

Integral Ecology and Sustainable Development: An Ecofeminist Conversation with Laudato Si'

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The encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, presents a profound theological and ethical reflection on the environment and sustainable development. This reflection is developed around the concept of integral ecology, which articulates the fundamental relatedness of all creation. This relatedness is traced to the Genesis accounts of creation, in which all creation similarly bears the mark of God and is unvaryingly good. Hence, it contradicts an androcentric notion of creation that portrays man as superior to woman and, ipso facto, other creatures. Thus, *Laudato Si'* seems to evince an ecofeminist liberationist perspective that is unprecedented in the tradition of Catholic Social Doctrine. As a school, Ecofeminist liberationist theology suggests a deep connection between the social domination of women and the ecological degradation of the earth. It also sees in this connection an intricate link to the oppression of the poor. Hence, the interests of *Laudato Si'* and Ecofeminism seem to converge in their common quest for an integral paradigm of sustainable development. In this light, this paper proposes to engage *Laudato Si'* in a creative conversation with Ecofeminist liberationist theology. This conversation aims to explore if and how *Laudato Si'* could bring Catholic theology into a constructive dialogue with Ecofeminism. The central argument here is that such a dialogue could facilitate a more robust understanding of sustainable development. Here, a robust understanding of sustainable development integrates the relevant contributions of both *Laudato Si'* and Ecofeminism into a practical developmental agenda.