



Integral Ecology and a New Carmelite NGO Initiative

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There are “Four Pillars of the Carmelite NGO.” Collectively, they summarize the mission, vision, and social and ethical commitments of our organization. These pillars inform and animate our work for justice—a work that is a deep expression of our faith.

Here are the **Four Pillars of the Carmelite NGO**, as they relate to the promotion of an integral ecology:

Sustainable Development

- Promoting equitable human development while addressing the threats posed by climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Following the principles and moral vision shared by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*.

Education

- Committed to education for all, regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, religion or other differences.
- Educating for social and environmental justice and promoting integral ecology.

Human Rights

- Working to end extreme poverty and promote the fundamental right to food.
- Advocating for an end to human trafficking and giving assistance to victims.

Freedom of Belief

- Working in an ecumenical spirit; respecting all faiths.
- Believing that all faiths everywhere should be free from repression.

Integral ecology speaks profoundly to each of these pillars and their intersections. Though the concept of integral ecology has been around for several decades, it was Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (2015), who brought that term into relatively common usage (with his own unique perspective).

As Francis explains in *Laudato Si'*:

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions (137)...

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (139).

Everything is interrelated. And clearly that includes the Carmelite NGO's Four Pillars. These pillars—sustainable development, education, human rights, and freedom of belief—are not simply stand-alone issues needing unique attention. They do not exist in individual vacuums. Each is connected to the others.

How do you address the climate crisis and promote sustainable development in a world that does not value the education of all people or protect their human rights? How do you address biodiversity loss and human rights violations without respecting all faiths, since all the great religions of the world profess love for our fellow human beings and care for God's creation?

Our world is in crisis and this crisis is, indeed, both social and environmental (as well as moral). Our work to address this tremendous crisis is urgent and

requires us to think in ways that make the vital connections that are necessary if we are to be successful in our efforts.

So, to this end, we in the Carmelite NGO have launched a new project: The Integral Ecology Learning Platform. This is a website that will act as a repository of resources that contribute to the understanding of the concept of integral ecology, while being faithful to the promotion of the Four Pillars of the Carmelite NGO.

The website is a continuous work in progress, as we will regularly add more material. Here it is: www.Integral-Ecology.org

What you will find on the website are original videos and articles, videos and articles from other sources, and links to other websites/resources all related to integral ecology.

Our NGO-produced videos you will find there currently include a short promotional video about this project, as well as a longer introductory video. We also have a wonderful presentation on integral ecology from an Indigenous Peoples' perspective.

Also included on the website are two of our videos on the challenges faced by communities around the world, one focusing on Louisiana (U.S.) and the other on Indonesia and both related to rising ocean levels caused by climate change. You can see from these two films an integral ecology perspective: a crisis that is both environmental and social. We invite you to watch these two videos, “The Rising Seas: A Global Challenge” and “Rising Seas in Indonesia,” with an integral ecology eye.

Additional original videos are currently in production or being planned. They include:
“Catholic Social Teaching and Integral Ecology”
“Integral Ecology from Other Faith Perspectives”
“Prophetic Carmelite Advocacy”

Others are in the works, as well. And videos from other sources will also be added.

Among the articles that you will find on the website will be some from previous issues of *CarmeNGO*.

Finally, we will be providing links to organizations and additional resources that should be helpful to those interested in learning more about integral ecology and wanting to *take action*. Indeed, action steps will be an important part of integral-ecology.org as we go forward. After all, faith without works is dead (James 2:26). We are all called to take action in the face of social injustice and the destruction of creation.

As of now, this project is about building an online resource. At some point in the future, we are considering offering opportunities for interested individuals to earn a Certificate in Integral Ecology Education and Action.

As we launch this new and exciting project, we hope you will be encouraged by it. We need each of you to be involved in the work to build a better world—to promote sustainable development, education for all, human rights, and freedom of belief.

When Pope Francis issued his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, he made it clear that he was writing not just to the Catholic faithful, but to all people of good will. That is the spirit in which we are creating this project. If you are Catholic, a person of another faith, or of no faith, you should be able to connect to our overall message of caring for each other and for our common home, our Earth. We are all in this struggle together.

We invite all of you to visit our new Integral Ecology online project: www.Integral-Ecology.org

Let us know what you think about this project. If you have suggestions or feedback of any kind, please reach out to us via the integral-ecology.org website or email me directly at DLKCarmeliteNGO@gmail.com.

Dennis Kalob has been the Chief Administrative Officer of the Carmelite NGO since 2015. He is also Professor of the Practice at Wheaton College Massachusetts, where he teaches in the Sociology Department and in the Criminal Justice, Restorative Justice and Criminology Program.