**Contemporary Challenges: Notes**

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| • explain why religious traditions respond to contemporary challenges generally* the causes of these challenges and the responses of the religious traditions
* – the ways religious traditions confront and respond to specific major social or moral issues that

challenge their vision for society* – the impact of the response/s of a religious tradition on the tradition itself and on the wider Society
 | ***Religion:*** A system of meaning and belief that gives a context for understanding interpreting life’s larger questions and significant human experiences. Religions express their beliefs through sacred writings, rituals, social structures, myths and stories, symbols and moral codes of behaviour and ethics.***Contemporary Society:*** Modern societies, that a multicultural, pluralist and democratic, have political, legal, economic and social dimensions that are complex, and evolving, with a large number of religious traditions that co-exist within a political and legal system which may not privilege any of them.* The relationship between religion and society is dynamic, mutually interactive, sometimes positive and other times negative.
* Either may attempt to dominate the other.
* Religion and society may work cooperatively for the betterment of the whole society.
* At times, and over certain issues, religion and society may be diametrically opposed.
* Religion contributes to social cohesion.
* Religion contributes to social transformation.
* Variety of religious expression in any society contributes to and is an expression of multiculturalism
* Society contributes to religious reflection, inspiration and initiative.
* Society can contribute to tensions and disunity within religion and between religious traditions.
* Society can offer a critique of the actions of religious leaders.

**Why religious traditions may be confronted by contemporary challenges*** In contemporary societies religions may be confronted by attitudes, beliefs, principles and values that contradict or are in tension with theirs. As religious communities strive to adhere to the tenets and traditions set forth by their doctrines, they continually come into contact with the opposing viewpoints of not only the contrasting religious philosophies of other faiths, but also from the non-religious or secular world.
* The major religions of the Western world face difficult issues every day that challenge the foundations of their faiths. Group members ask guidance of their elders and discuss issues among themselves. They seek approaches to how the religious community might address the issues while continuing to uphold their religious traditions. Religious traditions may even seek to implement their vision for society hoping to transform society into new entity based on religious values of the tradition.

**Ways that religious traditions respond to challenges include:*** refrain from comment and/or action
* promote discussion,
* research, (questioning, evaluation, re-evaluation)
* develop a position, position papers, public statements
* initiate or participate in internal and or public debate,
* instigate a major gathering for debate/discussion, for example, conferences and councils.
* support, embrace change, approve, condemn, argue against
* use of the media
* social action to address the problem
* promote public demonstrations
* invoking prayer – individually or as community witness

**Impact of the actions of religious traditions for itself and for its relationship with society*** ***The actions of religious traditions impact on the potential future of the tradition***
	+ Polarisation
* The actions can affirm the ancient faith and disaffect those seeking change within the tradition
* The actions of a religious tradition that can flow from a reinterpretation or re-emphasis of ancient faith and disaffect the traditionalists of the faith
* The actions of the tradition can appear to be at odds with the ancient vision and draw the leadership of the faith into question
	+ Harmonizing
* The actions may bring renewal in belief and its expression for adherents
* The actions may solidify or galvanise the faithful against a professed evil or opposition
* The actions may offer a new and hopeful vision of the faith for its followers
* ***That action of religious traditions impact on its relationship with society***
	+ Polarization
* Often, religion is a contentious issue. Where eternal salvation is at stake, compromise can be difficult at or even sinful.
* Religion is also important because, as a central part of many individuals’ identity, any threat to one’s beliefs is a threat to one’s very being.
	+ Harmonizing
* However, the relationship between religion and conflict is, in fact, a complex one. Religiously-motivated peace builders have played important roles in addressing many conflicts around the world.
* The bonds formed by religious communities gain strength by the experiences each group encounters while trying to adhere to or further their faiths.
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| • explain the vision of human society held by the religious tradition/s studied* the vision of human society implied in the religious beliefs of the religious tradition/s studied and articulated in ethical principles and moral values

Religious traditions have visions that encompass the way society should be developed over time, and stem from the religious beliefs of religious traditions concerning ultimate reality, the nature and purpose of human life, the meaning of life and death, the relationship between ultimate reality and humanity, the relationship between humans and the relationship between human life and the rest of the natural world. | **Christian Vision of Human Society**Roman Catholic beliefs about God and about the nature and purpose of human life are integral to the Catholic understanding how human being should act in community of the church and in the world community. It is the integration of these beliefs that give Catholicism its particular vision within the Christian faith tradition. For Catholics the vision is found in scripture and the traditions of the Church.* Beliefs about God: Trinity: Creator, Redeemer, Spirit (Wisdom *Sophia*), God is relationship
	+ Matthew 28:19 Father, Son and Spirit.

**Scripture*** From Genesis: Human Person: made in the Image of God; Human Freedom; Family: basic unit of society
	+ Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
	+ Natural Law: God’s Creative Wisdom built into the very fabric of human nature and all of creation.
* From Isaiah
	+ Isaiah 2, 4-5 there will be no more training for war. '
	+ Isaiah 11 , 6-7 'The wolf shall live with the lamb,
	+ Isaiah 25, 6-8 He will swallow up death forever.
* From the Gospels: Christ *(Christos; Mesia)* Kingdom of God *(Basileia*) : Values of the Kingdom: Justice; Peace; Humility; Service
	+ John 1:13 The word become flesh and dwelt among us (Incarnation)
	+ John 15: 12 “love one another as I have loved you.”
	+ Parables and teachings: forgiveness, freedom; service; fellowship *(Koinonia)*
* From other Christian biblical material: Church (*Ekklesia)*
	+ 1 Peter 2:9-10: *“*Chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people”
	+ Galatians 3:28: There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
	+ Revelation 21: Ia: 'Then I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth

**Tradition*** Social Structure: Church Order: Brotherhood and sisterhood – Fellowship (koinonia); Ministry *Diakonia* (Service) Bishop *(Episcopoi);* Priest *(Presbyter);* Deacon; Teach; sanctify and govern
* Affirmation of Church: Nicene Creed: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic
* Affirmation of vision beyond death: Nicene Creed: resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come
* Ethical Principals of Social Justice – Catholic Social Teaching

Solidarity ‘Solidarity is a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all’ (Pope John Paul, 1988, n.38) Common GoodBy the common good is meant the sum total of those conditions of social life which allow people as groups and as individuals to reach their proper fulfillment. (CCCC #407)SubsidiarityDecisions should be made as close as possible to the level of individual initiative in communities and institutions.Participation Because of the intelligence and free will of humankind, people have both a right and a duty to participate in those decisions that most directly affect them. Preferential Option for the Poorcalls for a commitment from individuals and communities at every level to engage actively in a struggle to overcome the social injusticesDignity of WorkLabour is always superior to capital since people are always superior to things.Ecological ResponsibilityEarth’s resources must be used in ways that allow for regeneration and sustainability. **More recent Magisterium (Official Church Teaching)*** Council Documents: *e.g. Lumen gentium, Gaudium et spes*
	+ Chapter 1The Mystery of the Church (LG)
	+ The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (GS I)
	+ But God did not create man as a solitary, for from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential. (GS 12)
	+ She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family. (GS 40)
* Papal teaching:
	+ Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. (Benedict XVI World Day Of Peace, 1 January 2007, n. 8)
* *Catechism of the Catholic Church / Compendium of Catechism of the Catholic Church*
	+ All men are called to the same end: God himself. There is a certain resemblance between the union of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbour is inseparable from love for God. (CCC 1878)
* Liturgical Documents: *Let us offer each other a sign of peace.* From the *Order of the Mass*
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| • describe and analyse how and why a specific major social or moral issue/s has been addressed by the religious tradition/s* the nature of the specific major social or moral issue/s selected
* the relationship between the selected issue/s and the religious tradition/s’ vision for society
* the causes of these challenges and the responses of the religious traditions
 | **The Rise of the Environmental Movement and the Response of the Roman Catholic Church****The rise of the Environmental Movement**Industrial Revolution* Mass production: movement from artisan to factory production
* Urbanisation: movement from rural base to city
* Increased use of fossil fuels
* Pollution of air and water systems
* Exploitation of workers
* Rise of the middle class

Romanticism* Partially a response to Industrialisation
* Valued beauty in nature
* Middle class action on air quality began in the mid 1800s: 1863 British law
* National Parks movement: Yellowstone 1872; New South Wales 1879

1962 Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*1970 First Earth Day ; Green Peace founded1985 Ozone Layer effects of CFCs1986 Chernobyl1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill1994 Population Conference Cairo1995 Women’s Conference Beijing1995 Climate Change Report: humans are changing the climate**Catholic Traditional Teaching on Human Relationship with the Earth**Based on particular readings of Genesis**Genesis 1:26-28**26 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”**Genesis 2**15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.The interpretations of these texts feature in all Catholic Doctrine but play a particular role in Catholic Social Teaching. Catholic environmental / Ecological teaching is within Catholic Social Teaching.**Interpretation of the texts**The hermeneutic that one brings to the text effects the interpretation of the text1. **Traditional (Dominion):** The earth exists for human’s use. Humans are of God. The earth is for human benefit – use it as you see fit. E.g. Vatican II : Gaudium et spes remarks that “…all things on earth should be related to man as their centre an crown” #12

Criticism from some theologians: Thomas Berry: A cosmic vision; global shift to an ecozoic age; humans must have an ecological visionSean McDonaugh: Social Justice includes ecological justiceRosemary Reuther: eco-feminism: males structures have wasted the earthJohn F Haught: renewal of theology to account for a scientific worldview1. **Stewardship**

1987 John Paul II Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concerns) #50 humans must use their "dominion" of creation to its proper purpose. To damage creation is betraying the will of God the Creator.1990 John Paul II World Day of Peace Message 1 January 1990 * Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the Earth as we have in the past. #1
* ​Today, the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness - both individual and collective - are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence. #8
* Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. #14
* the ecological crisis is a moral issue*.* #15

2001 John Paul II General Audience Wednesday 17 January God made man the steward of creation. We must therefore encourage and support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. #42009 Pope Benedict XVI “Caritas in Veritate” (“Charity in Truth”,), emphasized the importance of living in harmony with nature.2010 Pope Benedict XVI World Day of Peace Message 1 January 2010 was titled: If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. #1 The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations.#21. **Kinship / community**

Grows out of a broader vision of Wisdom Literature (Psalm 104), Pauline texts (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:28) and the vision: Saint Francis of Assisi (Canticle of Creation)Pope Francis *Laudato Si*“Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” # 84“If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.” #64Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. #49Together with our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes: “by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory”, and indeed, “the Lord rejoices in all his works” (Ps 104:31). #69 |
| • evaluate the impact of the response/s to the issue/s on the religious tradition itself and on the wider society* the impact of the response/s of the religious tradition/s to the issue on the tradition itself and on the wider society.
 | **The Impact Of The Response Of The Catholic Church For Itself** ***The work of John Paul II and Benedict XVI has produced internal results***Australian Examples* 2002 Catholic Earthcare Australia established by Australian Catholic Bishop’s Conference [*http://catholicearthcare.org.au/about*](http://catholicearthcare.org.au/about)
* 2002 Catholic Social Justice Statement: A new earth: The environmental challenge [*http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2002\_SJSS\_statement.pdf*](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2002_SJSS_statement.pdf)
* 2004 Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef. Queensland Catholic Bishops [*http://catholicearthcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Let-The-Many-Coastlines-Be-Glad-A-Pastoral-Letter-on-the-Great-Barrior-Reef.pdf*](http://catholicearthcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Let-The-Many-Coastlines-Be-Glad-A-Pastoral-Letter-on-the-Great-Barrior-Reef.pdf)
* The development of Diocesan Commissions e.g. [*http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/services-and-agencies/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=229*](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/services-and-agencies/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=229)

***Movements for Reform Continue***The Impact of Pope Francis and Laudato Si are profound; and the web presence is substantial for both.* Global organisations have formed to support the movement [*http://catholicclimatemovement.global/introduction/*](http://catholicclimatemovement.global/introduction/)
* [*http://www.mercyworld.org/mercy\_global\_action/project-home.cfm?pid=E220247F-BB4D-5777-D7B326F931C981F9*](http://www.mercyworld.org/mercy_global_action/project-home.cfm?pid=E220247F-BB4D-5777-D7B326F931C981F9)
* National initiatives are aplenty:[*http://catholicearthcare.org.au/ecological-encyclical/*](http://catholicearthcare.org.au/ecological-encyclical/)
* Diocesan structures have mobilised to spread the word: [*http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/services-and-agencies/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=229*](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/services-and-agencies/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=229)

***Traditional Approaches Remain***Most of the criticism of Laudato Si is from within Church circles. Detractors / dissenters are conservatives.“For it is no exaggeration to say that this encyclical is an embarrassment, and I am ashamed as a Catholic that my pope issued it.” [*http://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/fetzen-fliegen/item/1819-why-i-m-disregarding-laudato-si-and-you-should-too*](http://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/fetzen-fliegen/item/1819-why-i-m-disregarding-laudato-si-and-you-should-too)**The impact of the response of the Catholic Church for its relationship with society**There is support for the teaching in society but also criticism of some of the economic elements* [*http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/08/13/pope-and-planet/*](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/08/13/pope-and-planet/)
* [*http://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/fetzen-fliegen/item/1819-why-i-m-disregarding-laudato-si-and-you-should-too*](http://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/fetzen-fliegen/item/1819-why-i-m-disregarding-laudato-si-and-you-should-too)
* *The church seen is to more relevant in its ecological stance by many:*
	+ *Appreciation of the scientific story of the universe matters*
	+ *Pope Francis is touching people where they are at*
	+ *The church is addressing its own ecological footprint*
* *The church is still criticized*
	+ *By new atheists: refuse to allow for God questions in any space*
	+ *By industrialists: who refuse to accept any critique of laisse-faire capitalism*
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