

# STILL POINT

A PUBLICATION OF TAU CENTER

A spirituality ministry of the Wheaton Franciscans

FALL 2021



*At the still point of the turning world...  
Neither from nor towards;  
at the still point, there the dance is.*

LAUDATO SI' | ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY | INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. FROM THE DIRECTOR	3
2. LAUDATO SI'	4
3. ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY	10
4. INTEGRAL ECOLOGY	18
5. PROGRAMS	30

IMAGE CREDITS: PEXELS, PIXABY, SHUTTERSTOCK, UNSPLASH  
RESOURCES FROM:

LAUDATO SI' (WWW.VATICAN.VA & WWW.LAUDATOSI.ORG)  
GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT (WWW.CATHOLICCLIMATEMOVEMENT.GLOBAL)  
NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER (WWW.NCRONLINE.ORG)

DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY  
CHRISTINE CIANCIOSI  
EDITOR – SHARON DEVO  
ALL RIGHT RESERVED TAU CENTER



A spirituality ministry of the  
Wheaton Franciscans  
[www.taucenter.org](http://www.taucenter.org)

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Still Point is our new quarterly e-publication that introduces a range of spiritual topics in the months to come. A companion reflection video is available on our [website](http://www.taucenter.org). This inaugural issue is centered on [Laudato Si'](http://www.vatican.va) and the related concepts of Ecological Spirituality and Integral Ecology. As Pope Francis states:

***“The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion . . .” [LS 217]***

As we navigate the accelerating climate emergency, we have also found ourselves mired in the emotions and groundlessness of the Pandemic – which shows few signs of retreating. A thread running through both challenges is the sustenance and new-found appreciation we have found in the natural world – something as simple as an evening walk took on new meaning. The stars in the night sky and birdsong over morning coffee came into awareness. There was a pause in our routines that allowed a turning away from old ways of being, that no longer served.

The pandemic has been difficult, but it has also created a space for the new to emerge. That too is the invitation contained in [Laudato Si'](http://www.vatican.va)... to remain open to the opportunity in the midst of the chaos, hopeful in the heartache, connected across the distance, rooted in God above all else.

Through these past eighteen months, we have deeply missed hosting you for programs and retreats. This loss has brought sadness and disappointment – but it has also challenged us to find new ways to be with you and support your spiritual journeys from a distance.

When introducing the then new Tau Center Ministry in 2010, Sr Jane Madejczyk, OSF wrote:

***“Tau Center signs the work we do as belonging to the heart, not to a specific place; wherever the mission of Tau Center is carried out, there is the Center. Location is not as important by far as the service and the growth.”***

So, while we remain closed to in-person offerings, the heart of Tau Center is still radiating out into the world. And we continue to carry the mission of our Ministry through you and for you.

Blessings,

**Sharon and Christine**

Sharon Devo, Director  
Christine Ciansiosi, Retreat Coordinator  
on behalf of the Wheaton Franciscans



# LAUDATO SI'

The seven goals, grounded in the Laudato Si's concept of integral ecology, include: response to the cry of the Earth; response to the cry of the poor; ecological economics; adoption of simple lifestyles; ecological education; ecological spirituality; and emphasis on community involvement and participatory action.

“LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. [1]

## “I BELIEVE THAT

Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.”

— Laudato Si' [10]



# OUR COMMON HOME

The Global Catholic Climate Movement has compiled a handful of helpful *Laudato Si'* summaries here that, when put into action, will help you bring Pope Francis' encyclical to life in your community.

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* ("Praise be to you") is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that man is rendering to the environment and his fellow man.

While addressing the environment directly, the document's scope is broader in many ways as it looks at not only man's effect on the environment, but also the many philosophical, theological, and cultural causes that threaten the relationships of man to nature and man to each other in various circumstances.

This document is in many ways the epitome of Pope Francis. It is an unexpected topic. It presents Gospel truths. And, it provides a challenge for every believer (and non-believers too). From the outset, Pope Francis states the goal of the document: "In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home" [3]. Normally,

papal documents are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful. But, similar to Pope Saint John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, Pope Francis addresses his message to all people.

The goal of the dialogue: "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environment challenge we are undergoing, and its human



"Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."

— *Laudato Si'* [25]

roots, concern and affect us all" [14]. The above is at the heart of the document, but Pope Francis also has a very striking call to conversion for those in the Church as well.

"The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern

for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience". [217]



THOUGHTS

“INNER PEACE IS CLOSELY

related to care for ecology and for the common good  
because, lived out authentically, it is reflected  
in a balanced lifestyle together with a  
capacity for wonder which takes us to a  
deeper understanding of life.”

— Laudato Si’ [225]

“HAPPINESS MEANS

knowing how to limit some needs  
which only diminish us,  
and being open to the many different  
possibilities which life can offer.”

— Laudato Si’ [223]

# ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. [216]



“A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power.”

— *Laudato Si'* [78]



## ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls us to undergo an ecological conversion. But what is an ecological conversion? Global Catholic Climate Movement defines ecological conversion as the “transformation of hearts and minds toward greater love of God, each other, and creation. It is a process of acknowledging our contribution to the social and ecological crisis and acting in ways that nurture communion: healing and renewing our common home.”

The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the

Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. [216]

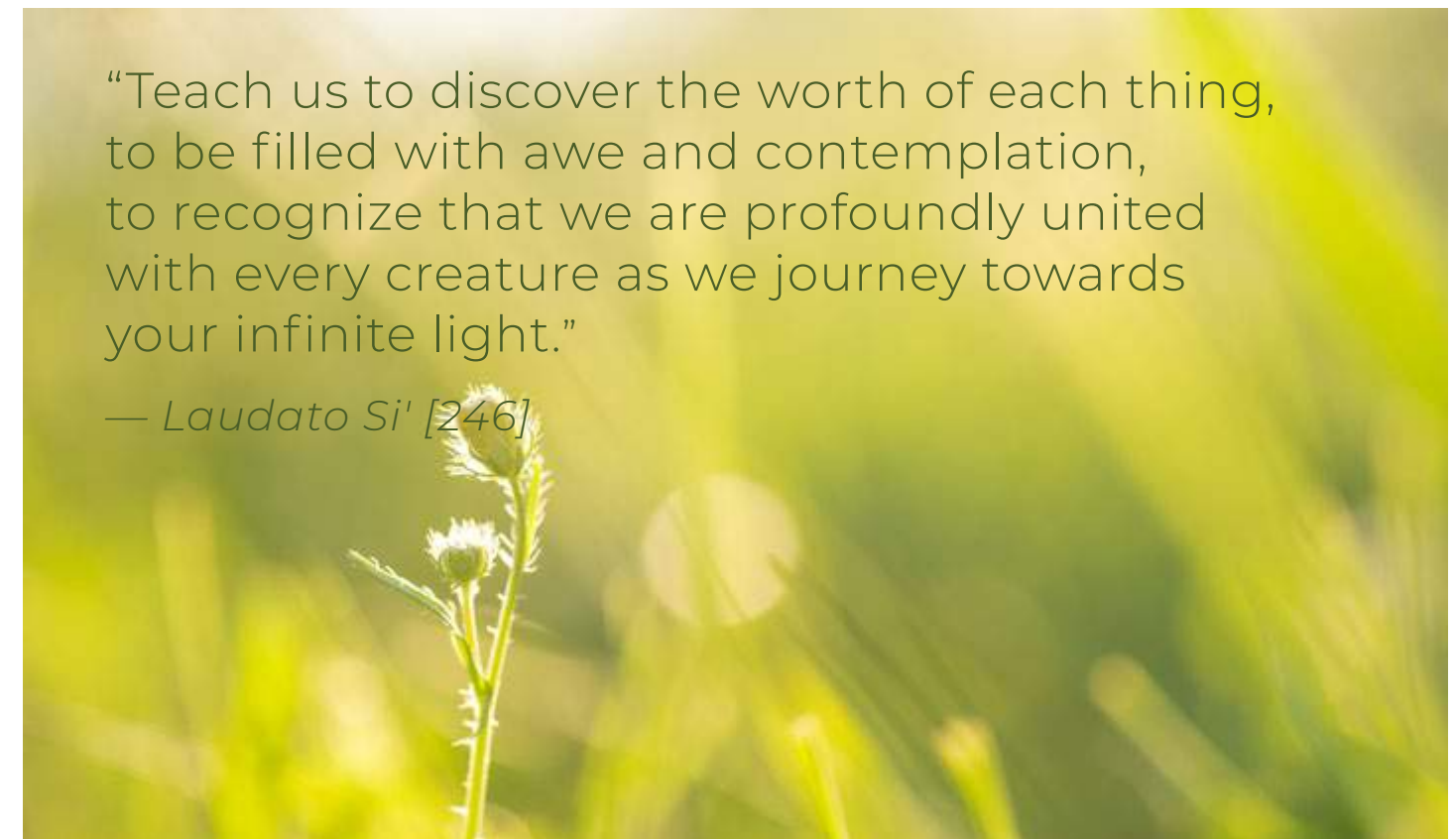
More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an “interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity”. [151]

Admittedly, Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us. [216]




“Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.”

— *Laudato Si'* [246]







“Ecological spirituality is the compassion that arises naturally within consciousness when we feel our biological unity with people, animals, plants and the elements of the Earth.”

— *David Crow*

STILL POINT

## LET US CONTINUE

---

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”. [152] For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment.

Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. [217]

---



THOUGHTS

---

“LET US SING AS WE GO.

May our struggles and our concern  
for this planet never take away  
the joy of our hope.”

— Laudato Si’ [245]

“ECOLOGY & SPIRITUALITY

are fundamentally connected,  
because deep ecological awareness,  
ultimately, is spiritual awareness.”

— Fritjof Capra



# INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

In his article *Integral Ecology: Everything is Connected* (National Catholic Reporter) Thomas Reese discusses the key concept in chapter four of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. It flows from his understanding that “everything is closely related” and that “today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis.”

Relationships take place at the atomic and molecular level, between plants and animals, and among species in ecological networks and systems. For example,

“EVERYTHING IS CLOSELY RELATED” AND THAT “TODAY’S PROBLEMS” CALL FOR A VISION CAPABLE OF TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EVERY ASPECT OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS

he points out, “We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about.”

Nor can the “environment” be considered in isolation. “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live,” writes the pope. “We are part of nature.”

As a result, if we want to know “why a given area is polluted,” we must study “the workings of society, its economy, its behavior patterns, and the ways it grasps reality.” And in considering solutions to the environmental crisis, we must “seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems.”

These interrelationships enable Francis to see that “we are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” As a result, “Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” In such an “economic ecology,” the protection of the environment is then seen

as “an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.”

He also calls for a “social ecology” that recognizes that “the health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life.” This includes the primary social group, the family, as well as wider local, national, and international communities. When these institutions are weakened, the result is injustice, violence, a loss of freedom, and a lack of respect for law.

Pope Francis also argues that it is important to pay attention to “cultural ecology” in order to protect the cultural treasures of humanity. But “Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it 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.”

He complains that a consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by globalization, “has a leveling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity.” New processes must respect local cultures. “There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture.”

“Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.”

— *Laudato Si'* [240]





“It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognize the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions.”

— *Laudato Si'* [64]



## STILL POINT

often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation.”

Here he calls for “valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity” so that “we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment.” It is not a healthy attitude, he says, “to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it.”

Human ecology, Pope Francis argues, cannot be separated from the notion of the common good, which he calls “a central and unifying principle of social ethics.” Quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, he defines the common good as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.”

The common good calls for respect for the human person as well as the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups. It requires social peace, stability and security, “which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice.”

For Pope Francis it is obvious that “where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity

This interconnectedness means that “environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community.” In various parts of the world, he notes, indigenous communities are being pressured “to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.”

Pope Francis also talks about the ecology of daily life “in our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and our neighborhoods.” We attempt to shape our environment to express our identity, but “when it is disorderly, chaotic or saturated

with noise and ugliness, such overstimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.”

He marvels at the ability of the poor to practice human ecology where “a wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment” and “the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging.”

Francis recognizes that “The extreme poverty experienced in areas lacking harmony, open spaces or potential for integration, can lead to incidents of brutality and to exploitation by criminal organizations,” but “I wish to insist that love always proves more powerful” when people “weave bonds of belonging and togetherness

which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome.”

He acknowledges the importance of architectural design and urban planning, but these must serve the quality of people’s lives and take into consideration the views of those who live in the areas affected. Such planning must protect common areas and promote affordable housing and public transportation.

Pope Francis quotes Pope Benedict 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.” He notes that “thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns,



and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.”

Finally, Pope Francis’ vision of integral ecology and the common good includes justice between generations. Returning to his biblical vision, he says that “the world is a gift we have freely received and must share with others.” This includes future generations. “The world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.” Or as the Portuguese bishops, whom he quotes, said, the environment “is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next.”

Thus he ends chapter four with the challenging question, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who will come after us, to children who are now growing up?” He fears that “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain.” On the contrary, “the pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world.”

According to Pope Francis, the ethical and cultural decline which accompanies the deterioration of the environment forces us to ask fundamental questions about life: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?”

Pope Francis calls for an integral ecology that sees the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, political, social, cultural, and ethical issues. Such an ecology requires the vision to think about comprehensive solutions to what is both an environmental and human crisis.

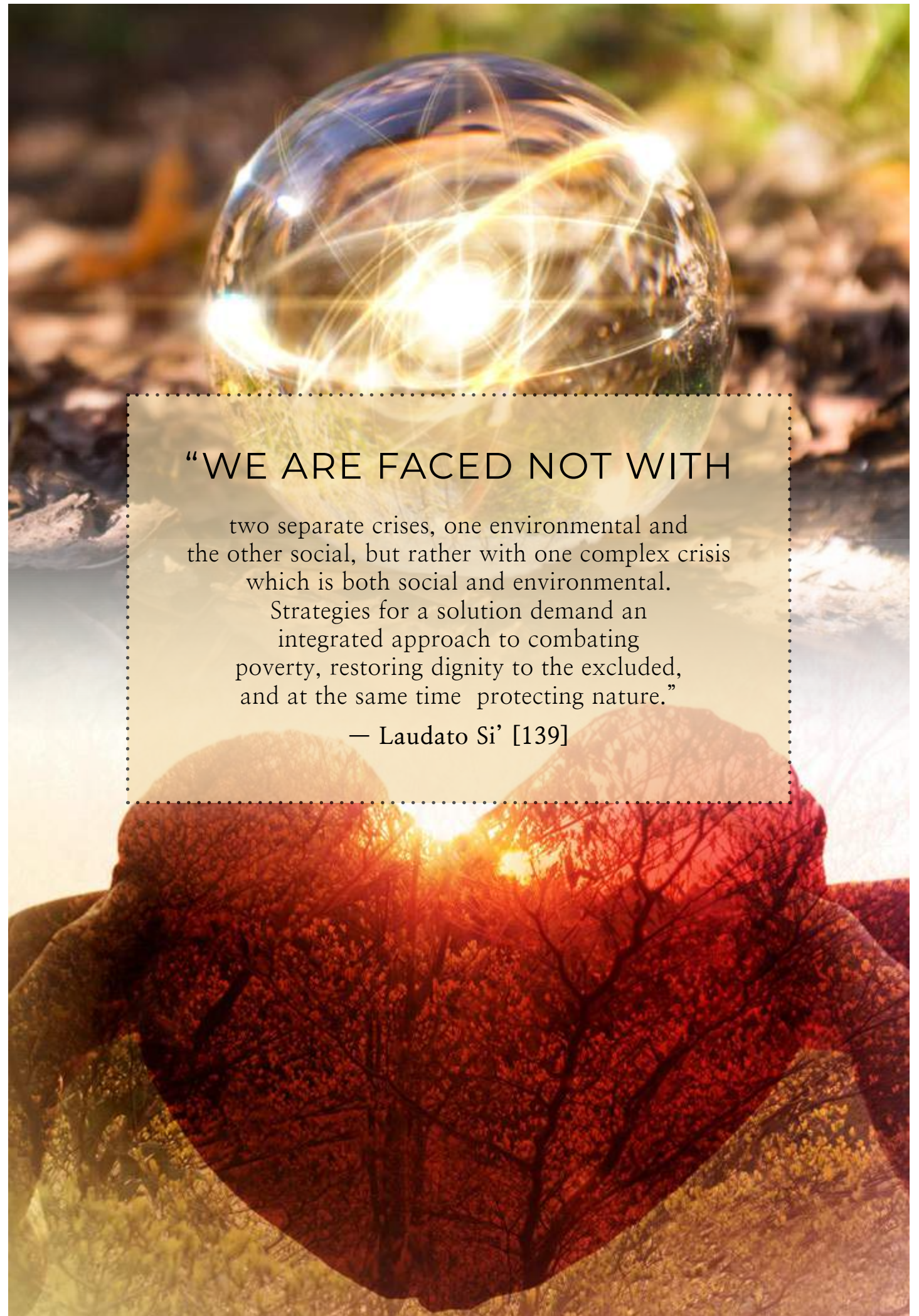
## “LOCAL INDIVIDUALS

and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land.”

— *Laudato Si’* [179]



## THOUGHTS

[illegible]



## “EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Concern for the environment needs to be joined  
to a sincere love for our fellow human beings  
and an unwavering commitment to  
resolving the problems of society.”

— Laudato Si’ [91]

## “AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

includes taking time to recover a serene harmony  
with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle  
and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator  
who lives among us and surrounds us,  
whose presence must not be contrived  
but found, uncovered.”

— Laudato Si’ [225]





## “INNER PEACE

is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.”

— Laudato Si’ [225]

## “MANY THINGS

have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change.”

— Laudato Si’ [202]

STILL POINT

# ABOUT TAU CENTER



Established in 2008 by the Wheaton Franciscans, who live intentionally as a presence of blessing in our world, the Tau Center is committed to the transformation of our world by helping individuals awaken to the sacredness of life.

In the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Tau Center provides a peaceful and reflective environment for people seeking a deeper relationship with God, self, others and all of Creation. Through the integration of body, mind and spirit, Tau Center is committed to

offering diverse experiences where individuals can nourish their spirit, find companions on their journey, and connect what they discover to meaning in their life and the world around them.

We offer a sacred space to assist individuals on their own spiritual journey – whether it is to reconnect with their inner-spirit or whether they are seeking a deeper relationship with God and the world around them. Our programs encourage an awakening of the spirit that leads to hope, healing, peace and transformation.



# PROGRAMS

## Introduction to Centering Prayer

Tuesday, October 19, 2021  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
ONLINE via Zoom

Facilitated by Laura Desmarais

It is within silence and stillness  
that we listen to our heart.

Join Laura and other seekers to  
learn the Centering Prayer process  
in a supportive and nurturing  
atmosphere. This session is a  
good beginning for those new to  
Centering Prayer or who feel a  
desire for ‘refreshment’ if you have  
been away from the practice.

Registration is required by  
Sunday 10/17 to receive the zoom  
link for this session.

**About our Presenter:** Laura  
explored meditation while living  
in India over ten years ago. Since  
then she found herself drawn to  
Centering Prayer and has been  
influenced by Thomas Keating  
and Cynthia Bourgeault. She is  
a Spiritual Director and has led  
Centering Prayer with Sr Pat Irr,  
OSF.

TO REGISTER FOR  
PROGRAMS PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.TAUCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.TAUCENTER.ORG)



## Centering Prayer – Listen with An Open Heart

Thursday, October 26,  
November 2, 9, 16  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
ONLINE via Zoom

Facilitated by Laura Desmarais

It is within silence and stillness  
that we listen to our heart. What is  
your heart saying?

We invite you to take time to  
connect and dwell in your heart  
space this Fall Season.

A new season is a time to  
journey within, to listen, listen  
with our hearts. It is through our  
hearts that we learn to open, to let  
go and to receive the fruits of the  
Spirit working within. We need

this reminder more than ever  
as we shelter in and experience  
disconnectedness from other  
and ourselves. As we experience  
heartfelt love and acceptance  
within, we are better prepared to  
reach out to others and share these  
gifts with them.

Together we will join in silence  
and deep listening each session as  
we explore the vulnerable space  
of our open hearts through the  
practice of Centering Prayer.

**October 26, Session 1:**  
Listening with your heart

As we listen, we ‘let go and let  
God’ as we open our hearts to  
receive his Divine love.

**November 2, Session 2:**  
Listening with your heart to others

As we listen to others, we  
connect with our hearts and not  
our thinking minds.

**November 9, Session 3:**  
Listening to the needs of the  
Universe

As we listen to our hearts, we  
are overwhelmed by our desire to  
bring peace and harmony to the  
world.

**November 16, Session 4:**  
Harvesting our Heart Song

One-time Registration is required  
by October 17th.

If you are new to Centering Prayer,  
we encourage you to register  
separately for “Introduction to  
Centering Prayer” being held on  
Tuesday October 19th.



# PROGRAMS

## Living In Alignment Conversation Circle

Thursday, October 14, 2021  
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
ONLINE via Zoom

Facilitated by Karen Bychowski

Do you often feel like you are not quite on the right path, or that you have lost sense your sense of direction in the daily demands of life?

Based on my own journey to live “in this world but not of this world,” this Conversation Circle is a group-based, coaching-centered experience, designed to help you reconnect with who you are and explore the factors that can help you gain a greater sense of alignment in your life.

The experience includes **six facilitated group sessions**, with a mix of learning, small-group sharing and individual reflection. In addition, each week, you will be invited to spend quiet time with God, engaging in a variety of short exercises, and considering opportunities to create more room for Him in the design of your life.

Over the course of the 6 sessions, you will have an opportunity to explore your Life Satisfaction, your



Personal Values, your Spiritual Gifts, your Inspired Vision and your Roadmap Forward. The first session will be a chance to introduce yourself to the group, learn more about the experience, share expectations and prepare for your journey.

**The Living in Alignment Conversation Circle** will take place virtually (via Zoom), from Thursday, October 14th through Thursday, November 18th, from 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Registration closes October 10th, 2021.

### About our Facilitator, Karen Bychowski

For nearly 20 years, Karen Bychowski spent much of her time

traveling around the United States and across the world, helping large organizations navigate change as part of her work with a Global Fortune 100 Consulting Company, before making the transition in 2019 to focus on coaching and facilitation. Her experience includes individual and team coaching, across levels, as well as leadership workshop facilitation.

Karen is passionate about helping others design and live out the most inspired vision for themselves and considers each person's values, talents, goals, and purpose. She completed robust coaching training at the Hudson Institute of Coaching, is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) through the International Coaching Federation and is a Gallup-Certified CliftonStrengths Coach.

She received her BA from the University of Illinois and her MS from Loyola University Chicago.

In addition to her professional work, in 2017 Karen started To Africa with Love, a non-profit organization whose mission is to connect, care and contribute to the people of Kenya and beyond. The organization's flagship program- Pads with a Purpose- focuses on the use of vision boards to empower girls and has reached over 4,000 young women across Kenya. In January 2020, the organization launched a second program called, “Amka.” Meaning “wake up” in Swahili, Amka is a social support and life skills development program aimed at helping vulnerable young women in Kenya make the transition from high school to “life.”

TO REGISTER FOR  
PROGRAMS PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.TAUCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.TAUCENTER.ORG)



# STILL POINT

A PUBLICATION OF TAU CENTER

A spirituality ministry of the Wheaton Franciscans

FALL 2021

God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always

present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him! [245]

