


INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

A green leaf and a brown leaf are positioned to the right of the word 'INTEGRAL'.

A narrative to
face up the planetary
socio-environmental crisis

Manifesto

OF THE CNBB COMMISSION
FOR INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND MINING

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**Manifesto of the CNBB
Commission for
Integral Ecology and Mining**

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CNBB Commission for Integral Ecology and Mining

President: Dom Vicente de Paula Ferreira

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SES quadra 801 | Conjunto B | 70200-014 | Brasília | DF
Tel.: (61) 2103-8300

 www.cepastcnbb.org.br |  ceem@cnbb.org.br

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Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

("Olhe bem as montanhas...",
in Caderno B, Jornal do Brasil,
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"Mountains and living beings participate in a vital process that diversifies without losing its unity. Man is earth, iron, plant, water, and air. Civilization is born from the identification of all these elements, driven by culture. As we unfortunately move further away from this fundamental concept, nature is being sacrificed, not assimilated, causing the mountains to disappear from the face of the earth. This produces wealth. However, it results in profound environmental transformations, which adversely affect the quality of life. These transformations invalidate the benefits of the wealth created and make the lives of all beings, from the humblest species to the proud human species, more precarious."

Our Manifesto begins with the words of the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade. The article cited was published in 1975, when, in Minas Gerais, the signs of destruction of the great mountains, caused by mining greed, were already visible. The poet wrote, the indigenous peoples warned, the Earth cried out, and the Church, through the welcome of Pope Francis, prophesied: everything is interconnected! The time to save the world of life is now.

Pope Francis has stated that we are not going through an epoch of change, but an epochal change¹: we have caused and experienced a new “*geological era*.” At the heart of the pontiff’s message is the recognition of the need to radically and profoundly transform the relationship that human beings have established with planet Earth. In recent centuries, in Westernized societies, motivated by the primary tenets of modernity, a mistaken understanding has developed that humans are distinct and separate from “*nature*.” They have forgotten that they are a species that weaves a web of life with others. They have come to believe that they are more important, special, and separate from everyone else. This worldview is the result, among other factors, of principles such as those pointed out by Francis Bacon when he formulated the Scientific Method: “*nature needs to be tortured by means of experiments, until it confesses to us all its secrets*.” (Bacon, 2012).

The Western tradition, in its civilizing concern, opposed and dismissed the perspectives of Indigenous peoples, their integrated view of the world, and their fight for a society focused on well-being, labelling everything as superstition or heresy. However, as we enter the twenty-first century, the rampant extractive activities and financialization of the economy and the world, characteristic of this phase of Western civilization, have emerged as significant threats to our common home. Consequently, the Earth has exhibited extreme responses in recent decades, raising an increasingly alarming cry.

In light of various crisis scenarios, we are confronted with wars, environmental destruction, and the rise of structural injustices and inequalities. Additionally, we are witnessing the exacerbation of patriarchy, the exclusion of the different, new forms of colonialism, manipulation of faith and naivety of innocent people, xenophobia, and more. The affirmation and articulation of political projects by the extreme right in several countries worldwide promote the concentration of income and power among the super-rich, leaving no room for mercy, and rendering the future even more challenging and unpredictable. The Catholic Church – like many other churches – is not exempt from these epochal shifts. On one hand, there is an urgent need to confront these challenges with parrhesia, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus; on the other hand, many Christians think that this issue – the destruction of global life – does not intersect with faith.

¹ Pope Francis’ speech during the meeting with the Movimientos Populares, Rome, October 28, 2014.

While Pope Francis calls us to engage with the twenty-first century as an outgoing Church, defending life, human rights, and nature, other sectors openly react by trying to reduce the Church to a medieval museum, imprisoning it within its sacristies. Worse still, while claiming to defend Christian-Western civilization, they support and encourage an alliance with powerful, violent, and unsustainable ways of life. Therefore, a meaningful way to navigate the unusual journey we are experiencing is to understand the image of God toward which our faith, hope, and charity are directed. A contemporary spirituality willing to take shape, open to the world and its challenges, and cultivating universal fraternity can only fulfill the prophecy of the church of Jesus Christ by choosing the “*wretched of the Earth*” (Fanon, 1961), or – as Ailton Krenak states – with those who “live on the edges of the planet” (Krenak, 2020).

It is not our place to be paralyzed. Like spawning fish, we are compelled to swim against the current so that life can reproduce. Otherwise, we risk becoming like the fish that do not migrate, do not spawn, and serve no purpose other than being devoured by humans. When discussing spiritualities, it is essential to clarify which spirituality is being referred to (Malvezzi, 2020). We must ask ourselves, from the perspective of the Christian faith, what witness, what posture, and what narrative we defend in light of the acute social and ecological crises before us.

The Special Commission for Integral Ecology and Mining of the CNBB (CEEM) has been actively engaged in discussions regarding the Christian vocation in this context. While not everything is a consensus, there are key points that guide us, which we want to share in this Manifesto. We begin with *Laudato Si*, an encyclical that addresses the care of our common home, commemorating 10 years since its publication in 2015.

The Encyclical emphasizes that the socio-environmental crisis has its roots in human activities. This crisis is a direct result of a lifestyle driven by global capitalism, which prioritizes money and profit over human lives. For this reason, “*a superficial or apparent ecology, which consolidates a certain torpor and a joyful irresponsibility, is of no use. As it often happens in times of deep crises, which require courageous decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not true*” (LS 59).

These attitudes of denialism, indifference, or belief in palliative solutions must be overcome. Thus, the objective of this Manifesto is to put the finger on the wound. Even if it is painful, one can no longer believe in naïve consolations that do not get to the heart of the problems. This is not the time to delude ourselves with false motivations. It is a crucial moment for humanity and life on the planet; it is an epochal change unfolding amidst suffering, wars, destruction, hunger, thirst, misery, and oppression. Things need to change for another world to be born, so that the next generation has a fair future. It is in this context that we are called to give the reasons for our Christian hope.

We believe that the year 2025, the Jubilee of Hope, Fraternity, and Integral Ecology, coinciding with COP 30 in Brazil, represents a kairological moment — a time of grace and God's explicit action in history. As the late Cardinal Claudio Hummes said, *"If our action takes longer, it will be too late."* Now is the time! There is no room to delay the actions that will define the future of humanity and the Earth. Common sense indicates that radical moments (from the Latin radix, root) are also moments of new opportunities. We know that the alternatives that emerge from this are not always positive. Right now, there is no shortage of profiteers of human suffering looking to consolidate power and wealth. Pope Francis calls us to stand with Indigenous peoples, popular socio-environmental movements, and all those who refuse to surrender to the winds of the season.



1. IN FAVOUR OF A LIBERATING CHRISTIAN NARRATIVE

Green or brown, the economy that kills

Humanity's reactions to the socio-environmental crisis, which has intensified since World War II, are often controversial and antagonistic. However, certain scientific truths cannot be ignored; since the Industrial Revolution, greenhouse gas emissions, primarily carbon dioxide and methane (CO₂ and CH₄), have increased. This rise is attributed mainly to the consumption of fossil fuels, as well as deforestation and the intensive rearing of animals, particularly cattle, which release thousands of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere daily. We often forget that not everything on Earth is at the service of human needs. The Earth must preserve its metabolism because it is a living being, a "*living superorganism*" (Lovelock, 2009), and has the right to exist. In other words, the Indigenous peoples of Brazil say that if we do not urgently change the course of what we call development, "*the sky will fall on our heads*" (Kopenawa, 2015).

Initially, the deniers dismissed the scientists' denunciations about climate change, treating them as unfounded arguments. Then, unable to ignore them, they began to deny that humans were the cause of the change. Recently, we have witnessed with great concern the implementation of denialist public policies, focusing on individual salvation solutions. When the super-rich build bunkers (Turbini, 2023) to survive the end of the world as we know it, they imply that the survivors, in this case, themselves, will continue the human species on Earth.

The current economic model emphasizes the distinction between those who have the right to survive and those deemed disposable. As Pope Francis warns: "*The excluded are not 'exploited', but waste, leftovers*" (Evangeli Gaudium, 53). The German sociologist, economist, and philosopher Max Weber, when analyzing capitalism in the nineteenth century, highlighted that the fundamental logic of this system is the relentless pursuit of profit. He stated that "*in a fully capitalist social order, the individual capitalist enterprise that did not take advantage of the opportunities for profit production would be doomed to extinction*" (Weber, 2013).

As we all know, capitalism fundamentally relies on the accumulation of capital, which requires the extraction of surplus value: the exploitation of

human labor and nature, regarded solely as resources and raw materials. Indigenous peoples of Latin America, along with those who live in harmony with the natural world, have never fully adopted this philosophy, which entails the privatization of land, water, biodiversity, food, and many other aspects of life. In recent decades, amid the intense financialization of the economy referred to as neoliberalism, there has been a transformation in the concept of surplus value. It now encompasses not just the exploitation of labor but also the “*violent extraction of the value mobilized by each subject, in their individuality*” (Oliveira, 2021, pp 24). This shifts the individual into an entrepreneur, becoming both “*slave and enslaver*” (Han, 2019). This phenomenon is known as the Uberization of the workforce. With Artificial Intelligence, it is anticipated that billions of jobs will be eliminated in the coming years, further complicating the working conditions for the vast majority of people.

Capitalism, by its very nature, feeds on the crises it causes. With each crisis, new strategies are created for greater capital accumulation. Still in the phase of industrial capitalism, for example, programs of planned obsolescence emerged. That is, industrialized goods are scheduled to have a short “*shelf life.*” Thus, consumers must return to the market and acquire new goods more frequently. As part of this strategy, aesthetic obsolescence is introduced, implying a change in appearance to stimulate the consumption of products with a more innovative presentation.

The burden of this unlimited and unnecessary production of goods falls directly on nature, as the continuous extraction of basic materials – ores, hydrocarbons, wood – is conducted according to the timings of the market: at a much faster pace than nature can regenerate itself. Therefore, the economic model of unlimited desire becomes incompatible with a limited planet. It is unsustainable!

However, in the current phase of neoliberalism, as some experts have noted, there is a growing trend of less investment in productive capital, with resources



increasingly shifting to the capital market. Thus, “*modernization as synonymous with technical progress and the culture of bourgeois industrial civilization, no longer exists (...). The linearity of the development process and the perspective of the collective effort to achieve a better life in a Promethean future do not communicate with the speculative reason of financial capitalism, for which there is no impediment, for example, to bet on catastrophe against prosperity or social justice*” (Oliveira, 2021, pp41). In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis referred to this moment as the “*end of historical consciousness*,” without the promise or commitment of elites to “a world for all.” This leads us, says the Pope, to a “*struggle of interests of all against all, where winning becomes synonymous of destroying*” (FT, 16).

This constant consumption of nature and the labour of workers has many other facets. Among these are the disposal of waste, which turns cities and the atmosphere into dumping grounds; the accelerated loss of biodiversity and the extinction of countless species each year, the rise in armed conflicts and wars, and the violation of several planetary boundaries. Scientists predict that global warming will soon reach levels not seen in the last two million years on Earth. We do not know if the human species or other species will be able to survive in this environment, for which we have no ancestral experience.

Due to all these factors and many others that we cannot detail in this Manifesto, we assert with conviction that the capitalist model is beyond redemption. By its very nature, it progresses by increasingly exploiting nature and people. That is why we say that this model consumes more than the Earth can provide. From this reality emerges the fact that the super-rich invest in the interplanetary search: the Moon and Mars are the sought-after destinations for rare minerals, such as Helium-3, which is valuable for nuclear fusion. The exploration of the solar system is just beginning, unless this model first brings an end to the world of all worlds, our planet Earth.

A critique of the development model

The fundamental criticism of the concept of “*development*” is its unsustainability and, consequently, its contribution to socio-environmental injustice. Although already captured by large corporations, the idea of “*sustainability*” still resists and, in a way, maintains its *raison d’être*. That is, it refers to the time when

economic production respected, or did not respect, the cycles of nature. If the rhythm of the economy preying on nature is faster than the time needed for its restoration, then development is unsustainable. If it respects the rhythms of nature, it becomes sustainable.

In recent years, as the concept has been appropriated for transformation, the idea of a “green economy” has been solidified as a positive aspect of sustainable development. From the 2000s onwards, organizations such as the World Bank began to incorporate this new concept into their reports. *“What these reports do, is reframe the narrative on sustainable development for the green economy, which bases climate action on correcting market failures, based on the definition of the ‘fair price’ and the introduction of public market instruments for the allocation of resources”* (Oliveira, 2022, pp28). Thus, we have witnessed the birth and growth of both the carbon credit market and the transformation of all nature and the so-called “environmental services” into “assets” for the financial market. New national legislation has been adapting and creating a market not only for the commodification of natural goods but also for their transformation into “assets,” which favors the markets and the financial system.

Antonio Covas helps us understand the logic of the green economy. He addresses *“the theory of ecological modernization.”* He presents ten theses (Covas and Covas, 2010) that suggest the green economy can serve as a strategy for renewing capitalism by integrating environmental protection as a driver of economic growth. It is an effort to restructure capitalism through a technical-instrumental rationality, which redefines the relationships between the economy and ecology, institutionalizing environmental practices and exploring technological and scientific advances as instruments of regulation. However, this approach reveals limitations by reinforcing dependence on core economic paradigms, concentrating power in corporations and regulatory complexes, and neglecting structural inequalities between developed economies and disadvantaged regions. Thus, the green economy emerges not as a rupture but as an incrementalist modernization of capitalism, expanding its capacity for self-regulation while perpetuating systemic contradictions.

The initiatives for greater tax exemptions for mining, agricultural, and hydro businesses, which are often linked to tax evasion and supported by new national legislation, complete the picture that enables the rise of the super-rich, who increasingly exert direct control over the planet. To give you an idea, 0.0005%

of American billionaires were responsible for 87% of Donald Trump's campaign spending. Thus, a small minority that benefits from tax exemptions bets on direct control by governments.

In Brazil, it is no different. Indigenous peoples, adopting the perspective of "good living," recognize that lifestyles and societies should be founded on and respect the interrelationship between human and non-human beings, living in an integrated manner. Human beings are nature. The Western conception of development, however, is not cyclical; it is not circular, and it does not imply a time of re-composition, thus exhausting Creation and transforming the Earth into a garbage dump.

Therefore, when we discuss Integral Ecology, we cannot remain on the surface of the issue. In this sense, Chico Mendes' phrase became famous: "*Ecology without class struggle is gardening.*" Chico was not proposing forms of violence or physical elimination of his opponents. Still, he was clearly aware that there are causes and responsible individuals for destructive practices that need to be confronted. For him, there was no other way to engage them than through popular organizations that resist projects destroying the forest and allow the creation of new paths, reinventing life in the interrelationship of dependence with nature. He defined this understanding as "*forestizenship*" to introduce another form of "*citizenship*." His opponents murdered Chico. Hence, the longstanding observation in the Pastoral da Terra (CPT) that "*those who kill the forest, are also those who kill the workers and defenders of the forest.*"

To confront these neoliberal contradictions, the Commission on Integral Ecology and Mining supports resilient individuals and groups defending the common home while advocating for a liberating Christian narrative. This involves revisiting the issue of class struggle. This aspect has always been sensitive in the reflections of the Catholic Church, which has never found an adequate method to address conflicts arising from this struggle. It exists not solely because the oppressed mobilize against their oppressors, but because those who oppress people and exploit nature are consistently organized to control the bodies and territories of the disadvantaged. Consequently, it is intertwined with the ideological domination over society: in the formulation of laws, in the control exerted by the repressive forces of the State (police and armed forces), in the regulation of the media, and the influence over minds and hearts. Nowadays, in many instances, churches also engage in a society of control through alienating

religious discourses that benefit the oppressors.

This challenges Christians and their priorities in evangelization projects: are they truly serving and defending the impoverished and oppressed (discarded), as well as justice and peace, or are they protecting the interests of those who exploit nature and oppress people? What model of society do we genuinely defend as disciples of Jesus Christ? As Pope Francis said to the Popular Movements:

The future of humankind rests not only in the hands of great leaders, powerful nations, and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of the people, in their ability to organize themselves, and also in those who govern with humility and faith in this process of change... Let us say together from the bottom of our hearts: no homeless family, no landless peasant, no worker without rights, no people without sovereignty, no person without dignity, no child without childhood, no young person without possibilities, no elderly person without a dignified old age (Francis, 2015, vol. 4, pg. 23).

This posture in defense of the impoverished and discarded - orphans, widows, foreigners - who take on different faces at various points in history, is rooted in the biblical prophetic tradition. If we accept that the Bible is divinely inspired, then prophecy and its resulting struggle for justice come from God Himself. Although we can interpret the biblical text like any other text, it is undeniable that God consistently positions Himself on the side of the weakest.

In the early Christian communities, the poor were the Church. The tradition of the Latin American Church and its commitment to the Second Vatican Council affirm the liberating Christian narrative, which must have the courage to denounce the oppressors and proclaim the alternatives that arise from the discarded.

2. THE INJURED AND RESURRECTED BODY OF CHRIST EXISTS IN ALL CREATION

We are Planet Earth, possessing unique characteristics. We are here after a gestation period estimated at 4.6 billion years. The first humans are believed to have appeared in Africa approximately 2.5 million years ago. About 400,000 years ago, the Neanderthals emerged, and between 300,000 and 200,000 years ago, Homo sapiens appeared. The Earth had to prepare itself much like a mother's womb to welcome our species, which can reason, feel, think, and love. Furthermore, this species is capable of concluding that God created the universe, the solar system, and the planet. Thus, through different paths, it can reconnect with its Creator. Many people understand that God seeks the human being, desiring to relate to him, the work of his hands. As the great theologian Karl Rahner said, *"the human being is prepared to host God in himself."*

For Christians, God reveals Himself. He draws near to humanity by becoming one of us in the person of Jesus Christ, who shows us His Father and sends us the Holy Spirit, renewing the face of the earth and enabling our rebirth. He bridges the gap between the world of the Creator and the created world to bring all of Creation to its fullness. *"When the appointed time was fulfilled, God sent forth his Son"* (Gal 4:4). The God who created everything is also the God who made Himself small, who became incarnate, who walked among us, and who was not afraid or ashamed to approach the poor, the sick, prostitutes, tax collectors, and sinners. He came to call the sick, not the healthy.

John says that he is the alpha, the omega, the beginning, and the end of everything that exists (Rev 22:13). Therefore, this Earth is marked by him. When he resurrects, he takes a piece of that planet with him into eternity. He precedes us in the definitive Kingdom (Jn 1).

Thus, defending Integral Ecology is a fundamental element of the Christian faith. We believe in Creation as a divine gift and that we, human beings, were also created with the vocation to participate in and defend a paradise that is as sacred as it is threatened. It is an urgent task to contemplate this Christic mark

imprinted on the universe. To accomplish this, Christology must deepen our understanding of the Theology of Creation, for the evolution of the universe, through its mysterious intricacies, speaks of a history of salvation as well².

This Earth, on which we live and to which we belong, cries out loud like a suffering creature. We need to hear its cries along with the cries of the poor (LS 49). Therefore, at this moment in history, the first 25 years of the twenty-first century, we are compelled to examine humanity and our planet, still having a chance to avoid the worst. The Earth, in its organic beauty, relies on our creative action for its improvement, not for its destruction. We have nowhere else to go if life becomes unfeasible due to heat or any other hostile situation: we are interdependent. As our grandparents used to say, if we take care of the earth, the earth takes care of us. Otherwise, we will face a hostile planet.

We inhabit a sacred territory in which the cosmic Christ lives. *“We know that the whole creation is groaning as in labour pains up to this time”* (Rom 8:22). That is why we have written this Manifesto in defense of all Creation, which we understand as the first gospel of divine love. We intend to awaken hearts to the promotion of *“paths of hope and care for the common home.”* (Ferreira, 2025).

*“paths of hope and
care for the common home”*
(Ferreira, 2025).



² We recommend the book of the theologian Juan Luís Segundo: *“Que mundo? Que Homem? Que Deus* (1995).

3. WHAT WE MEAN BY INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

“Integral ecology” means that in the created world, everything is intrinsically interlinked. This is the fundamental dimension of this worldview. We humans are intertwined and dependent on the Earth, which is connected to the sun and the solar system, which in turn is part of a galaxy, the Milky Way, located in the Universe. “*We are stardust*,” say the scientists, because the atoms that make up our bodies originated from the great stellar explosions. We, like the entire animal kingdom, depend on plants for our livelihoods: they are the ones who perform photosynthesis, transforming the sun’s energy into vital energy. Therefore, they rely on sunlight and the essential elements of life for their food synthesis. From there comes the food chain, which links living, biotic beings with all the abiotic elements: water, land, and air. When a life ceases, the decomposition of its body – also caused by microscopic beings – allows the constituent elements to return to the cycle of life. Effectively, everything is interconnected. Therefore, the only possible path to Life is Universal Fraternity among all creatures, which implies the defense of biodiversity. Outside of it, there is no salvation for humanity or life on Earth: it expresses the dynamic with which the Creator creates everything.

In the superficialities of modern times, when social media serves as the “*encyclopedia of the unprepared*,” we run the risk of simplification and reductionism. We must not lose sight of the depth, breadth, and scope of Integral Ecology. It pertains to the totality of what exists, including their natural, material, and spiritual connections. It relates to the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we consume, the books we read, the music we listen to, and the bacteria that will one day decompose our bodies.

It concerns each of us who make up the subjectivity of the Earth, “*the fissure in the being*” (Sartre, 1997). We are capable of understanding, loving, hating, building, destroying, generating, killing, cultivating, and guarding. It is the interconnected cosmic totality we reference when discussing Integral Ecology.

If everything is interconnected integrally; genuine pastoral care should also be integral and integrative, alongside a proper theology of creation and creatures. Ecotheology recognizes the connection among all creatures and engages with the perspective developed by paleontologist and theologian Teilhard de Chardin, who saw interconnection from the very beginning of

the creation of the fabric of the Universe, through biogenesis and noogenesis, to Christogenesis (Chardin, 1970).

As philosopher Edgar Morin (1991) said, “*complex thinking*” is not an answer, but a challenge; we know that everything is interconnected. Nonetheless, it is not easy to act with respect for the interconnection of everything with the whole.

In this sense, integral ecology can serve as the element that inspires and influences all the pastoral, celebratory, and formative dimensions of the Church. It can manifest in catechetical contents, parish groups, homilies, the liturgy, and socio-environmental pastoral efforts, particularly through the unique gift of the Church in Brazil: The Fraternity Campaigns, which are crucial links between the Church and society.

In Brazil, we have pastoral actors and actresses who have long been involved with socio-environmental issues. This includes the CIMI, CPT, CPP, Pastoral da Habitação e Favela, Pastoral da Rua, and Caritas, in addition to the CNBB commissions. It is worth noting that the first specific pastoral created in Brazil was the Pastoral Council of Fishermen (CPP) by Friar Alfredo, who worked with fishing communities along the Northeast coast, particularly in Pernambuco. As Brazilian rivers became dammed and contaminated, leading to pollution that affected the beaches, the availability of fish decreased. The fishing population recognized that their livelihoods were at risk, along with their survival, due to environmental degradation. This ecclesial foundation often provided practical insights for the Church’s reflections on socio-environmental challenges. Consequently, any initiative in integral ecology must involve these actors.

For the Church, pastoral care inspired by Integral Ecology relies on the political will of its organizing bodies, including the CNBB, as well as the autonomy of dioceses, parishes, communities, and pastoral units. For society as a whole, it relies on the ability to form partnerships with key players such as social movements, civil society organizations, Indigenous peoples, quilombolas, urban movements, and many others who also advocate for integral ecology. These partnerships already exist and have collaborated successfully, as seen with the articulation among different entities in the Brazilian Semi-arid (ASA), which unites more than 3,000 groups working toward a comprehensive project of Coexistence with the Semi-Arid Region. There are thousands of examples like this, some more impactful than others, but all highlight possibilities that will intensify with climate change.

4. SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL AND PASTORAL CONSEQUENCES

The mining paradigm as a predatory model

We acknowledge that the neoliberal extractive model employs various methods that can have a devastating impact on the natural environment. The most prominent of these are mining, agribusiness, and the extensive field of energy exploration. However, the Integral Ecology Commission aggregates mining for essential reasons. First, because of the historical mining trajectory that has unfolded in Brazil and Latin America since the arrival of Europeans. As Eduardo Galeano states, *“our defeat has always been implicit in the victory of others. Our wealth has often generated poverty by fostering the prosperity of others, including empires and their native representatives. In colonial and neocolonial trade procedures, gold is transfigured into scrap, and food into poison”* (Galeano, 2021, p. 18). Our territories have been victims of over-extractive activities that have taken away wealth and left poverty in their wake. There is a history of outstanding debts to our native peoples, to Afro-descendants, and the extraordinary biodiversity of our territories. Secondly, the memory of terrible socio-environmental crimes must be preserved in the struggle for justice and full reparation. Recently, we have witnessed tragedies such as those in Mariana and Brumadinho in the state of Minas Gerais. We regret that the subsequent processes, referred to as reparation, *“did not have the participation of the main stakeholders: the victims,”* as the book *“Architecture of Impunity”*³ exhaustively echoes. Even with all the evidence, injustice persists, including in the reparation agreements between the State and companies. From the gold explorations during the colonization period to the current mineral extraction programs in Brazil, the prioritization of profit over life remains evident.

In various parts of the world, the Church has taken clear positions in response to the threats posed by predatory extractive activities. A manifesto from the bishops of the Philippines directs the Church not to accept donations from companies involved in environmental crimes. At a meeting of African

³<https://www.cnbb.org.br/comissao-lanca-o-livro-arquitetura-da-impunidade/>

bishops, in the context of ongoing wars, it was noted that the presence of mining enterprises often leads to conflicts⁴. In Panama, bishops from several Latin American countries boldly took a stand against the impacts of mining on the continent⁵. The “*Churches and Mining Network*” has been operating for over ten years in Latin America, bringing together faith communities that resist the threats posed by this model of plunder.

Finally, while this is not the only sector that causes numerous injuries to the environment and communities within its territories, it remains a catalyst for complex challenges, accumulating irreparable harm. To remain active, this sector dominates not only geographies but also culture, politics, and spirituality. Therefore, we believe that confronting “mining” is paradigmatic for the entire defense of Integral Ecology.

The proposal from some Latin American organizations, called “*Transitions to post-extractive activities*,” suggests a gradual path to reducing dependence on the intensive extraction of natural resources, with stages ranging from predatory to essential mining. It prioritizes essential demands, ecological justice, reduced consumption, and recycling of extracted materials. The current mining model, propelled by the constant increase in wars, the production of armaments, and the pursuit of short-term profits, continues to engage in unsustainable practices that prioritize the distribution of dividends from financial capital invested in large companies. Consequently, the Mining Divestment Campaign was launched a few years ago, inviting churches to withdraw their financial investments from banks and funds that finance predatory extractive activities. The document from the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, “*Mensuram Bonam*,” published in 2022, identifies mining investments as ethically “*risky*” due to their potential social and environmental impacts. Two years later, the Austrian Bishops’ Conference issued a directive banning investments in gold mining companies.

The Churches need to uphold a transparent, ethical, and independent stance on the use of money, particularly in conflict situations where powerful economic actors may attempt to co-opt or entice them, prioritizing the interests of a few over social and environmental justice. The Prelature of Itacoatiara (AM), for example, decreed in 2022 that parishes and pastoral activities

⁴ <https://cepastcnbb.org.br/a-igreja-na-africa-condena-a-exploracao-abusiva-da-mineracao-e-dos-recursos-naturais-que-e-uma-causa-de-conflitos-e-sofrimento/>

⁵ <https://cepastcnbb.org.br/colunista/a-igreja-e-as-comunidades-atingidas-pela-mineracao/>

would not receive financial resources from politicians, logging companies, mining companies, or oil and gas exploration that contribute to deforestation and the displacement of Indigenous people, quilombolas, riverside dwellers, and small farmers. These are significant examples that inspire the journey.

The spiritual beliefs of Indigenous peoples

Can we still discuss other civilizational matrices and worldviews in the twenty-first century that are often hegemonized by Western thought? Not only can we, but we must, said Pope Francis during the Synod for the Amazon and in the Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*. The reason is that these civilizations have existed for centuries and even millennia, and they know how to live in harmony with the territory of which they are a part.

These are not spiritualities of the past; they are not outdated. By keeping the memory of their ancestors, they bring dimensions and insights from lives lived that can help outline and open more loving and welcoming futures for life in the present. The few areas of the world where a balance of life exists among all forms of existence are precisely those protected by peoples who, through their rites, spirituality, and way of life, respect the cycles of the earth. They are inspiring the future. Pope Francis tells us that losing one of these cultures is as harmful as losing a living species of nature: *“Just as there are potentialities in nature that could be lost forever, so can cultures that carry a message that has not yet been heard and that are threatened today more than ever”* (QA, 28).

The culture of the common good (the “commons”), including land, water, biodiversity, and even food, is not solely the prerogative of native peoples. The concept of the “commons” also has roots in the Bible, the prophetic tradition, early Christian communities, the patristics, and the tradition of the living Church. Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, pointed out that *“a social mortgage weighs every private property”* (LE, 14). Often, this is merely a phrase with no impact on reality, even in the pastoral care of the Church. However, it is part of the Magisterium and should be taken very seriously.

According to the worldview of most Indigenous peoples, the idea of private property is unacceptable. It is inconceivable that some have housing while others do not, that some have land while others do not, that some have water

while others do not, and that some have food while others go hungry. In the Western tradition, many have viewed this as a stage of “*primitive communism*” that must be overcome through modern development. However, this perspective holds increasing value today and suggests a horizon for the future. Therefore, contemporary thinkers from Indigenous communities, such as Ailton Krenak, Davi Kopenawa, Nego Bispo, and several young Indigenous and Black women, including Txai Suruí and Lélia Gonzales, deserve our careful attention. They embody this communitarian thinking, centered on the “*commons*,” and challenge us to reclaim our mystical and prophetic history as Christians.

The defense of territories and communities

It is common knowledge that when people can take care of their own territories in their own way, they are preserved. In a hydrographic basin situation, for example, the territory of a people is not sufficient; the entire territory of the basin needs to be managed. This is a fundamental principle of management. For this reason, basin committees were created, covering not only the central channel but also its tributaries, to care for the basin as a whole. Thus, the territories of original peoples lead us to consider the entire planet, as they are connected to the water cycle, wind, and climate. While care begins locally, concern for the defense of life and the Earth must extend to flows that occur thousands of kilometers away from this territory. We are called to think globally and act locally.

Consequently, attempting to reverse climate change (not just adapting to or mitigating it) requires immediate action, both personally, communally, and politically, with a focus on the common good. It is possible to minimize the situation with “*amenity islands*” or allow our environments to become “*heat islands*.” Areas with more trees, less pavement, and more shade tend to soften the climate in far more significant ways than we imagine. Studies indicate that the temperature difference between the center of Teresina and its outskirts can reach 7 °C. In São Paulo, the temperature difference between neighborhoods can reach 10 °C, depending on income, but primarily on the level of afforestation (Mackenzie, 2024). There is a significant difference over such a short distance.

All of this influences “*ecological conversion*,” which involves not only a change in mindset but also in practices, effectively fostering a new culture of socio-environmental care. The territorial issue cannot be separated from the climate issue. Unfortunately, there is a strong tendency in political configurations to treat these matters symbolically and aesthetically, without producing tangible results. The demarcation of Indigenous lands, the protection of quilombos, small farmers, fishermen, and peasants, true “*climate protection zones*,” are far more significant tasks than merely establishing a ministry for these communities in governments.

In recent years, violence and conflicts in rural areas have escalated, along with threats, criminalization of leaders, displacement of communities from their territories, arson, and murder. Militias, shooters, armed, and organized groups, some of which call themselves “*Zero Invasion*,” seek to impose, by force, their control over the land and the expansion of large businesses, disregarding the law and institutions. The Church, since the Synod for the Amazon, has initiated, on a national level, the campaign “*Life by a thread*,” which has now expanded across the South American continent under the name “*La vida pende de un hilo*,” supporting community initiatives for self-defense of their territories and enhancing the political influence of civil society on governments in defense of the right to life. This aims to promote Integral Ecology.

Land Reform

While significant capital accumulates wealth and dominates various sectors of the global economy, including food production with a particular interest in commodities, the subaltern sectors of society reveal another side of this issue. In a country like Brazil, the population’s diet relies on peasant-style family farming, centered on small plots of land that produce basic foods such as vegetables, cassava, and a large quantity of rice and beans. Agribusiness, despite using advertisements to justify its significance, is responsible for the concentration of land ownership, intensive water consumption, monoculture plantations, and the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. Agribusiness struggles to coexist with biodiversity. Meanwhile,

producing food on a local scale generates income for families engaged in these activities, promoting food sovereignty. It facilitates a proximity-based circular economy, which essentially eliminates long-distance transport, conserving energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, as we have seen, the State's investment in agribusiness is significantly higher than its investment in agroecology.

Agrarian reform has always been a constant struggle throughout the history of the Brazilian peasantry. The Landless Workers' Movement (MST) gave a new face to this struggle. By advocating for land and occupying unproductive areas, the movement has successfully guided agrarian reform, settling approximately 450,000 families. Despite its limitations, the MST's care for people, especially children (Sem Terrinhas), has made it a globally recognized movement.

In the context of an agrarian agribusiness regime, often violent toward people and nature, and amid the persistent hunger afflicting Brazilian territory, a contemporary agricultural reform that considers and practices the sharing of land and the recognition of traditional and community territories, including those of indigenous peoples and quilombolas, not only supports food production but also provides a dignified life for a significant portion of the population while generating jobs and income.

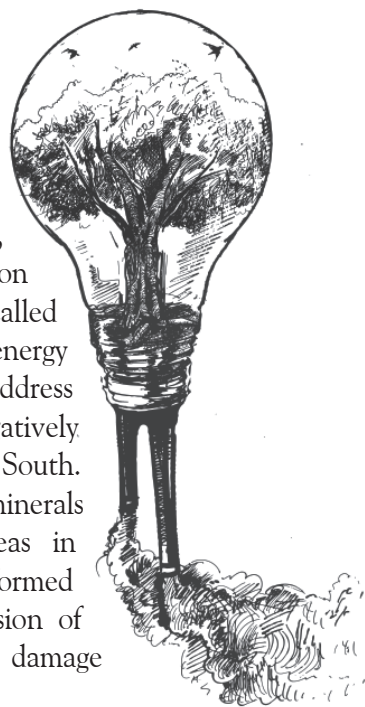
Therefore, due to its importance, Agrarian Reform is a fundamental component in the vision of a fairer and more peaceful country. It would be naïve to propose ecological conversion in our country without implementing genuine Agrarian Reform policies and defending agroecology. Otherwise, we will remain trapped in the unjust structures that exploit workers and damage the land.

A change in the use of energy

Without energy, nothing moves, including us human beings. Our food is our primary source of energy. The shift away from fossil fuels for energy generation is necessary, urgent, and inevitable. Energy derived from fossil fuels is the primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂). This shift is also inevitable because fossil

fuels are limited and non-renewable resources, which means they are being depleted.

This Manifesto, however, critiques the “energy transition” agenda promoted by governments and corporations, especially in the Global North, which prioritizes decarbonization and the reduction of emissions associated with the production of so-called “clean energy.” This model aims to maintain high energy consumption in wealthy countries and fails to address inequalities in energy access and distribution, negatively affecting vulnerable communities in the Global South. Additionally, to secure the supply of essential minerals for the so-called “energy transition,” vast areas in the peripheral regions of the world are transformed into “sacrifice zones,” suffering from the expulsion of communities, pollution, violence, and other damage caused by predatory extractive activities.



This search for new energy matrices encompasses numerous interests, proposals, mistakes, confrontations with traditional communities, and other daily conflicts in our territories. The energy transition, as proposed within the framework of neoliberalism, is based on and amplifies the unequal accumulation of wealth, creating markets for new energy sources. This is why it has been framed as an energy “transaction” rather than a “transition.” Consequently, various sectors of society justly resist these new enterprises.

We advocate for a structural transformation that prioritizes socio-environmental justice and respects the rights of the most affected peoples, rather than merely a transition with superficial effects. Many grassroots proposals emphasize decentralized production of solar and wind energy, the effort to maintain these resources as common goods, and the regulation of both domestic and industrial consumption. We highlight agroecology, which conserves energy and promotes local production/distribution/consumption while avoiding long transport distances that consume polluting energy. Although these initiatives exist, they do so in isolation, rather than as a cohesive proposal or coordinated effort for a country, state, or city. It is from this dynamic that grassroots proposals arise, advocating for moratoriums

on mineral extraction activities and even for the expansion of projects that use water intensively, as is the case with the São Francisco Vivo Popular Articulation.

The Happy Sobriety

Pope Francis proposes a different lifestyle for this epochal transition, based on the principle of happy sobriety. In doing so, he further critiques consumerism and the disposal model, which generate waste and pollution. Happy sobriety leads us to a richer life: *“Christian spirituality proposes an alternative way of understanding the quality of life, encouraging a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, capable of generating deep joy without being obsessed with consumption”* (LS, 222).

In *Laudate Deum*, the Pope acknowledges that a change in personal lifestyle is insufficient to transform our society. It is also crucial to consider a new level of societal development. In other words, he ultimately accepts the proposal of scientists who, for more than two decades, have suggested the urgency of the “*degrowth*” of the rich and super-rich economies. The proposal of a happy sobriety exposes the contradiction of capitalist accumulation, which can only sustain itself through infinite growth, favorable for only a minimal number of people, and unbearable for the Earth.

This is the great impasse of today’s civilization: it cannot grow infinitely; however, it has no way to subsist except through continuous growth, an appeal that resonates daily in the economic world and in capitalist-oriented media. As we have seen, this paradox is insurmountable within the current model. Humanity will only achieve new leaps in quality when impasses that seem insurmountable are faced, overcome, and transformed. This model leads to the warming of the planet, a decrease in soil quality, and the loss of many species. As Christians, we maintain hope for a world of justice and peace, and we are passionately committed to contributing to its construction. The time is now! Maranatha!

May this Manifesto be a cry of hope. Not a passive hope of pure waiting, but the kind of hope that runs through the veins of those who write these pages: full of prophetic movements in favor of a new time. The hope of the martyrs who defended the forests, rivers, mountains, and biodiversity, such as Dorothy Stang, Berta Cáceres, Chico Mendes, and so many others. A just hope that does not die with the violence of the unjust, because it is a paschal gift born of the Risen One.

May this manifesto open clearings, not only from trust in human efforts but also from trust in the greater gift of life. God manifests His love through the mysterious universal engineering, always in transformation. It is only possible for the butterfly to fly free after it has undergone the patient metamorphosis of the cocoon.

May this Manifesto not be perceived as a pessimistic and desperate piece of writing. If it were, who would it serve? Those who revel in power and glory amid such numerous tragedies? All pessimism, in this civilizational transition, only aids in the perpetuation of an unjust society. Therefore, it is essential to bravely confront the wounds without concealing them, as neoliberal discourses often do. There is nothing more contradictory than the so-called “*green capitalism*.” By the way, this serves as a good illustration of the figure of speech known as an oxymoron. This occurs when two contradictory realities are merged. Furthermore, they are currently using the term “*green mining*.” What this manifesto inquires is: Who is paying for the ink? A manifesto for both inside and outside our churches as we engage in discussions about Integral Ecology. We must strive for an urgent narrative that positions us, as Christians, as stewards of the common home; this is our understanding. Concerned about the planet we will pass on to future generations, it is time to contemplate and act in light of the God of life, who “*saw that everything was good*” (cf. Gen 1). Therefore, may these pages also inspire us to enter into a new pact with Mother Earth, our true home and generous partner. Finally, let us not forget to beseech the Creator, in our prayers with our eyes closed, to assist us in widening our gaze to the realities affecting the planet. And may we possess the creativity to create, with dreams and hard work, “*new heavens and new earth*” (2 Pt 3:13).

CNBB Commission for Integral Ecology and Mining

Dom Vicente de Paula Ferreira
Dom Edson Taschetto Damian
Dom Francisco Cota de Oliveira
Dom Gabriele Marchesi
Dom Norbert Hans Christoph Förster
Frei Rodrigo de Castro Amédeé Péret
Moema Miranda
Pe. Dário Bossi
Roberto Malvezzi

FRATERNITY AND
**INTEGRAL
ECOLOGY**

"God saw that everything was very good"
(Gn 1,31)



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