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## **Someone is Missing in the Common House: The Empty Place of Women in the Encyclical Letter “Laudato si”**

Global climatic changes are one of the most tragic threats to our present life and to the future generations, calling for an accurate analysis of the situation and for fearlessness. Pope Francis’ Encyclical Letter, “Laudato si” (LS), is the first papal Encyclical to totally focus on environmental issues. The document had a huge impact and sparked a lively debate of its contents. Notably, it underlines the necessity of a humane, all-encompassing, ecology, able to face the challenges of the degradation of both nature and social ties. However, if, on the one hand, the text can be seen as a path-breaking document, on the other hand it does not emphasise the specific impacts of the ecological crisis upon half the human population: the majority of poor people around the world are women. The inexistence in LS of an approach that takes into account the “disaggregated data” on women’s situation hinders LS’ project of an “integral ecology”. It also reflects what has already been called the “blind spot” (Katha Pollitt) of the “cultural revolution” Pope Francis appeals to in LS (114). The present article focuses on the discussion of what this “blind spot” seems to be. It starts with a brief reference to various reactions to the Encyclical, in order to illustrate both the polemic surrounding it and the blindness of many of these reactions to women’s situations. The second part presents the Encyclical’s notions of “Common Home” and “Common Goods” as the background for an integral ecology. The following part presents some “disaggregated data,” gathered by international organisations. The aim of this section is to “attach women’s faces” to some of the ecological problems raised in LS as if they have no gender and no sex. The last part of the article appeals to the necessity of implementing a critical approach to anthropocentrism (mentioned in LS), that is consistent with a critical approach to androcentrism (not mentioned in LS). Or, to put it differently, there will be no possibility of an integral ecology without a radical critique of anthropocentrism as a synonym for androcentrism.

Die globalen Klimaveränderungen stellen eine der tragischsten Bedrohungen für unser heutiges Leben und für die zukünftigen Generationen dar. Es ist notwendig, die Situation genau zu analysieren und ihr ohne Furcht zu begegnen. Die Enzyklika “Laudato si” von Papst Franziskus, ist die erste päpstliche Enzyklika, die sich ganz und gar auf die ökologischen Fragen konzentriert. Dieses Schreiben hat immense

Auswirkungen gehabt und eine lebendige Debatte über ihren Inhalt ausgelöst. Es ist bemerkenswert, dass es die Notwendigkeit einer humanen und allumfassenden Ökologie unterstreicht, die fähig ist, sich den Herausforderungen der Zerstörung sowohl der Natur, als auch der sozialen Beziehungen und Bindungen zu stellen. Obwohl der Text auf einer Seite als ein wegweisendes Dokument gesehen werden kann, untergräbt er auf anderer Seite die spezifischen Auswirkungen der ökologischen Krise für mehr die Hälfte der Menschheit: die Mehrheit der Armen in der Welt sind Frauen. Diese Abwesenheit beeinträchtigt das aus *Laudato Si* erwachse Projekt maßgeblich, will es doch eine integrale, ganzheitliche Ökologie institutionalisieren. Der vorliegende Beitrag konzentriert sich auf die Debatte über, den ihr zu Grunde liegenden so genannte toter Winkel. Er präsentiert die Ideen und Vorstellungen der Enzyklika und den in ihr thematisierten ökologischen Problemen, die derart verhandelt werden, als würde es weder Gender noch Geschlecht geben, und versucht ihnen das fehlende Frauengesicht zu geben. Diskutiert wird die Notwendigkeit einer kritischen Analyse von Anthropozentrismus und Androzentrismus. Es wird gezeigt, dass keine integrale Ökologie möglich ist, ohne einer radikalen Kritik des Anthropozentrismus, als einem anderen Begriff für Androzentrismus.

## **Introduction**

Global climatic changes are one of the most tragic threats to our present life and to future generations. When "times they are a-changing" (as Bob Dylan wrote and sang already in 1964) as they are now, there is the need to find new ways out of the many faces the global crisis assumes, that is, there is the need for accurate analyses of the situation and for fearless stands – it is time to think of new answers. Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter "Laudato si'" (issued on 24 May 2015; hereafter LS) is the first papal Encyclical to totally focus on environmental issues.<sup>1</sup> The document had a huge impact and sparked a lively debate of its contents: for some people the letter is too radical, for others it is anti-modern. Indeed, the Encyclical focuses on the crisis of the 'common home' of humanity, identifying the problems and indicating the path. Notably, it underlines the necessity of a humane, all-encompassing ecology, able to face the challenges of the degradation of both nature and social ties. It uses a language enabling a dialogue not only with theologians, but also with experts, politicians, scientists, and activists – even if some of them have reacted negatively to the document.

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<sup>1</sup> The present text uses the English translation of the Encyclical Letter. Numbers in parentheses following LS are paragraph numbers, as in the original document. See [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

However, if, on the one hand, the text can be seen as a path-breaking document, different from the previous encyclicals in its primary focus, on the other hand it does not emphasise the specific impacts of the ecological crisis upon half the human population: the majority of poor people around the world are women. The inexistence of an approach that takes into account the “disaggregated data” on women’s situation hinders LS’ proclaimed project of an “integral ecology”. It also reflects what has already been called the “blind spot”<sup>2</sup> of the “cultural revolution” Pope Francis appeals to in LS (114). In fact, to put it in Michael Schuck’s words, it is very sad that there is no mention at all of the “incomparable and disproportionate suffering of women all around the world because of the ecological crisis of water and food scarcity, of contamination with environmental pollution and climate changes.”<sup>3</sup> The Pope is not alone in this blindness: as the current text will show, many reactions to LS shared this same problem. They also gave no voice to women’s problems.

The present article will focus on the discussion of what this “blind spot” seems to be: the non-awareness of the still existing “different rooms” for men and women in what Pope Francis envisages as a “Common Home,” and of the different places at the table when talking about “Common Goods,” that is, the lack of awareness of the fact that many of the ecological problems stem from the interconnection between the domination of women and the domination of nature.

The article starts with a brief reference to various reactions to the Encyclical, in order to illustrate both the polemic surrounding it and the blindness of many of these reactions to women’s situations.

The second part of the article presents the Encyclical’s notions of “Common Home” and “Common Goods” as the background for an integral ecology, followed by an analysis of what is considered in LS to be putting the world as a Common Home at risk. This brief presentation is necessary in order to present the main concerns of LS, as well as to prepare the ground for the core issue of the present article: raising the question of the inexistence of women in the description of the situation. The use of expressions such as “men and women”, “humanity” or “human beings” is not sufficient in order to turn visible the

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<sup>2</sup> Katha Pollitt, “If Pope Francis Really Wanted to Fight Climate Change, He’d Be a Feminist,” in: *The Nation* (9 September 2015). (<https://www.thenation.com/article/the-popes-blind-spot/>, 27 September 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Schuck, “Laudato si’ – Die Enzyklikavon Papast Franziskus,” in: *Concilium* 51.5 (December 2015), 610-613, here 613 (my translation into English).

specific impacts of the identified problems upon women, and to acknowledge that in many of the described situations, women were victims of men and of a patriarchal social and economic order.

The next part presents some "disaggregated data" gathered by international organisations. The aim of this section is to "attach women's faces" to some of the ecological problems raised in LS as if they had no gender and no sex.

The last part of the article appeals to the necessity of implementing a critical approach to anthropocentrism (mentioned in LS), that is consistent with a critical approach to androcentrism (not mentioned in LS). Or, to put it differently, there will be no possibility of an integral ecology without a radical critique of anthropocentrism as a synonym for androcentrism.

### **Reactions to the Encyclical Letter "Laudato si"**

LS had a huge impact and sparked a lively debate with regard to its contents. Climate scientists Ottmar Edenhofer and Christian Flaschland, for instance, emphasise the novelty of a papal document being quoted in scientific journals, which, according to them, means not only the acknowledgement of the Pope's dialogic attitude, but also the accuracy of the state of knowledge reflected in LS: With a view to climate science, many scientists have confirmed that LS accurately summarises the state of knowledge on the climate problem as assessed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose reports reflect the current state of scientific knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

The General Secretary of the World Council of the Churches, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, stated that the Encyclical's message has a worldwide significance in various ways:

Care for peace, justice and the common good of the human family and the care for the wellbeing of all life in love and solidarity are concerns of all people, whatever religion we belong to. The Encyclical therefore is addressed to all people and not to Christians only, to all walks of life and not just to religious leaders, politicians, business men or women or scientists. Opening this wider horizon, the Encyclical has necessarily an ecumenical and inter-religious appeal and calls for intentional cooperation. We have also seen that many religious communities, locally and globally, have welcomed this text from Pope Francis. Hardly any document of any pope has been received with the same enthusiasm in other churches, perhaps more even than

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<sup>4</sup> Ottmar Edenhofer and Christian Flaschland, "Laudato si': Concern for our global commons," in: *Thinking Faith* (23 September 2015). (<http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/laudato-si%E2%80%99-concern-our-global-commons>, 7 November 2016)

within the Catholic church itself. I do not know of any document that has united Christian churches so much in these last years. It is referred to everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, not only scientists, but also theologians, politicians and activists greeted the text as a courageous statement on the existence of dramatic climatic changes, and in favour of global and local politics of change. Barack Obama, for instance, declared that he welcomed the Pope's Encyclical, and "deeply admire[d] the Pope's decision to make the case – clearly, powerfully, and with the full moral authority of his position – for action on global climate change."<sup>6</sup> Others welcomed Pope Francis' text because of the links it establishes between ecological problems and human rights: Kumi Naidoo, executive director of Greenpeace International, asserted that "what's important about the way he's addressed climate change is it's brought together with inequality, social exclusion and poverty."<sup>7</sup> Laura Westra and Janice Gray wrote that there have been "few if any religious leaders and heads of state before Pope Francis" who "have dared to condemn openly and clearly capitalism, globalization and consumerism, as well as the clear consequences that follow upon ongoing overuse and abuse of the Earth."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, LS proposes an integral ecology, "since everything is closely interrelated" (LS, 137), that is, there are not two different crises (the environmental crisis and the social crisis): the world is confronted with "one complex crisis which is both social and environmental", since there are interactions between natural and social systems (LS, 139).

According to Leonardo Boff, the novelty of the text lies precisely not only in proposing an "integral ecology" in which "every fact and phenomenon is

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<sup>5</sup> Olav Fykse Tveit, "Caring for Our Common Home: An Ecumenical and Interreligious Concern," WCC General Secretary, Geneva, 15 January 2016. (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/aring-for-our-common-home-an-ecumenical-and-interreligious-concern/@@download/file/Caring%20for%20our%20common%20home%20rev%20OFT.pdf>, 10 November 2016)

<sup>6</sup> Danny Wiser, "Obama calls for world leaders to heed Pope Francis's message," in: *Catholic Herald* (19 June 2015). (<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/06/19/obama-calls-for-world-leaders-to-heed-pope-franciss-message/>, 21 November 2016)

<sup>7</sup> "Greenpeace's Kumi Naidoo Praises Pope for Linking Climate Fight to Inequality & Poverty," in: *Democracy Now!* (25 September 2015). ([https://www.democracynow.org/2015/9/25/greenpeaces\\_kumi\\_naidoo\\_praises\\_pope\\_for](https://www.democracynow.org/2015/9/25/greenpeaces_kumi_naidoo_praises_pope_for), 15 November 2016)

<sup>8</sup> Laura Westra and Janice Gray, "Introduction: The common good and the May 2015 papal encyclical," in: Laura Westra, Janice Gray and Antonio d'Aloia (eds.), *The Common Good and Ecological Integrity: Human Rights and the Support of Life* (Routledge: London and New York 2016), 1-8, here 1.

connected,” but also in the emphasis given to injustice as a result of production’s voracity:

Production’s and consumerist’s voracity produces two forms of injustice: an ecological injustice that degrades ecosystems, and a social injustice that throws millions of people into poverty and misery. The Pope exposes this causal relation. That is why he proposes a change of paradigm in the relationship between everything, a change that represents something better for nature and something fairer for human beings, and for all the other inhabitants of our common home.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, there were also negative reactions to the text. Some of these reactions came from Catholics. Catherine Keller comments on this:

It was interesting to watch powerful Catholic Republicans reacting to the Encyclical, like Rick Santorum and Jeb Bush, who normally love church hierarchy, scramble to restrict papal authority to private faith, stripped of political and of scientific meaning. Just like secular humanism does.<sup>10</sup>

If for some people the letter is too radical, for others it is anti-modern. R. R. Reno, for instance, considers Pope Francis’ Encyclical to be “strikingly anti-scientific, anti-technological, and anti-progressive sentiments.” Summarising, he considers the text to be “the most anti-modern Encyclical since the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX,” since it criticises anthropocentrism in the name of a theocentric orientation, as well as of “economic globalization, a signature feature of late modern world.”<sup>11</sup> He admits to be “disoriented” after reading “*Laudato si*,” since even if John Paul II “denounced the culture of death,” and Benedict XVI “spoke of the dictatorship of relativism,” their teachings did not put in question “modernity’s positive achievements” like Pope Francis does: their “criticism” was just intended to “restore religious and moral basis” of

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<sup>9</sup> “Ecologia integral. A grande novidade da *Laudato Si*’. ‘Nem a ONU produziu um texto desta natureza’. Entrevista especial com Leonardo Boff,” in: *Adital*, (18 June 2015). (<http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/entrevistas/543662-ecologia-integral-a-grande-novidade-da-laudato-si-qnem-a-onu-produziu-um-texto-desta-natureza-entrevista-especial-com-leonardo-boff>, 12 October 2016). The following quotations from Boff are all from the same on-line source.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Keller, “Encycling: One Feminist Theological Response,” in: *Syndicate* (22 December 2015). (<https://syndicate.network/encycling-one-feminist-theological-response/>, 10 July 2016)

<sup>11</sup> R. R. Reno, “The Return of Catholic Anti-Modernism,” in: *First Things* (18 June 2015). (<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/06/the-return-of-catholic-anti-modernism>, 22 July 2016). The following quotations from Reno are all taken from the same on-line source.

modern progress, something that Pope Francis puts in question.<sup>12</sup> Reno thinks that this approach will lead Catholicism back to “its older, more adversarial relationship with modernity,” since it links the problem of the existence of poverty, environmental problems and the indifference of rich people with “a global view of modernity as the epitome of godless sin.” He is actually convinced that even if there is the need for repent, “when it comes to pressing ethical problems, revolution is a dangerous game to play.”

Peter Forster and Bernard Donoughue consider LS a naïve text, a “gentle idealism” that “longs for a world in which cats no longer chase mice,” because “to regard economic growth as somehow evil, and fossil fuels as pollutants, will only serve to increase the very poverty that he seeks to reduce.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, there were aggressive reactions in the Australian press in which, for instance, Paul Kelly, the editor-at-large of *The Australian*, accused the Pope and his advisers of being “environmental populists and economic ideologues of a quasi-Marxist bent.”<sup>14</sup> Christopher S. Carson’s panic attack when Naomi Klein was invited to speak at a press conference on LS in Rome, lead him to say that “a radical anti-capitalist and an anti-population growth zealot are welcomed to the Vatican.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the Encyclical focuses on the crisis of the ‘common home’ of humanity, identifying the problems and indicating the path. Notably, it emphasises the necessity of a human, all-encompassing ecology, able to face the challenges of the degradation of both nature and social ties, and calls for an

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<sup>12</sup> There is also a debate going on about the continuity or dis-continuity of Francis’ teachings with the teachings of former Popes, a debate that reaches far beyond the scope of the present text. For some examples of this discussion *a propos* the Encyclical Letter analysed here, see William F. Byrne, “The Tragedy of Laudato si’,” in: *Crisis Magazine: A Voice for the Faithful Catholic Laity* (24 June 2015). (<http://www.crisismagazine.com/2015/the-tragedy-of-laudato-si>, 25 July 2016), or “Ecologia Integral”.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Forster and Bernard Donoughue, *The Papal Encyclical: A critical Christian response* (The Global Warming Policy Foundation: London 2015), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Kelly, “Green-left Pope Francis endorses flawed view of progress,” in: *The Weekend Australian* (24 June 2015). (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/paul-kelly/greenleft-pope-francis-endorses-flawed-view-of-progress/news-story/57e6f3fce440ad900ab09540acd73253>, 24 September 2016)

<sup>15</sup> Christopher S. Carson, “Pope Francis’s sinister ‘science’ advisors: A radical anti-capitalist and an anti-population growth zealot are welcomed to the Vatican,” in: *Frontpage Mag* (3 July 2015). (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/259339/pope-franciss-sinister-science-advisors-christopher-s-carson>, 14 July 2016). And see Naomi Klein’s Vatican press conference ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m\\_kNNpjyzo8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_kNNpjyzo8), 16 June 2016)

“urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution” (LS, 114), and not just for a spiritual individual change in the “hearts and souls” of economic and political agents. Actually, LS is a theological and political document. Even more precisely: it is an eco-political theological document that challenges allegedly a-political faith approaches to world problems. In this sense, Catherine Keller’s opinion is strategically reasonable, in face of the trends (also inside the Catholic Church) to override the relevance of Pope Francis’ teachings, and his efforts to open doors and to adopt as his main concern the option for the poor as the main gospel’s message:

For the most part, [...] the conservative majority of churches remains untouched by or actively reactionary toward the emergent networks of ecologically-minded Christians. Ecotheological traditions have their own deep ancestry and planetary networks, but they remain fragile minorities, affiliated with feminist, liberation, process, and other dissident traditions, and are prone to drift discouraged or disenchanted from the exhausted oldline institutions that support or tolerate them. The asymmetrical schism runs right through some old denominations, most manifestly through Roman Catholicism. Theology in its various ecological and interreligious registers keeps trying but has not been equal to the challenge.<sup>16</sup>

And she concludes: “This is why we need the Pope.”

It is remarkable that apart from Catharine Keller (to whom this text will come back), none of these positive references and negative reactions to LS noticed that women were non-existent – both in LS and in their own stances on the text.

### **“Common Good,” “Common Goods,” and a “Common Home” – in search of an integral ecology**

Pope Francis uses *Gaudium et spes*’ definition of “common good.” For *Gaudium et spes*, “common good” is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment, that every political community should pursue.”<sup>17</sup>

Respect for common good requires a social order based on distributive justice, since the lack of justice is at the root of social conflicts and violence

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<sup>16</sup> Catherine Keller, “Encycling: One Feminist Theological Response”.

<sup>17</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, (Holy See, 1965), Nr. 26.



(LS, 157). That is why LS emphasises the duty of solidarity and of a preferential option for the poorest, establishing a core link between common good and what can be called "common goods." According to the Letter, the option for the poorest results from the recognition of "the universal destination of the world's goods" (LS, 158), and should be at the centre of international political and economic discussions (see LS, 49). It can be said, that ecology as justice is the leitmotiv of the Letter: "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" (LS, 49).

The duty to put the poorest at the centre of ecology also means the "subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use" (LS, 93). This is considered to be "a golden rule of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order" (Ibid.). The Letter states that "the Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property" (Ibid.). This means that private property cannot be seen as part of God's plan as such.

Pope Francis establishes a link between the need to understand the "natural environment" as a "collective good," as "the patrimony of all humanity," and "the responsibility of everyone" (LS, 95). This is why it is not possible for someone to consider himself an "owner" of that common patrimony. The document distinguishes between "owning" and "administering." "Administering" means acting "for the good of all" (Ibid.). "Owning goods" that should be shared by everyone for someone's own profit means denying the existence of others. Francis quotes the New Zealand bishops' question of "what the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' means," when "twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive" (Ibid.).

The integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis includes the environmental, economic, social, and cultural ecology as well as what he calls "the ecology of daily life" (LS, 147). An environmental, economic and social ecology means that there is not only the need to recognise the existence of a link between society and environment, but also the need to "question certain models of development, production and consumption" (LS, 138). There is the need of an ecology taking into consideration the interactions within social systems and among them:

Social ecology is necessarily institutional, and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national and

international communities. Within each social stratum, and between them, institutions develop to regulate human relationships. Anything which weakens those institutions has negative consequences, such as injustice, violence and loss of freedom. (LS, 142)

Social ecology imbalance has an impact upon nature too: "every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment" (LS, 142), since it introduces forms of injustice that impact the way nature is considered and "used" as a resource, and reveals the loss of understanding of the existence of an interconnection between all human beings (with the same dignity).

LS' agenda of cultural ecology means, first of all, incorporating "the history, culture and architecture of each place [...] preserving its own identity" (LS, 143) and establishing "a dialogue between scientific-technical language and the language of people" (LS, 143). Cultural ecology also means respect for local cultures and cultural contexts. The document emphasises the relevance of preserving local cultures, and the engagement of locals in their own culture (see LS, 144) as well as in their own definition of quality of life, since "quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group" (LS, 144).

Finally, ecology of daily life (see LS 147-154) means taking care of common spaces, a sense of belonging, solidarity, and openness among neighbours, harmonic cities and proper infrastructures (transports, housing, public spaces) built in order to proportion the well-being of their inhabitants. It is in the context of this ecology of daily life that Pope Francis inserts the topic of "sexual difference" (LS, 155) to which the present text will come back later.

The Letter proceeds to conduct an analysis of the motives that lead our planet to the present situation. It identifies pollution and climate change, loss of biodiversity, decline of the quality of human life, social degradation, global inequality, the existence of weak answers to these problems, and disagreement among scientists and experts as the main problems besetting "our common house."

Since the present article will not go into the technical details of the identified problems, it will just summarise the issues which, according to the Pope, explain the imbalanced and risky ecologic situation:

- a "loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded" (LS, 23)
- a "short-sighted approach to the economy, commerce and production" focused on the "service of business interests and consumerism" (LS, 32), and on obtaining "quick and easy profit" (LS, 36)

- a “growth of the past two centuries” that “has not always led to an integral development and an improvement in the quality of life” (LS, 46)

But most of all, the document considers the globalisation of the technocratic paradigm and the modern anthropocentrism to be the human roots of the ecological crisis. The globalisation of the technocratic paradigm “exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures progressively approaches and gains control over an external object” (LS, 106). The submission to a technocratic logic diminishes human beings’ capacity for “making decisions”, for freedom, and for “alternative creativity” (LS, 108). This paradigm “tends to dominate economic and political life” (LS, 109), since it is obsessed with profit at the cost of human beings. The Pope considers that this is what happens when “finance overwhelms the real economy” (Ibid.). The Letter is critical towards “some circles” that maintain that “current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems,” and that “the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth” (Ibid.).

Modern anthropocentrism, on the other hand, is based, according to LS, upon “a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about” (LS, 116). At this point, the Pope criticises what he calls a culture of “practical relativism” (LS, 122). This culture of practical relativism has the following features:

- it “drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects,” by “imposing forced labour upon them or enslaving them to pay their debts” (LS, 123)
- it “leads to sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests” (LS, 123)
- it allows “the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage” (LS, 123)
- it leads to “stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain” (LS, 128)
- it is at the roots of “human trafficking, organized crime, the drug trade, commerce on blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species” (LS, 123)
- it “justifies buying the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation or eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted” (LS, 123)

In face of these problems, Pope Francis considers that the existing answers have been weak until now, due to the submission of politics to technology and finance, and to “the alliance between the economy and technology” (LS, 54). In this point the Letter is critical towards what is considered to be “superficial rhetoric” and “sporadic and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment” that boycott “any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change,” considering them a “nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented” (Ibid.).

The Pope thinks that “for new models of progress to arise, there is the need to change models of global development” (LS, 194). It is not enough to make partial changes – he calls for a redefinition of the very notion of progress:

It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress (LS, 194).

Hence, in order to redefine progress, it is important to “review and reform the entire system” (LS, 193), that is, to establish a dialogue between politics and economy in which politics are not dominated by economy (LS, 189).

### **There is someone missing in the common House: The need to look at “disaggregated data”**

This short presentation of LS already gives an idea of the “blind spot” found in this document. In spite of its systematic critique of the current social and economic order, in spite of proposing an integral ecology, and in spite of the constant appeal to take care of the Earth as our “common house” in the name of “common good” and of common-use goods, the document completely ignores the specific impacts of these issues upon women. The invisibility of women in the document,<sup>18</sup> along with the use of the expression “men and

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<sup>18</sup> The English translation of the Encyclical quoted in this article tries to use an inclusive vocabulary: it uses the expression “men and women” 11 times, the word “humanity” 46 times and the word “poor” 61 times. The word “woman” (in singular form) appears 5 times: 3 times in the context of the theology of Creation of man and woman, once in relation to the problem of refugees and once in a reference to Mary (in this last case, it is written with a capital “W”). Mary receives the epithet “Queen and Mother of all Creation” (LS, 241).

women” in problematic situations where men and women play or played different roles, ignores the relevance of “disaggregating data,” that is of an approach, considered very important since the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration from 1996,<sup>19</sup> that enables a detailed analysis of the specific situation of women with regard to various topics. This approach would foster an even more realistic portrayal of the ecological problems the world is struggling with, because it would clearly show that poverty has a female face, since women and girls are the poorest of the poor in this world.

There is enough data to support a picture of women’s situation that could shed light upon some of the “blind spots” of LS. One of them is nothing less than the recognition of the specific impacts climatic crisis and dangers have upon women and children, since, in developing countries, they are most of the time the ones that carry the responsibility of feeding the family.<sup>20</sup> The Welthungerhilfe website, for instance, describes women’s situation in developing countries as being particularly harsh:

In developing countries, women produce up to 80% of the food. But they only own around 15% of the land. 6.4 million km is the distance women in Sub-Saharan Africa cover every day to collect water. That is almost as far as traveling to the moon 16 times. Who is responsible for the wood and water supply in Africa? 90% are women and 10% are men. 6 in 10 girls in Sub-Saharan Africa receive primary education. 781 million adults worldwide cannot read or write. 63.5% of them are women. In January 2015, the share of women among the 243 heads of state and government worldwide was 22. The ratio is still low, but there is a 45% increase since 2009.<sup>21</sup>

According to the United Nations, women and girls “represent half of the poor in developing regions and slightly more than half in developed regions”.<sup>22</sup> In 2015, women’s access to own cash income was much lower than men’s. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, 46% of married women earn any cash labour income, in contrast to 75% of married men. Another sign of poverty and of

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<sup>19</sup> The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995. (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>, 10 October 2016)

<sup>20</sup> See FAO document: “Women feed the world.” (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0262e/x0262e16.htm>, 14 July 2016)

<sup>21</sup> Welthungerhilfe. ([http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Themen/Frauen\\_und\\_Entwicklung/Infographic-women-facts-figures-2015-welthungerhilfe.png](http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Themen/Frauen_und_Entwicklung/Infographic-women-facts-figures-2015-welthungerhilfe.png), 24 July 2016)

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, *The World’s Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*. (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>, 29 September 2016)

women's economic dependency has to do with the fact of being excluded from economic decision-making within their own households: "1 in 3 women have no say about major household purchases,"<sup>23</sup> even if they are the providers of food security for the family.

Many of the world's poorest people are women who must, as the primary family caretakers and producers of food, shoulder the burden of tilling land, grinding grain, carrying water and cooking. This is no easy burden. In Kenya, women can burn up to 85 percent of their daily calorie intake just fetching water.<sup>24</sup>

According to Voss Foundation, there are many situations in which the responsibility of providing water to the family puts women at risk, since, "while walking to get water, particularly when they must walk alone before or after daylight hours, women are vulnerable to rape and other violent attacks."<sup>25</sup> The containers they use to collect water weigh over 40 pounds. The fact that they carry them on their heads, over long distances, "has detrimental health effects, including back and chest pains, developmental deformities, arthritic disease, and miscarriages."<sup>26</sup>

When it comes to women's access to assets, in 52% of the developing countries the "law guarantees the same rights, but discriminatory practices against women exist", while in 28% the "law does not guarantee the same inheritance rights".<sup>27</sup> This also means that when talking about the unequal and iniquitous distribution of goods, it is necessary to name the dramatic disproportionate distribution of property between men and women.

"Day to day ecology" also has divergent meanings for women and men. According to Eurofond's 2016 report on "The Gender Employment Gap":

In spite of more than 30 years of equal pay legislation, the gender pay gap has remained persistent across all Member States, regardless of the overall level of female employment, national welfare models or equality legislation [...]. A gender-segregated labour market, the difficulty of balancing work and family life, and the undervaluation of women's skills and work are some of the complex causes of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Gender and Poverty Reduction*. ([http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus\\_areas/focus\\_gender\\_and\\_poverty.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty.html), 24 September 2015)

<sup>25</sup> Voss Foundation. (<http://www.vossfoundation.org/women-and-water/>, 25 September 2016)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, *The World's Women 2015*.

persistent gender pay gap. On average, in 2014, women in the EU earned 16.1% less per hour than men, according to Eurostat data. The gender pay gap exists even though women do better at school and university than men.<sup>28</sup>

Women's day to day life also includes caring for children and dependent relatives (since caring is still understood, in many parts of the world, as being women's duty). the need to reconcile work with family and private life has different meanings for men and women. According to the European Parliament, "in the EU as a whole women spend three and a half times as much time as men on domestic work (12.9 hours and 3.6 hours per week respectively) and almost twice as much time on caring activities (10.7 and 5.5 hours)".<sup>29</sup>

This leads the European Parliament to the following conclusion:

Since women assume more family care responsibilities than men, work-life conflicts also perpetuate gender inequalities. During the early years of a child's life, women in particular seek to reduce the amount of time devoted to paid work. However periods out of work or in part-time work may reduce a woman's long-term job security, possibilities for advancement and training, present and future earnings and pension benefits.<sup>30</sup>

The inequality between men's and women's rights, when linked with climate changes, has specific impacts upon women, including with regard to their reproductive health. LS is critical of "forms of international pressure which make economic assistance contingent on certain policies of 'reproductive health'" (LS, 50). However, according to the World Health Organization:

For girls and women, poor nutritional status is associated with an increased prevalence of anaemia, pregnancy and delivery problems, and increased rates of intrauterine growth retardation, low birth weight and perinatal mortality. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in places where iron deficiency is prevalent, the risk of women dying during childbirth can be increased by as much as 20%.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Eurofound (2016), *The gender employment gap: Challenges and solutions*, Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg 2016), 17.

<sup>29</sup> Library Briefing: Library of the European Parliament, *Work-life balance: Measures to help reconcile work, private and family life* (27/05/2013). ([http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130549/LDM\\_BRI\(2013\)130549\\_REV1\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130549/LDM_BRI(2013)130549_REV1_EN.pdf), 28 October 2016)

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> World Health Organization, *Gender, Climate Change and Health* (<http://www.who.int/global-change/GenderClimateChangeHealthfinal.pdf>, 25 September 2015), 17.

According to this report, “after a natural disaster women are more likely to become victims of domestic and sexual violence and may avoid using shelters as a result of fear.”<sup>32</sup> Their vulnerability increases in the context of environmental migration and displacements. For example, women migrating inside Latin America (coming to Mexico from other countries), “while they are seeking safety, they often find more danger instead in the form of sex traffickers and in marginal, hazardous jobs.”<sup>33</sup>

These examples and data bring to light the blind spots of LS, also when it comes to recognising that women are not only in the position of being victims of a social order and an ecological disorder, but are also agents of change. As UN Women Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri at GLOBE International’s annual legislators’ summit said: “they are on the front lines of combating climate change and finding solutions – whether in mitigation, adaptation, resilience building or in more sustainable production and consumption patterns and waste disposal”.<sup>34</sup> However, participation of women in this combat also depends on their possibility of reaching places where their voices are heard, that is of involving themselves in the conception of programmes and not only in their implementation. According to UN/Women:

Today, there is growing recognition of the differential impact of climate change on women. Their critical role as leaders and agents of change in climate action and management of natural resources is often overlooked in climate negotiations, investments and policies. For example, women account for only 20-25 per cent of the workforce in the modern renewable energy sector, and a 2015 study covering 881 environmental sector ministries from 193 countries found only 12 per cent of the ministers were women.<sup>35</sup>

The history of women’s efforts to survive and to enable their families to survive should also be considered as being part of the “cultural ecology” mentioned by

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>33</sup> UN Women, *Annual Report 2015-2016*. (<http://annualreport.unwomen.org/en/2016/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>, 1 March 2017)

<sup>34</sup> UN Women, “*Women and girls are essential climate actors’ — Lakshmi Puri in Paris. Remarks by UN Women Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri at GLOBE International’s annual legislators’ summit dubbed ‘Towards Coherence and Impact’ at the Assemblée Nationale of Paris, 4 December 2015.*” (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/12/lakshmi-puri-at-globe-internationals-annual-legislators-summit>, 5 September 2016)

<sup>35</sup> UN Women, *Women leading climate action*. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/climate-change>, 10 October 2016)



Pope Francis (LS, 143). It is also part of the "world patrimony". It "calls for greater attention to local cultures when studying environmental problems" since culture "is more than what we have inherited from the past" (ibid.). Culture is "also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment" (ibid.).

### **A critical approach to anthropocentrism calls for a critical approach to androcentrism**

Pope Francis considers "modern anthropocentrism" to be one of the roots of the ecological crisis, because it took "the technological mind" as the main approach to nature. Quoting Romano Guardini, LS asserts that "the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere 'given', as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape" (LS, 115). However, Pope Francis recognises that an "inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world" (LS, 116), based upon "a Promethean vision of mastery over the world" (ibid.). In fact, this arrogant anthropocentrism emphasised an approach to nature based on the notion of "dominion" instead of a "sense of responsible stewardship" (ibid.). The devaluation of nature leads to the devaluation not only of beings other than human but also to the devaluation of human beings themselves. This leads the Pope to assert that "there can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology" (LS, 118) and without the healing of "all fundamental human relationships" (LS, 119). Anthropocentrism leads to forms of "practical relativism" (LS, 122), which "sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests" (ibid.), where 'everything' includes other human beings, especially the most fragile ones.

The document associates an integral ecology that "does not exclude human beings" (LS, 124) with the "need to protect employment," and this need with the place given to man and women in God's Creation:

According to the biblical account of creation, God placed man and woman in the garden he had created (cf. Gen 2:15) not only to preserve it ("keep") but also to make it fruitful ("till"). Labourers and craftsmen thus "maintain the fabric of the world" (Sir 38:34). Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things: "The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them" (Sir 38:4). (LS, 124)

The absence of a critical approach to androcentrism is even more puzzling in the context of this critical view of anthropocentrism, since androcentrism means – to put it plainly – “the belief that the male or masculine view is normative.”<sup>36</sup> And the roots of androcentrism, at least in the Western world, are strongly connected with a theology of Creation and a Christian anthropology that considered women to be lesser human beings in need of guidance by men, just as passive nature was understood to be owned and dominated by them, according to a misguided interpretation of Genesis’ tellings of the creation of man and woman:

There is no explicit mandate for the domination of some humans over others, as male over female, or master over slave, in the Hebrew story. This fact allowed the Genesis story to be used as a potent basis for an egalitarian view of all humans as equal in God’s image in later Christian movements that sought to dismantle slavery and sexism. But this later Christian usage of Genesis overlooks what was implicit in the Hebrew story and explicit in Hebrew law and exegesis. Adam is a generic human who is assumed to be embodied by the male patriarchal class who represent dependent humans, women, slaves and children, and rule over God’s creation.<sup>37</sup>

Let us just take a brief look at Augustine’s and Thomas Aquinas’ anthropology and theology of Creation, not only because they provide very relevant examples of these misguided interpretations, but also because their theologies had an everlasting impact upon Catholic theology.

For Augustine, in spite of the equal resemblance of men and women with God, because of their spiritual souls (since the soul has no body and no sexual features), men’s body matches their soul as human beings (*vir* also means *homo*), while women are identified through the difference between their body (*femina*) and their soul (*homo*). Augustine asks himself why God has not created a masculine help for Adam. And he finds the answer for this question in the reproductive role of women.<sup>38</sup> The role of the woman is to be a passive help: in the process of gestation, she contributes the substance of her passive body to harbour the active principle of male semen.

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<sup>36</sup> Rebecca Moore, *Women in Christian Traditions* (New York and London: New York University Press 2015), 3.

<sup>37</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminism – The Challenge to Theology,” in: *DEP - Deportate, esuli, profughe. Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile*, 20 (2012), 22-33, here 25.

<sup>38</sup> See Augustine, *Gen. ad litt.* IX, 2,3; *Civ. Dei*, IXX, 24.

Thomas Aquinas considered men and women to belong to the same *homo* species. For him, the sexual difference is accidental and based upon corporeity (*vir, femina*).<sup>39</sup> So the soul, as essential formal principle (*forma substantialis*) of human body, is the same in both women and men. However, women are seen as underdeveloped men, as a “shortcoming” (*aliquid deficiens et occasionatum*), since it is the manly semen that gives shape to the child: women’s contribution is only providing the material for that. According to Aquinas’ interpretation of Genesis and to the Aristotelic philosophy that inspired him, the biological function of women is passive and receptive. The woman’s organic inferiority is decisive for her condition as helper of the man. Summarising, the man is the origin and aim of the woman, just like God is the origin and aim of Creation.<sup>40</sup>

The second range of women in these theologies is also very strongly rooted in the link between women and sin, and in New Testament interpretations of passages in Genesis. According to Ruether:

1 Timothy expresses what became the most important Christian justification for sexism, namely, the idea that women are both subordinate in the original “order of creation” and have become doubly subjugated because of their priority in causing sin to come into the world. Thus, 1 Timothy 2:11–14 declares: ‘Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.’ This passage read in its context shows that the author of 1 Timothy is actually contending against an alternative tradition with his own church where women did teach and had somewhat independent ministries. But in Christian tradition, this passage was read as an absolute reflection of early Christian practice, to be normative for all time. This idea that women are both naturally subordinate, because of their secondary status in the order of creation, and to be forcibly subjugated, as punishment for Eve’s revolt against her subordination, causing sin to come into the world, is repeated in various forms in classical Christian teaching.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia* II,11-13; VI,5.

<sup>40</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, 1,93,4 ad 1. See also Maria Fernanda Henriques e Teresa Toldy, “Desconstruindo antropologias assimétricas,” in: *Impossibilia. Revista Internacional de Estudos Literários* 4 (October 2012), 18-33. See also the seminal book by Kari Elisabeth Boerensen, *Subordination et équivalence. Nature et Rôle de la Femme d’après Augustin et Thomas d’Aquin* (Universitetsforlage: Oslo-Paris 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and Social Systems: Historical Constructions and Ethical Challenges* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers : Lanham - Boulder - New York - Plymouth 2009), 93.

The idea of women as having a especial role in caring contributed directly to the invisibility of women in public spaces and to a normative interpretation of women's roles as being mothers and wives.<sup>42</sup> The consequences of a Christian anthropology based on this idea, linking women with private space while men's destiny was to occupy the public space where decisions – including ones regarding women – were taken, did not disappear with modernity. On the contrary: modern anthropocentrism (criticised by the Pope) also meant an androcentric dichotomy (the “missing link” in Pope Francis' critique). Modernity emphasised the notion of men being linked with reason, and women, with emotions. The modern notion of reason – developed mostly by male philosophers – built itself upon the glorification and universalisation of male (western) features, one of them being the ability to dominate nature. On the other hand, women were seen as “the other”, the non-normative human being, emotional, unpredictable, in need of being controlled by male reason and by “a scientific approach,” also at the hands of men. As Genevieve Lloyd states in her seminal work, “rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.”<sup>43</sup>

Going back to LS, one can see that the total lack of reference to the androcentric damages caused by a theology of Creation and a western philosophical philosophy in which women are seen as less than men seems to be the result of blindness to the structural male construction of what the Pope calls “anthropocentrism”. Indeed, anthropocentrism is androcentrism, since the idea of dominating nature is based upon the same structural order in which women (linked with nature and not with culture) are beings that should be dominated. And that is why an inclusive language like the one used in LS – “men and women”, “human beings”, “humans” – is actually not inclusive, because it does not put in question androcentrism: without this radical critique of androcentrism, talking about “men and women” when analysing a world built mostly in accordance with male reason means involving women in structures that were not built by them. As Lloyd says, “Women cannot easily be accommodated into a cultural ideal which has defined itself in opposition to the feminine”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John Paul II's Apostolical Letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), is a good example of this.

<sup>43</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1984), 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

Actually, this is very clear in the passage of the Encyclical letter where – to put it in Catherine Keller words – “we feminists run for the exits,”<sup>45</sup> or feel a kind of a slap to the face, namely the passage on “valuing” “femininity” and “masculinity” as part of “human ecology” (LS, 155). The notion of femininity and masculinity is here said to correspond to “the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment” (ibid.). The text adopts the classical language of papal documents and traditional theology, according to which there is a “nature” defined by the Creator and inscribed in human bodies. Human bodies “establish us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other human beings,” they are “God’s gift” for “welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home” (ibid.). Rejecting nature, defined as a mirror of God’s will for man and woman, is considered to be a way “often subtly” to “thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation” (ibid.). The document even quotes Pope Benedict XVI, who spoke of an “ecology of *man*” based on the fact that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will”<sup>46</sup> (cited in LS, 155). It is very interesting to see that Benedict XVI spoke of an “ecology of *man*” and not of an ecology of “men and women”, since it emphasises both the traditional theology of Creation and the reference to “man” as the prototype of human being. It is in the context of such an understanding of a nature created by God that Pope Francis talks about the need of “valuing one’s own body in its femininity and masculinity” (LS, 155), and reproduces the paradigm of complementarity of man and woman, that is, what he calls “an encounter with someone who is different” (ibid.). He also inserts the traditional essentialist approach based upon the existence of a male and female “specificity” – “we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman” –, and criticises what, according to him, is “to cancel out sexual difference,” because it means that human beings “no longer knows how to confront it” (ibid.).

This passage, reproducing the traditional understanding of sexual difference and complementarity as part of God’s Creation, is inscribed in an Encyclical letter which does not mention the specific problems of women in flesh and blood (indeed, it is not enough to sow the expression “men and women” along

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<sup>45</sup> Keller, “Encycling: One Feminist Theological Response”.

<sup>46</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to the German Bundestag, Berlin (22 September 2011),” in: *AAS* 103 [2011:10], 668.

the document). This, in association with the invisibility of the differences in problems men and women have to face in dealing with the ecological crisis, confirms the “blind spot”<sup>47</sup> identified in such an important and innovative document, or what could be seen as a “myopic spot” in Francis’ pontificate. All the more so, since Pope Francis seems to understand that women are important for the Church: see the creation of a Commission to study the topic of diaconate in the primitive Church (even if the pope has already repeated twice the refrain of forbidding women’s access to priesthood developed by John Paul II), and most of all, his recognition of the relevance of the option for the poor as the main mission and identity of the Church. Nevertheless, the myopic spot is still there. As Katha Pollitt puts it:

I know I risk being the feminist killjoy at the vegan love feast, but the world, unlike Vatican City, is half women. It will never be healed of its economic, social, and ecological ills as long as women cannot control their fertility or the timing of their children; are married off in childhood or early adolescence; are barred from education and decent jobs; have very little socioeconomic or political power or human rights; and are basically under the control – often the violent control – of men.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

In fact, the main problem with the Encyclical is that women and men do not share “a common home” in the same way, because this house is built upon a “modern” order (conceived upon the possibilities and advantages of “dominating nature”, including women, as opposed to culture) and not upon a “common vision” shared by women and men.

Indeed, “Laudato si” rejects the idea of progress based upon the modern idea of the domination of nature, but does not seem to be aware of the link between this domination and the domination of women. The document uses an inclusive language when referring to problems with impacts that are often different for men and women, and repeats the essentialist perspective on man and woman when talking about the “specific roles” of each of them.

However, Pope Francis seems to be the “doorman” of a Church in which the obsession with dogmatic thinking (Benedict XVI’) and the obsession with sexual morals (John Paul II’) is replaced by the notion of compassion and

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<sup>47</sup> See Miriam Duigan, “In His Thoughts and in His Words: Francis on Women,” in: *Conscience: The newsjournal of Catholic Opinion Francis’ Blind*, XXXV, 4.4 (2014) 19-23.

<sup>48</sup> Katha Pollitt, “If Pope Francis Really Wanted to Fight Climate Change”.

forgiveness.<sup>49</sup> It seems that Catholics are called to not let the doors he is opening close again.

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<sup>49</sup> Rui Estrada and Teresa Martinho Toldy, "Pope Francis' Emphasis on Charity," in: *Concilium* 4 (October 2014), 101-111.