the icebergs melt and sea levels rise. Wet places get wetter and dry places get dryer. Humans lose their homes, crops are destroyed, and animals die out. And yes, we are all implicated and

involved in this crisis. It is our demanding needs that create these problems. It is we who purchase 5 or 6 cars instead of one. We excessively consume meat which uses billions of litres of water and electricity. Electricity, as we know, largely comes from burning of fossil fuels. Even the much-needed glass of beer or cup of coffee uses large amounts of water and energy. Humans are (in)directly involved in all forms of pollution. Think of the last time you had an ice-cold coke zero with a lemon and PLASTIC straw tilted to the side.

Who came first, human beings or nature?

If we look at history we can agree that colonization was a modern-day sin because it sought to remove people from their homes and marginalize them. This is true of Apartheid in our country. Many people were moved from their homes and treated unequally to their counterparts (to put it nicely). Today we shun such practices and beliefs. And yet, we have done the same thing to Creation. We have found Creation here and chose to destroy it according to our means. Creation and Scripture serve as a source of revelation to relationship with God. By destroying nature we destroy God's invitation to love. We do not exist as leaders in charge of nature, but rather we co-exist with nature in a very mutual relationship with God.

Learning from our ancestors

Our African ancestors had deep mystical relationships with Creation. For them the lakes were alive, the mountains could see and the forests could talk back. The land and animals were sacred gifts given by God. Many had animals who were their spiritual guardians. Africans felt great sorrow in slaughtering an animal. After a slaughter, they would cover the walls of the caves with the blood, excrement, and fat of the animal in order to restore it to the earth. In those days, killing was not for profits or for showing off. It was done with great respect for the circle of life.

I am not trying to suggest people should give up meat, using cars or stop drinking coffee. I am suggesting we have what Pope Francis calls a "conversion to the earth." In so doing we realize that we have wrongly abused nature and therefore need to repent and show our solidarity

towards Creation. This could imply we go back and embody the saying of Saint Francis of Assisi, "Live simply, so that others can simply live." Living simply could mean that we cut down on the things that destroy the earth. Less of what destroys, more of what builds.

The truth is that we are all interconnected. It is the trees that give us oxygen to breathe and the bees that allow pollination so plants can grow. We are all equally connected in the circle of life as the Creation of God. If we listen closely we will hear Creation mourning; we will hear the Amazon burning... The time to do something is now!