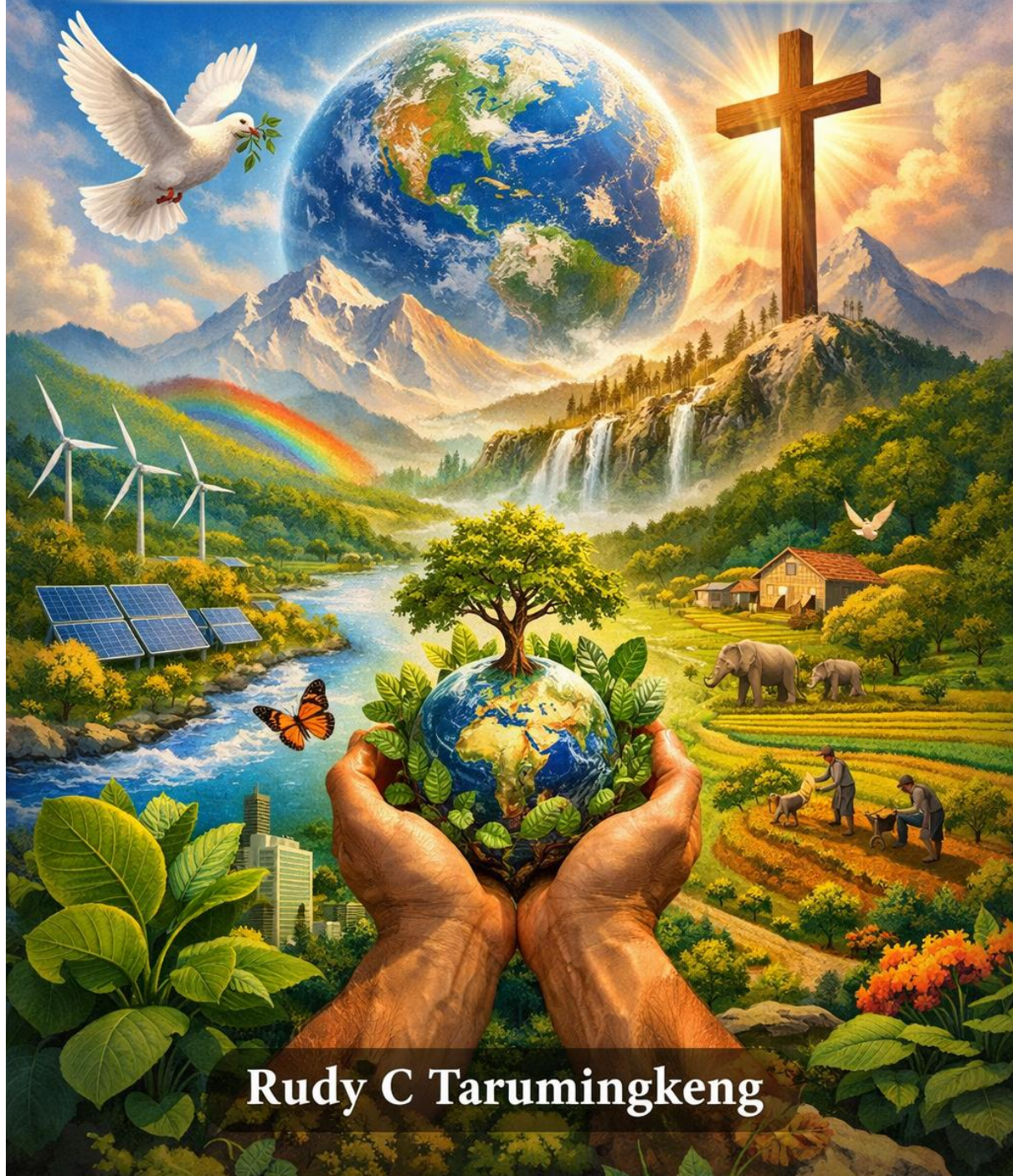


FAITH AND THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH

Toward an Eco-Spiritual Economy



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FAITH AND THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH: TOWARD AN ECO-SPIRITUAL ECONOMY

Abstract

This essay examines the relationship between Christian faith, ecological crisis, and economic life through the concept of an eco-spiritual economy. It argues that the future of the earth cannot be secured by technical policy instruments alone, because the planetary crisis is also a moral and spiritual crisis. Contemporary global institutions increasingly describe climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, unsustainable production, and fragile resource systems as interconnected rather than isolated problems. The United Nations 2030 Agenda frames sustainable development as a shared project for people, planet, and prosperity; UNEP describes climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution as linked emergencies that require systemic transformation; the IPCC's 2023 synthesis report presents climate change as a widespread and growing threat to human and natural systems; and the World Bank emphasizes that natural capital, including forests and water, sustains economies and long-term development. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))

Against this background, the essay proposes that Christian theology offers a distinctive contribution: it sees creation as gift, human beings as stewards rather than owners, the poor as morally central rather than

expendable, and economic life as accountable to truth, justice, restraint, and care for future generations. Drawing on biblical texts such as Genesis 1–2, Psalm 24, Leviticus 25, Proverbs, Matthew 6, Luke 10, Romans 8, and Revelation 21–22, the essay argues that the ecological crisis is inseparable from disordered desire and distorted economic imagination. An eco-spiritual economy, therefore, is not merely a greener market system. It is an economy shaped by reverence, sufficiency, relational responsibility, and what Pope Francis calls “integral ecology.” *Laudato Si’* links ecological degradation with social injustice and calls for ecological conversion, while *Laudate Deum* warns that growing technical power has not been matched by equivalent growth in responsibility, values, and conscience. ([Vatican](#))

The essay develops its argument in six movements. First, it clarifies the planetary and economic context of ecological crisis. Second, it recovers the biblical theology of creation, stewardship, and Sabbath. Third, it diagnoses the spiritual roots of ecological-economic disorder in greed, waste, domination, and forgetfulness of creaturely dependence. Fourth, it defines an eco-spiritual economy as an economy of gift, restraint, justice, circularity, and intergenerational responsibility. Fifth, it considers practical implications for production, consumption, finance, policy, churches, and local communities. Sixth, it argues that faith communities can help cultivate the moral imagination necessary for long-term ecological and economic transformation. The essay concludes that the future of the earth depends not only on better environmental regulation or cleaner technologies, but on a deeper reordering of human desire and economic purpose toward care for our common home. ([UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#))

Keywords

Eco-spiritual economy; integral ecology; creation care; Christian ethics; sustainability; natural capital; circular economy; stewardship; ecological justice; future generations.

Faith and the Future of the Earth: Toward an Eco-Spiritual Economy

1. Introduction: Earth, Economy, and the Crisis of Meaning

The modern ecological crisis is often discussed in the language of science, policy, markets, and technology. Those domains are indispensable. Yet they are not enough. When forests disappear, soils degrade, rivers are polluted, seas warm, species vanish, and waste systems overflow, the problem is not only technical mismanagement. It is also a sign of moral misdirection. The earth is being treated as if it were merely inventory. Communities are being organized as though economic growth could be detached from ecological limits. Desire is being trained toward extraction rather than gratitude. The crisis is therefore not only environmental. It is civilizational.

Official global frameworks now describe the problem in similarly interconnected terms. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents its vision as a plan for people, planet, and prosperity together, not as competing agendas. UNEP's *Making Peace with Nature* synthesizes scientific evidence across climate, biodiversity, and pollution, arguing that these emergencies must be addressed jointly rather than in silos. The IPCC's 2023 synthesis report states that human-caused climate change has already caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people. The World Bank likewise

treats natural capital as foundational to growth, jobs, and long-term resilience. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))

Yet even these frameworks, important as they are, cannot answer the deepest question: what kind of economy corresponds to a faithful relationship between humanity and the earth? Economic systems are never morally empty. They reward certain desires, normalize certain assumptions, and embed certain hierarchies of value. If the earth is seen only as raw material, then extraction becomes rational. If human wellbeing is defined only by accumulation, then sufficiency looks like failure. If the poor are treated as peripheral, then ecological burden is easily externalized onto those with the least power. For this reason, an ecological crisis is also a crisis of meaning.

Christian faith enters here not as a rival to science but as a deeper grammar of reality. It asks what the earth is, who humans are, and what economic life is for. It asks whether land, water, animals, labor, time, and capital are merely factors of production or whether they belong within a creation that is first received as gift. It asks whether economics is a neutral mechanism or a moral practice that forms the soul. It asks whether prosperity can be called prosperity when it destroys the conditions of life.

The phrase “eco-spiritual economy” names an attempt to answer these questions. It suggests that ecology and economy are not separate spheres, and that both are finally rooted in spiritual vision. “Eco” reminds us that the household of creation is interconnected. “Spiritual” reminds us that desire, reverence, humility, gratitude, and moral imagination shape material systems. “Economy” reminds us that production, exchange, finance, labor, consumption, and distribution cannot be excluded from theological reflection. An eco-spiritual economy is therefore not merely about environmental ethics in the abstract. It is about how people organize material life under God.

2. Creation as Gift: The Biblical Foundation of Ecological Economics

Any Christian account of the earth and the economy must begin with creation. Genesis 1 does not depict the world as a neutral storehouse of resources. It depicts the world as the good work of God. Light, waters, land, vegetation, animals, and humankind all emerge within a created order that is repeatedly declared good. Theologically, this means that creation possesses value before economic use. Its worth is not exhausted by its instrumental function. A river is not first an industrial input. A forest is not first timber stock. Soil is not first a substrate for yield maximization. They are first creatures within a gifted order.

Psalm 24:1 states this with unforgettable clarity: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." That verse immediately places a limit on human possession. Humans may use, cultivate, shape, and exchange, but they do not own the earth absolutely. Ownership in the deepest sense belongs to God. This distinction is decisive for economic theology. If the earth belongs to God, then humans are stewards, not sovereign proprietors. Economic life must therefore remain accountable to the Creator and to the integrity of creation.

Genesis 2:15 sharpens the point by presenting the human vocation in Eden as "to till it and keep it." The verbs imply both cultivation and guardianship. Human beings are not told to dominate the garden into exhaustion, nor to leave it untouched. They are called to work within it responsibly. This is a profoundly economic verse. It tells us that labor is not alien to paradise. The problem is not work itself. The problem is work severed from care, limit, and obedience.

This biblical foundation challenges both environmental romanticism and technocratic exploitation. It rejects the romantic view that faithful life requires withdrawal from making, cultivation, or development. But it also rejects the technocratic view that the earth exists only for human

projects. The biblical picture is more demanding. Humans are active within creation, yet answerable to its giver.

The Sabbatical and Jubilee traditions deepen this theology further. Leviticus 25 commands that the land itself shall have a Sabbath. The land is not to be driven without rest indefinitely. This is an extraordinary economic idea. It means that productivity is not absolute. Land is not simply an asset to be optimized continuously. It has rhythms that humans are morally obliged to honor. Sabbath for land, labor, debt, and social life reveals that biblical economics includes built-in restraint. It teaches that rest, redistribution, and limit belong to a faithful political economy.

In this sense, Scripture already anticipates an eco-spiritual critique of endless growth. It does not oppose abundance. It opposes the absolutization of production. It teaches that the good life is not defined by perpetual expansion of output, but by right relation among God, people, land, labor, and time.

3. Fall, Greed, and the Spiritual Roots of Ecological-Economic Disorder

If creation establishes the goodness of the earth and the dignity of stewardship, the fall explains why economies become destructive. Genesis 3 is not only about individual disobedience. It is about disordered desire. Humanity grasps, seeks autonomy, and refuses creaturely limit. Once that pattern enters history, every sphere of life is affected: relation to God, relation to one another, relation to labor, and relation to the ground itself.

This is why ecological crisis cannot be reduced to informational failure. Humanity often knows enough to recognize the consequences of its actions and continues anyway. Forests are cleared despite awareness of watershed loss. Emissions continue despite mounting evidence of

climate risk. Plastics accumulate despite widespread recognition of long-term harm. Food is wasted while hunger persists. Such patterns reveal more than ignorance. They reveal greed, impatience, denial, and moral distance.

Christian theology names these realities more clearly than technocratic discourse often does. Sin distorts economic imagination. It tempts people to confuse desire with entitlement, possession with security, and growth with blessing. It trains societies to normalize externalization: the wealthy enjoy convenience while the poor bear waste, polluted air, water stress, and displacement. This is why Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, insists that ecological degradation and social injustice are intertwined and must be addressed together through an "integral ecology." ([Vatican](#))

Laudate Deum intensifies the warning. Pope Francis argues there that growing technical and economic power has not been matched by growth in responsibility, values, and conscience. He warns that a technocratic paradigm can encourage the treatment of reality as material available for manipulation, while leaving untouched the moral disorder that drives the crisis. ([Vatican](#))

This diagnosis matters because it explains why policy reforms, though necessary, often remain fragile. Without inner transformation, new tools may simply be absorbed into old patterns of domination. Solar energy can still be pursued unjustly. Circular economy rhetoric can coexist with labor exploitation. Sustainable finance can become branding without conversion. The spiritual roots of the crisis therefore require spiritual remedies: repentance, gratitude, humility, restraint, and solidarity.

The biblical tradition offers several names for these remedies. Proverbs speaks of wisdom. The prophets speak of justice. Jesus speaks of treasure and the heart in Matthew 6, warning that where treasure is, there the heart will be also. The issue is not only what people extract from the earth. It is what they worship through their patterns of

extraction. An economy ordered by greed is never only an economy. It is a spiritual regime.

4. Faith and Ecological Conversion

One of the most important contributions of contemporary Christian reflection to environmental ethics is the language of ecological conversion. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis argues that ecological concern cannot remain external to spirituality. It must become a transformation of perception, desire, and daily practice. This conversion involves gratitude for creation, attention to the poor, simplicity of life, and a renewed willingness to see all creatures as connected within one common home. ([Vatican](#))

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, promoted by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, translates that spiritual vision into seven goals, including response to the cry of the earth, response to the cry of the poor, ecological economy, simple lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community involvement. It explicitly teaches that "everything is connected" and presents ecological economy as one of the areas in which faith must become concrete action. ([Laudato Si' Action Platform](#))

This language is important for an eco-spiritual economy because it shows that Christian ecological thought is not content with personal sentiment alone. It includes economy, education, culture, and institutional life. Ecological conversion is not only about recycling or private virtue. It is about rethinking how work, money, land, consumption, and community are structured.

Pope Francis's Economy of Francesco initiative extends the same logic into economic imagination. In his 2022 message to participants in Assisi, he said that a new economy inspired by Francis of Assisi "can and must become an economy of friendship with the earth and an economy of

peace,” and he described the task as transforming “an economy that kills into an economy of life.” ([Vatican](#))

This is a crucial phrase. An economy of life is not simply one with lower emissions. It is one that honors relationships—between people and the earth, between wealth and responsibility, between production and dignity, between present use and future inheritance. In Christian terms, such an economy must be sustained not only by policies but by virtues. Gratitude guards against entitlement. Temperance resists excess. Justice keeps the poor visible. Hope sustains long-term effort. Sabbath resists totalizing production. Mercy interrupts indifference.

Ecological conversion therefore provides the inner architecture of an eco-spiritual economy. Without it, “green” economics can become merely technocratic. With it, economic change becomes part of discipleship.

5. What Is an Eco-Spiritual Economy?

An eco-spiritual economy may be defined as a way of organizing material life that integrates ecological integrity, social justice, and spiritual responsibility. It refuses to separate economy from ecology, and it refuses to separate either from moral and spiritual formation. It asks not only whether a system produces wealth, but whether it does so truthfully, justly, sustainably, and with regard for the vulnerable and future generations.

Several elements are essential to such an economy.

First, it treats creation as gift rather than mere stock. This means natural systems are not only resources but conditions of life, beauty, and moral responsibility. The World Bank’s emphasis on natural capital moves in this direction at the policy level, noting that forests, water, and ecosystem services sustain economies and long-term resilience. While the World Bank expresses this in development language rather than

theological language, the underlying insight is compatible with Christian thought: the ecological foundations of economic life are real and cannot be treated as expendable. ([World Bank](#))

Second, it adopts sufficiency rather than endless acquisition as a moral horizon. This is not anti-development. It is anti-excess. It allows for material improvement where poverty, hunger, and deprivation remain urgent. But it resists a culture in which status competition and compulsive consumption drive ecological breakdown. Jesus' warnings about greed, treasure, and anxiety in Matthew 6 and Luke 12 are profoundly relevant here. An eco-spiritual economy asks how much is enough, not only how much more is possible.

Third, it integrates the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. This is the central formula of *Laudato Si'*. The poor often suffer first and worst from ecological degradation, while contributing least to its causes. Pollution, unstable rainfall, flood risk, land loss, and food insecurity do not affect all communities equally. An eco-spiritual economy therefore places distributive justice at its center rather than treating it as an afterthought. ([Vatican](#))

Fourth, it values circularity rather than linear waste. UNEP Finance Initiative emphasizes that the circular economy can reduce waste, conserve resources, and support resilience amid supply disruptions and resource scarcity. UNEP's circular economy materials and financing work also show that transition requires coordinated roles for governments, regulators, and finance actors. In theological terms, circularity resonates with stewardship because it resists the "take-make-dispose" logic of a culture of waste. ([UNEP FI](#))

Fifth, it embeds intergenerational ethics. The 2030 Agenda's emphasis on future-oriented sustainability and the IPCC's warnings about escalating risks underscore that current economic choices are effectively decisions about inheritance. Christian faith intensifies this concern. If humans are

stewards, they are responsible not only for present gain but for what they hand on. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))

Finally, an eco-spiritual economy is sustained by spiritual disciplines. Gratitude, simplicity, truthfulness, communal discernment, Sabbath, and worship are not peripheral. They are what prevent ecological economics from collapsing into another managerial program.

6. Production, Consumption, and the Culture of Waste

One of the clearest places where spirituality and economy intersect is the culture of waste. Modern consumer systems often normalize disposability at every level: packaging, products, food, attention, labor, and even landscapes. This is not only inefficient. It is spiritually formative. It trains people to treat things, and eventually persons, as replaceable.

UNEP's recent work on waste and circular economy underscores the scale of the issue. The 2024 Global Waste Management Outlook describes rising waste generation, the costs of inadequate management, and the gains possible under zero-waste and circular economy pathways. UNEP's finance and circularity work likewise emphasizes shifting from linear systems to circular ones through public policy, finance, and sectoral transition. ([UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#))

Christian theology identifies the deeper vice beneath waste as ingratitude combined with excess. Waste happens when goods are detached from gift and reduced to disposable utility. Food becomes cheap matter rather than the fruit of soil, water, labor, transport, and grace. A garment becomes fashion turnover rather than a product of material extraction and human effort. Electronics become rapid-status markers rather than tools with ecological footprints.

An eco-spiritual economy challenges this through both personal and structural means. Personally, it encourages simplicity, repair, mindful use, and resistance to compulsive upgrading. Structurally, it supports

durability standards, reuse systems, repair ecosystems, responsible procurement, and circular design. Spiritually, it recovers thanksgiving as an economic virtue. People are less likely to waste what they truly receive as gift.

The biblical witness supports this deeply. In the feeding narratives, Jesus does not only multiply bread; he also commands that the fragments be gathered so that nothing may be lost. The point is not austerity for its own sake, but attentiveness to abundance without waste. The wilderness narratives, too, repeatedly teach Israel dependence, daily bread, and the danger of hoarding.

Thus production and consumption cannot be left to price signals alone. They must be judged by whether they cultivate gratitude or disposability, stewardship or waste, sufficiency or restless excess.

7. Natural Capital, Common Good, and the Moral Limits of Extraction

Modern development language increasingly speaks of “natural capital.” The World Bank uses the term to highlight the role of forests, water, soils, and ecosystem services in sustaining growth, jobs, and resilience. From a policy perspective, this is useful because it makes visible what conventional accounting often ignores. Economies can appear to grow while quietly consuming the ecological foundations on which future wellbeing depends. ([World Bank](#))

Christian ethics can welcome this clarification, but it must also add a caution. Nature should not be valued only because it is economically useful. The category of natural capital is helpful, but insufficient. Creation is more than capital. It has worth as gift, habitat, beauty, and fellow-creaturely life. A forest is not only carbon storage and watershed support, though it is certainly those things. It is also a community of life.

A river is not only water infrastructure. It is a living system that nourishes people, species, memory, and place.

This is where the common good becomes essential. The common good asks whether economic decisions preserve the conditions under which all can flourish together. It resists both individualistic extraction and narrowly technocratic management. If a mining or energy project enriches a few while degrading watersheds, displacing communities, and burdening future generations, then the common good has been violated even if GDP rises.

Gaudium et Spes remains relevant here. It teaches that earthly goods are meant for all and that economic life must be governed by justice, human dignity, and the common good rather than by profit alone. It also presents human activity in the world as something that can contribute to the Creator's plan, but only if it remains ordered ethically. ([Vatican](#))

An eco-spiritual economy therefore supports accounting reforms, natural capital valuation, and ecosystem data not as ends in themselves, but as tools of moral clarity. They help societies see what they are otherwise tempted to ignore. But theology must ensure that visibility does not become commodification. The point is not to price everything. The point is to prevent the moral invisibility of the earth.

8. Finance, Circularity, and an Economy of Life

Economic transformation cannot occur without finance. Capital allocation shapes infrastructure, energy systems, agriculture, waste management, housing, transport, and industrial transition. For that reason, an eco-spiritual economy must consider not only lifestyle but finance.

UNEP Finance Initiative argues that the circular economy offers a transformative approach for a world of finite resources and mounting environmental challenges. Its work on circularity emphasizes the need

for governments, regulators, public finance, and private finance to support business models that reduce waste, conserve resources, and redesign production systems. UNEP materials on circular economy financing argue that unlocking transition requires not just moral aspiration, but financial structures that reward durability, reuse, and system redesign rather than linear extraction. ([UNEP FI](#))

This is a profoundly theological point because money is never spiritually inert. Finance directs social energy. Jesus' teaching on treasure and the heart means that capital allocation is also moral orientation. If investment continues to privilege extractive short-term gain over regenerative long-term stewardship, then spiritual claims about caring for creation remain empty.

Pope Francis's Economy of Francesco initiative speaks directly to this. In Assisi he called for "an economy of friendship with the earth and an economy of peace," and urged transformation from "an economy that kills" into "an economy of life." That language implies more than charity. It implies that economic structures themselves must be reoriented. ([Vatican](#))

An eco-spiritual economy therefore asks finance several moral questions. What kinds of business models are being rewarded? Are costs being externalized to ecosystems and vulnerable communities? Are circular and restorative practices gaining access to capital? Are local communities treated merely as risk variables, or as participants in shared stewardship? Is return measured only financially, or also in terms of ecological repair and social resilience?

Christian ethics does not require romantic rejection of finance. It requires that finance become answerable to life. In that sense, eco-spiritual economics demands a conversion of capital as well as of conscience.

9. The Poor, Future Generations, and Ecological Justice

No Christian ecological economy is credible if it does not place the poor near the center. Scripture is relentless on this point. The prophets denounce those who trample the needy. Jesus identifies with the hungry, thirsty, sick, and imprisoned. The early church is marked by material sharing. The moral test of economics in biblical faith is never only aggregate output. It is how the vulnerable fare.

Modern environmental discourse increasingly recognizes this injustice dimension. *Laudato Si'* insists that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one crisis, not two. *Laudate Deum* reminds readers that those least responsible for emissions often suffer the gravest consequences, while richer groups contaminate far more. Vatican explanations of *Laudate Deum* explicitly emphasize this inequality. ([Vatican](#))

The IPCC likewise underscores that climate impacts and risks are distributed unevenly, affecting regions, ecosystems, and communities differently, with greater vulnerability often linked to existing social inequalities. ([IPCC](#))

Ecological justice also includes future generations. Christian stewardship extends forward. If land, waters, climate systems, and biodiversity are handed on in degraded form, then current prosperity is effectively a form of theft from the future. This is not abstract. It affects food security, disaster exposure, migration pressures, public health, and social cohesion.

An eco-spiritual economy thus requires an ethic of inheritance. What are people passing on? Fertile soils or exhausted land? Clean rivers or poisoned waters? Durable institutions or ecological debt? Financial profit or biospheric fragility? These questions belong equally to theology and economics.

Justice here is not only distributive. It is participatory. The voices of those most affected by ecological disruption—small farmers, indigenous

peoples, coastal communities, waste workers, children, and the poor—must matter in decision-making. Otherwise sustainability becomes elite management rather than moral repair.

10. Church, Community, and the Formation of Eco-Spiritual Habits

Economic transformation requires institutions, but it also requires formation. A society does not become ecologically responsible merely by enacting regulations. It must learn new habits of desire, attention, and practice. Here churches, faith communities, and local associations have a distinctive role.

The Laudato Si' Action Platform embodies this by linking ecological conversion to education, spirituality, lifestyle, and community participation, not only to policy. Its seven goals show that ecological responsibility must become embodied in worshiping communities, schools, parishes, families, hospitals, businesses, and neighborhoods. ([Laudato Si' Action Platform](#))

Churches can contribute in several ways. They can teach a doctrine of creation that resists exploitation. They can recover Sabbath as an economic virtue. They can model simpler, less wasteful institutional practices. They can integrate land care, food ethics, water use, and energy responsibility into discipleship. They can support local agriculture, repair cultures, and community solidarity. They can preach against greed not only in personal terms but in structural ecological-economic terms.

They can also recover practices of gratitude. Prayer before meals, blessings of land, liturgical seasons attentive to creation, and theological education about common home are not trivial rituals. They shape perception. They teach that the world is received, not owned.

The Economy of Francesco movement also illustrates how faith can stimulate younger generations toward economic imagination that is

both ecological and social. Its call to “give a soul to the economy” recognizes that policy alone cannot heal economic life if the moral imagination governing it remains unchanged. ([The Economy of Francesco](#))

In this sense, an eco-spiritual economy is not only a macroeconomic framework. It is also a pedagogy of daily life. Households, congregations, campuses, and local communities become schools of restraint, solidarity, and care. Without that cultural depth, sustainability remains thin and reversible.

11. Toward an Economy of Friendship with the Earth

The phrase “economy of friendship with the earth,” used by Pope Francis, deserves to be taken seriously. Friendship is a moral category stronger than management. One can manage something one does not love. Friendship implies attentiveness, mutuality, care, and refusal of casual harm. Applied analogically to the earth, it suggests that the world should not be approached only as a field of extraction, but as a shared home whose integrity matters. ([Vatican](#))

Such friendship is not sentimental. It must enter law, finance, infrastructure, agriculture, education, and public life. It must shape how cities are built, how waste is handled, how energy is generated, how land is valued, how goods are designed, and how children are taught to see the world.

The 2030 Agenda, UNEP’s synthesis work, circular economy frameworks, and natural capital approaches all provide technical and policy scaffolding for such change. But faith contributes something they cannot fully supply: a reason to care that reaches deeper than risk management. It says the earth matters because it belongs to God. The poor matter because they bear God’s image. Future generations matter because

stewardship is covenantal. Restraint matters because human beings are creatures, not gods. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))

An eco-spiritual economy therefore does not ask people to choose between material life and spiritual life. It asks them to reunite what modernity has fragmented. Food, water, soil, work, money, debt, waste, biodiversity, and worship all belong to one moral world.

12. Conclusion

The future of the earth depends on more than environmental regulation, green technology, or market adaptation. Those are necessary, but insufficient. The ecological crisis is also a crisis of desire, meaning, and economic imagination. It reveals a spiritual disorder in which humanity forgets creaturely dependence, treats the earth as disposable inventory, and normalizes systems that burden the poor and future generations for present gain.

Global institutions increasingly recognize the structural side of this crisis. The 2030 Agenda joins people, planet, and prosperity. UNEP frames climate, biodiversity, and pollution as linked emergencies requiring systemic transformation. The IPCC documents widespread harm and growing risk. The World Bank highlights the economic importance of natural capital. UNEP finance and circular economy work shows that financial structures must shift if material systems are to become more regenerative. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))

Christian faith receives these insights and presses deeper. Creation is gift. Humans are stewards. The poor are not peripheral. Sabbath limits production. Wisdom disciplines desire. Justice links earth and neighbor. Ecological conversion is therefore inseparable from economic conversion. An eco-spiritual economy names the kind of material order that becomes possible when economy is reoriented toward life, restraint, solidarity, and reverence.

This vision is demanding. It requires reform of finance, production, and consumption. It requires circularity, natural capital awareness, and ecological accounting. It also requires transformed hearts, grateful habits, truthful institutions, and communities capable of resisting the culture of waste. In the light of Christian ethics, the future of the earth will be secured not by technique alone, but by a deeper reordering of treasure, desire, and responsibility.

An eco-spiritual economy is thus not a slogan. It is a vocation: to become, in Francis's phrase, artisans of a common home and builders of an economy of life. ([Vatican](#))

Glossary

Common home

A theological and ethical expression, popularized in *Laudato Si'*, referring to the earth as a shared dwelling whose care is a collective moral responsibility. ([Vatican](#))

Circular economy

An economic approach that seeks to reduce waste and resource extraction by emphasizing reuse, repair, refurbishment, and recycling rather than linear "take-make-dispose" systems. ([UNEP FI](#))

Ecological conversion

A transformation of perception, values, and habits in response to ecological crisis, involving gratitude for creation, care for the poor, simplicity, and active responsibility. ([Vatican](#))

Eco-spiritual economy

In this essay, an economy that integrates ecological integrity, social

justice, and spiritual responsibility in production, consumption, finance, and community life.

Integral ecology

A framework used in *Laudato Si'* that treats environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual crises as interconnected rather than separate.

([Vatican](#))

Natural capital

Forests, water, soils, biodiversity, and ecosystem services considered as foundational assets that sustain economies and human wellbeing. ([World Bank](#))

Sabbath economics

A shorthand term for biblical economic principles of rest, limit, redistribution, and protection of people and land, especially reflected in Sabbath and Jubilee traditions.

Stewardship

The responsible care and use of resources, land, institutions, and power under God's authority and for the good of others.

Technocratic paradigm

A mindset criticized by Pope Francis in which technical and economic power are treated as sufficient guides to human flourishing, often neglecting ethics and spiritual responsibility. ([Vatican](#))

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