

The Catholic Church's response to the cry of the poor amid the environmental crisis in the light of Laudato Si

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Abstract

In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, published in 2015, Pope Francis highlighted the interconnection between the environment and the poor by saying that the suffering of the earth is also the suffering of the poor. Although the ecological crisis adversely influences human life in various aspects, people experiencing poverty are the most vulnerable. They must bear the prolonged negative impacts of climate change or environmental degradation while being the least responsible for the planet's destruction. This study used the See-Judge-Act method to address the Catholic Church's responses to the cry of the poor amid the environmental crisis considering the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. In the See aspect, the study discussed the interconnection between the poor and the environmental crisis, the adverse effects of the global ecological crisis, and the 2030 agenda of sustainable development goals. The major causes of problems are unsustainable usage of natural resources, dominantly in agricultural and industrial sectors. In the Judge aspect, the study analyzed the issues of the poor in ecological degradation from different dimensions, such as biblical text, the Judeo-Christian tradition, Catholic social teachings, the common good, environmental justice, and sustainable development of ecosystems. In the Act aspect, the study showed that ecological degradation adversely and dramatically affects the life quality of the poor. Thus, to improve the life of the poor, the Church should first launch environmental protection by collaborating with official global leaders and implementing practical environmental protection actions at all levels of the Church, including the popes, bishops, priests, families, and individuals.

Keywords: Laudato Si', environmental crisis, the poor, ecological degradation, the vulnerable, sustainable development, environmental protection

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, humans worldwide have experienced severe natural disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatened the survival of human beings. Global health systems have been disrupted causing major threats due to the overwhelmed number of patients. The unequal Covid-19 vaccination distribution across the globe sharpened the sense of injustice among people. The wars in Ukraine also destroyed large fields of grain and polluted soils and waters. The prices of food and fuel reached the highest levels, leading to increased poverty due to the shortages of food and drinking water. Besides, the crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, and the extinction of several sea and wildlife animals and plants are occurring in countries. Ecological degradation widens the economic gap, global inequality, and injustice among the poor and the rich in society. The poor are the most vulnerable since they are dramatically affected by the impacts of ecological degradation (United Nations, 2022). Although ecological crisis influenced everyone, the poor's safety and health are seriously affected. Even though everyone has the right to access natural resources, the poor are limited or have no access to them. Many questions have been raised and urgent rescue efforts for sustainable development of our planet and for the most vulnerable in society have been highlighted (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2022). Responding to these questions, Pope Francis calls the Catholics and the world to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor to comprehend the urgency of the environmental crisis. This review aims to examine the interconnection between the poor and environmental crisis in the light of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, humans' responsibility to care for the poor from theological perspectives, and the suggestions of Catholic Church's practical actions to protect environment.

1.1 The interconnection between the poor and ecological degradation

The encyclical, **Laudato Si'**, emphasizes the interconnection between the environment and the poor to shift people's attention from natural resources and sustainable development to the condition of the poor and marginalized (Abumoghli, 2022). Although ecological degradation affects everyone, the poor are the most vulnerable to its prolonged negative impacts. The Bolivian Bishops' Conference asserts that the "gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest" (Goodwin, 2020, p. 40). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that 3.3 billion to 3.6 billion of the poor were highly vulnerable to climate change. The reason was that the poor had limited access to essential health and food services to prevent, adapt, escape, or recover from the devastating consequences of natural disasters (Biviano, 2020). A forecast for 2030 predicts that 700 million people will face displacement by drought alone (United Nations, 2022). The poor are most affected by environmental changes, but they are least responsible for the destruction and degradation of the planet (Perkins, 2021). The encyclical **Laudato Si'** supports the shift of humans' attention from the contemporary usage of natural resources to a sustainable development perspective which explicitly considers the life quality of the poor and marginalized. This transition fosters solidarity and involvement with the poor in business, agricultural, industrial, and individual decisions to achieve sustainability for humans and the earth (Puglisi & Buitendag, 2022).

Pope Francis opposes the damage to the planet and the poor and asserts that God loves all creation, so "the rich and the poor have equal dignity" (Biviano, 2020, p. 51). Pope Francis also stresses the physical and material harm to the life of the poor because of the degradation of ecosystems, such as natural disaster risk, lack of clean water and energy, forced migration, and human trafficking (King, 2019). The poor suffer from air, soil, and water contamination since their livelihood heavily depends on natural resources such as fishing and farming (King, 2019). The poor are disadvantaged, lack housing security, and live on marginal lands where access to clean

drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities is limited. Natural disasters often influence them, including drought, flood, and storms (United Nations, 2022). Moreover, Pope Francis presents the inequality of natural source distribution in *Laudato Si*: "Twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive" (Goodwin, 2020, p. 44). Rising populations in marginal and rural areas also inevitably contribute to ecological degradation and depletion of natural resources, influencing the life quality of the poor of present and future generations (United Nations, 2022).

The significant reasons for climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are unsustainable human consumption and production patterns. While a significant number of people are starving due to food shortage, "too much food continues to be lost" during "on-farm activities, transport, storage," or wasted in households and restaurants (United Nations, 2022, p. 50). Moreover, renewable energy usage has been implemented in many developing and developed countries; the developing countries still lag. In addition, the poor are frequently dramatically affected by natural disasters and inequality of resource distribution because of the weak capacity of governmental agencies in resource management and prediction of the launch of disasters to respond to them. Besides, the government excludes the poor from making regulations. Dealing with these issues, the Catholic Church places its concern for the poor and marginalized as a preferential option in all of the Church's decisions regarding the long-term sustainability of resource usage (Chu, 2022). Pope Francis calls for people, especially governments, to care for the poor in rural and urban communities around the world and to protect integral ecology by tirelessly seeking solutions for the severe impacts of environmental degradation on the life quality of the poor (King, 2019).

Population growth also significantly influences the depletion of natural resources because of the rising demands for environmental resource usage. The population's demands for natural resources may exceed the planet's ecological ability to supply and damage environmental assets and quality. Rapid population growth becomes a significant force on ecological degradation and a threat to the sustainable development of ecology. Through overexploitation and intensive farming, natural resources reduce quantity and quality (Khan et al., 2021). It increases the production of waste, the pollution of water, and the depletion of natural resources. In many regions, the scarcity and inequality of resource distribution foster unsustainability since the poor depend more directly on natural assets than the rich. Small-scale food producers are often among the most vulnerable groups in rural areas (United Nations, 2022). Small farms with low-income face food insecurity and weak ability and conditions to adapt to climate change (Khan et al., 2021)

1.2 Adverse impacts of environmental degradation on the poor.

The shortage of food - During the COVID-19 pandemic, greenhouse gas emissions and water and air pollution were significantly reduced, contributing to ecological systems' restoration. However, this pandemic increased global food security and the poverty rate in almost every country. The COVID-19 pandemic has erased the results of a four year-progress against poverty worldwide. In 2020, the global poverty rate sharply increased by 0.9 percent for the first time in the last two decades. The number of poor raised 93 million people in 2022. They needed more regular access to adequate food and health. Furthermore, the outbreak of Ukraine's war posed an additional threat to food insecurity among the poor and the vulnerable. Ukraine and Russia frequently exported grain and sunflower seeds to other countries. However, the war in Ukraine pushed the poor in dependent countries on food import suffering. This war also damaged vast swaths of farmland. It burned down forests, and industrial facilities, which created heavy air, water, and soil pollution, which led to a decrease in productivity of food production, especially in small-scale food producers (United Nations, 2022). Although many countries have taken action to respond to the crisis, numerous poor people have not yet benefited from them. They are the most vulnerable since they have necessary things, such as food and medicine, to protect themselves during the war (Richie, 2020). Moreover, the impacts of climate extremes caused droughts, floods, and heat waves that pressure agriculture and food production in every country (Farrell, 2021). Many people, particularly the poor, are experiencing food insecurity and malnutrition because their livelihood depends on

agriculture and natural resources.

The scarcity of clean drinkable water - In addition to the food crisis, fresh water is fundamental to the sustainable development of human life. However, the earth is experiencing an ecological water crisis due to unsustainable usage and inappropriate water management. The population is rising rapidly, so water demand in the industrial, agriculture, and energy sectors also increases. This high demand burdens the water ecosystem heavily (DiLeo, 2020). Besides, untreated wastewater and chemical products that pour into the lakes, rivers, and seas threaten clean water resources. Furthermore, water resources face other new threats, including regulation for water, loss of aquatic biodiversity, and wetlands conversion that affect nature services and endanger human health and species' survival—the degradation of wetlands releases stored carbon, causing diseases (United Nations, 2022). Although in many countries, water resources are constantly diminishing and already reach a warning level, there is a growing tendency “to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market” (Pope Francis, 2015, para. 30). Countries which possess abundant water are wasting water because of low awareness of severe water degradation and consumption culture. In contrast, many rural and marginalized areas do not have access to clean water for drinking and agricultural production. The poor in these regions also face severe effects on health and food due to a lack of access to drinkable water and sanitation (United Nations, 2022). Their fundamental right to survival is denied, while clean drinking water is a common good, and using it is a fundamental human right. As a result, our society owes the poor a vital debt, and urgent actions are needed to ensure water distribution is sustainable and equitable to meet the world population's needs. Each member of society is called to partially pay the debt through funding to provide safe drinking water and sanitary services for the poor (Pope Francis, 2015).

Climate change and biodiversity loss - Climate change causes severe natural disasters, such as storms, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires, that dramatically destroy fragile housing infrastructure and jeopardize the human health of the poor (Richie, 2020). The root of climate change is the concentration of greenhouse gas emissions produced by unsustainable consumption and industrial production in companies, especially outsourcing companies in developing or less developed countries (United Nations, 2022). Besides, the poor frequently live near factories, landfills, and refineries that heavily pollute the environment. While the rich benefit the most from using natural resources, the poor are the most vulnerable to the effects of noxious externalities of ecological and medical issues (Richie, 2020). Therefore, a call to develop sustainable strategies to decline emissions, recover the ecosystems, and preserve their natural resources for the sustainability of the earth's future (United Nations, 2022).

1.3 The decrease of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)

Many leaders worldwide have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) with 17 goals built based on human rights framework to achieve access and equality of ecological resources. The SDGs seek to protect the poor and the vulnerable in countries. During the last two decades, the programs obtained remarkable results in poverty termination, food security, and clean drinking water. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the wars in Ukraine in the last three years derailed progress in ending poverty (Khan et al., 2021). The poverty rate has reduced over the past 25 years but has risen again. Eight hundred twenty-eight million people suffer from hunger in 2021, and an additional 20 million people live in extreme poverty in 2022 (United Nations, 2022). A key reason for the issue is the misunderstanding of the sustainable development concept, which focuses on unlimited economic growth and ignores the ecological degradation of our planet's natural resources. Therefore, there is an urgent need to acknowledge the need to manage economic growth and natural resource usage in developed countries to enhance the living standard in developing countries and plans for ecological sustainability (Khan et al., 2021).

1.4 The significance of the present study

This present study is significant and worth examining. After the encyclical **Laudato Si'**, written by Pope

Francis, was released in 2015, many studies of the environmental crisis and the Catholic Church's responses have been conducted. However, in the last two years, exposure to the Covid-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war in Ukraine severely damaged the food, water, and habitats of humans. These two events delay the progress to end poverty in many countries and push the poor into worse circumstances due to scarcity of food, safe drinkable water, and adequate healthcare services. This study provides an overview of the urgent current situation of the poor and ecosystems. This study also pays special attention to the poor and seeks different solutions from different levels of the Church to improve the life quality of the poor.

2. Methodology

The study used the See, Judge, and Act method to implement and develop the present research. The study's purpose is to examine the Catholic Church's responses to the cry of the poor amid the environmental crisis in the light of the encyclical **Laudato Si'**. In the See aspect, the study discussed how the poor and the environment are interconnected, the adverse effects of the global ecological crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the Covid-19 pandemic on the life of the poor. The major causes of problems are unsustainable usage of natural resources, dominantly in agricultural and industrial sectors. These issues are presented in the introduction. In the Judge aspect, the study analyzed the life quality of the poor amid ecological degradation from different dimensions, such as biblical text, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the common good, and the Catholic social teachings. In the Act aspect, I presented suggestions to solve environmental problems through collaboration with global official leaders and participation of the Catholic Church from all levels, including the popes, bishops, priests, schools, family, and individuals.

3. The poor and ecological crisis are viewed from perspectives.

Amid ecological degradation, the poor are the most vulnerable whom we are responsible for caring for and protecting as a steward of God. This responsibility is viewed from different perspectives. From a biblical perspective, humans are responsible for caring for and protecting the poor as a steward of God. The book of Genesis 1:28 and 2:15 narrate that God created and entrusted humans to care for His creation, so taking care of God's creation as stewards is essential to the Christian life. God also establishes harmonious relationships among God, humans, and other creatures (Gen 3:1-7). Everything on the earth is interconnected, and caring for humans' lives cannot be separated from relationships with nature, fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others (Pope Francis, 2015). Thus, human beings are called to become caretakers rather than exploiters (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2022). They protect the earth and its fullness for themselves and the coming generation (Pope Francis, 2015). Besides, acknowledging that the planet and all creatures on it is the gift of God granted to everyone (Dt 10:14) means that humans have a responsibility to share the earth's fruitfulness and other natural resources, especially with the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable (Lev 19:9-10). The biblical passage of Psalm 24:1 asserts that the earth is the Lord's. God rejects humans' absolute ownership: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev 25:23).

From the Judeo-Christian tradition perspective, God loves all creation He had made without exception (Wis 11:24). Every creature is an object of God's tenderness, even the least on earth. Therefore, humans must respect other creation nature. Suppose humans realize the fragility of our world and the sense of their abilities God gives them to protect it. In that case, they will change their attitude toward the ecological crisis and actively take action to defend it. Protecting the fragile world has challenged us when humans view nature merely as a source of profit or groups of wealthy people (Pope Francis, 2015). The rich and the authorities obtain most of the natural resources; the poor have nothing to live a better life. Therefore, Jesus emphasized that the authority should act as a servant (Mt 20:25-26). In addition, Jesus expects human beings to treat each other in the sense of moral duty and be responsible to one another (Mt 7:12; Mk 12:30-31). He wants people to pay attention to the sake of the disadvantaged in society (Mt 25:35-40) and pursue each other's interests without bias that can ruin brotherly relationships and breed mistrust (Acts 2:44-46) (Onyibor & Eegunlusi, 2019).

From the Catholic social teaching perspective, ecosystems maintain human life, but the sustainability of ecology also primarily depends on human behavior on natural law (Richie, 2020). Pope Benedict XVI stated that severe environmental damage resulted from humans' irresponsible behaviors. Human beings are responsible to future generations and to live sustainably in the usage of the planet's natural resources, in the fair distribution of resources, and in the maintenance of the ecology (Ikeke, 2021). Furthermore, all creatures are interconnected, but humans frequently see the natural environment merely as things to serve their immediate usage and consumption (Areo, 2020). They forgot that they are just stewards of God's creation, and natural resources on the earth are the common property of humanity consisting of future generations. Thus, they cannot be used alone by any person, community, and nation (Luszczynska, 2020). The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves when we see nothing else but ourselves" (Pope Francis, 2015, para 6). Pope Paul VI also emphasized that while using natural resources, an individual must have a moral responsibility to sustain resources for future generations (Klimski, 2023).

From a common good perspective, Pope Francis (2015) believed and strongly stressed that the natural environment is a collective good. God created all creation on the earth for everyone as a gift without excluding or favoring anyone. Therefore, the rights of the poor and the underprivileged must be a concern in every aspect of decisions. He also said that the Church plans to include ecological sins in **the Catechism of the Catholic Church**. Ecological sin is a sin against God and our typical home, and ecocide is as "fifth category of crime against peace." Acts can be considered ecocide. He denounced the abuse of law and legislation to justify acts of violence (Esteves, 2019). Likewise, the New Zealand bishops questioned the seventh commandment when "twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive (Pope Francis, 2015). In addition, each person is interconnected with all creation, so each harmful action can negatively impact the rest of the creatures (Deneulin, 2021). For integral ecology, the interconnection between environmental issues and the poor must be considered first since they are the foremost victims of the ecological crisis (Chandler, 2021).

From an environmental justice perspective, an individual has the right to fair and equitable access to and usage of natural resources to guarantee livelihood security and basic human needs and participate in environmental decisions and resource distribution. However, the unequal distribution of benefits from natural resources and pollution risks have emerged more frequently in current society (Bizuneh & Simane, 2019). The poor contribute the least to ecological degradation and achieve the least benefits from ecology. However, they must bear the most severe threats and the worst consequences of the environmental crisis. In both developing and developed countries, the poor and vulnerable are those who pay the price of unsustainable lifestyles of the national and global elite. They disproportionately bear burdens by environmental degradation (Atapattu et al., 2021). The poor also have the right to live in a healthy environment, but they often must work and reside in unsafe or polluted areas. This situation is the imbalance between the rich, who get the most benefits from ecology, and the poor, who get the least advantages from natural resources. They are "disproportionately burdened by environmental degradation" (p. 9).

From a sustainable development perspective, sustainable development of our planet is the center of global environmental debates and conferences because of the expansion of ecological degradation (Sarmast et al., 2021). Sustainability will protect and restore ecosystems and avoid harming other people, especially the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. However, the sustainability of ecosystems faces many challenges due to the depletion of natural resources, inequality of resource distribution, climate vulnerability, and the increase in poverty. These issues disproportionately harm the livelihoods and well-being of the poor since their livelihoods primarily rely on natural resources. Thus, there is a need to empower the poor to practice the sustainability of ecological resources necessary for sustainable development (Khan et al., 2021). Providing universal access to essential services to the poor and balancing the exploitation of ecosystems among the rich is vital to recovering ecological health and responding to future demands. Sustainability also links with intergenerational justice, so economic growth and usage of natural resources should ensure adequate ecological resources for a better quality of life for all people at present and in the future (Sarmast et al., 2021). Thus, people must eliminate unsustainable

behaviors that may increase ecological degradation and cause a severe shortage of natural resources for future generations.

4. Suggestions for the Church's environmental actions to protect the poor.

4.1 Collaboration with official leaders

The poor and the environment are interconnected because environmental crises directly and dramatically affect the life quality of the poor in various aspects. To protect the poor amid the environmental crisis, the Church should take action to reduce ecological degradation and implement environmentally sustainable development to settle this issue. First, the Church continues cooperating with official leaders for the preferential option for the poor. Through meetings and conferences, the Catholic Church invites governmental leaders and those with authority to set environmental policies, listen to the cry of the poor, pay attention to their needs, and give them concern while making decisions. The Church cooperates with those in power to eliminate poverty, improve the life quality of the poor, and motivate the investigation of infrastructure in rural areas, such as equipment in the medical field and irrigation systems. In addition, the issue of water shortage should be solved from the aspect of water pollution and drinking water access. The Church also has dialogues on the ecological crisis with national governments and official leaders to supply adequate sanitation and clean technologies to poorer countries. In addition, the Church continues to promote national leaders who commit to walking along with the political process, bringing the voices of the poor to the table of policymakers, and placing preferential options for the poor in their decisions.

Moreover, religions influence believers' environmental protection by providing an ethical framework to guide believers. Religious teachings and values stimulate believers to take ecological actions. Religions encourage believers to eliminate greed, ignorance, and intolerance, care for others, and think of the common good, the heart of the earth's sustainable development. Religions stress the balance between personal prosperity and society's good governance. Therefore, religious leaders play essential roles in global environmental governance and policymaking. The Catholic Church should continue inspiring religious leaders to urgent ecological crises, motivating a movement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and opposing injustice against the poor.

4.2 Environmental protection at all levels of the Church

Environmental protection is implemented at all levels of the Church. The issue of environmental crisis is essential, both theoretically and practically. Hence, the Catholic Church places the environmental protection aspect within its doctrine and considers ecology as a common good of humanity. Thus, all Catholics are obligated to perform ecological protection. First, the pope and Catholic social Teachings should frequently address ecological concerns in intimate connection to the poor to enhance people's awareness of environmental degradation and eliminate the culture of waste. The Church also helps people respect the poor and understand that everyone, including the poor, has fundamental rights to use natural resources. The bishops and priests should be aware of the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a global call to action to end poverty and prevent ecological degradation. Also, bishops can send pastoral letters to address our current severe situations of the fragile earth and the poor and to encourage Catholics in their dioceses to utilize practical actions to create a better world. The priests can integrate environmental aspects in their homilies in Mass, environmental workshops, and other activities to draw people's attention to the ecological crisis and how the poor, their neighbors, suffer from adverse impacts of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

Secondly, the parishes or Catholic institutions should regularly place concerns of care for creation and stimulate the usage of renewable energy sources in parishes, schools, universities, and families. They also support environmental activities and programs in their parishes or schools and promote people working together to decrease energy consumption and waste in their local areas. Moreover, Catholic schools should integrate

environmental education into their curriculums and provide ecological workshops to enhance people's attitudes toward the environment and promote pro-environmental behaviors. Organizational and church leaders should raise topics of care for the poor amidst the destruction of ecosystems in their teaching and preaching. Ecological ethics should also be introduced and frequently reinforced in classrooms or parishes to deepen ecological awareness. Furthermore, parishes or Catholic organizations can bring sustainability into their communities through recycling programs, composting programs, and green space establishment and maintenance in their areas. Finally, the poor often face natural disasters and other adverse impacts of climate change and ecological degradation without resources and necessary things to protect themselves. Thus, Catholic organizations can provide food, clothing, and housing and volunteer to help disaster areas rebuild communities.

In schools and universities, teachers and students can protect the poor through environmental protection since ecology directly affects the life quality of the poor. Teachers should integrate environmental content to enrich their students' knowledge of ecological issues, biodiversity loss, climate change, and connections between their sustainable development behaviors and their present life and future generations. Teachers should also teach students the influences of the usage of renewable energy sources, which are constantly being replenished by wind, solar, hydro, and tidal energy. This knowledge will inspire students' sustainable attitudes and enhance their sense of responsibility to care for ecological systems. Teachers also should apply different methods and teaching skills to successfully convey environmental lectures, such as board and digital games, quizzes, hotspot images, flashcards, and videos. Teachers can leverage social media platforms and numerous materials about ecology to continue engaging their students in environmental discussions and share exciting information. Besides, teachers should show students the positive impacts of pro-environmental behaviors and guide them to practice sustainable behaviors in their daily life and the earth's sustainability. To make their teachings more effective, teachers should become a model of pro-environmental behaviors in their lifestyle. Moreover, teachers should encourage students to participate in practical environmental activities regarding service-learning projects, waste and recycling investigations, and artwork made from recycled materials.

In addition to teachers, students should actively learn about ecological topics and participate in class discussions and environmental activities to improve their understanding of ecological issues. They can volunteer with environmental organizations or school ecological projects to enhance public awareness of environmental degradation and their role in recovering the earth's health, such as cleaning up the roads, planting trees, and advocating campaigns for environmental protection. Particularly, students can contribute to the sustainable development of ecosystems through their environmentally friendly consumption behaviors. For instance, students bring their lunchboxes, use reusable water bottles and coffee cups in school, and buy sustainable products to reduce plastic waste. They should adhere to the principles of a sustainable classroom or a school, including turning off lights and computers when they are not in use, recycling electricity items in the right places, and avoiding dumping anything into streams and lakes.

Thirdly, the family plays an active role in solving environmental issues since it is the first and the most important place that has a greater propensity to grow seeds of green practices to protect the environment. Children can learn about the environment and the poor in a family through their parents and other adults. Children regularly imitate adults, so parents should be a powerful example of good stewardship of the poor and the environment. Children are robust solutions for the ecological crisis since they are future leaders, environmental policymakers, and ecological activists. Thus, parents should educate children early on that humans are created in God's image and likeness, and they must care for and protect the earth. Parents also teach their children to eliminate the culture of waste so deeply rooted in society, build attitudes and environmental awareness, and implement sustainable actions. As a result, their children can build a harmonious lifestyle with the environment. In addition, parents should encourage their children to experience the outdoors through the five senses, such as seeing, touch, taste, feeling, and smell. Therefore, children can directly perceive their interconnection with the environment and appreciate nature and other creatures. Children who have a connection to nature are aware of environmental degradation around them and have the motivation to pro-environmental behavior.

Finally, individuals can actively participate in ecological protection and significantly impact the decrease of environmental degradation through their daily consumer choices. By choosing environmentally friendly products and services, individuals contribute to the decrease of waste and pollution. People can frequently practice several meaningful and practical actions, such as reducing, reusing, and recycling paper and plastic and buying local and friendly products. Individuals with sustainable habits can reduce their environmental footprint and create a healthier planet. For instance, they turn off the light when it is not in use, conserve water, and do not throw waste into rivers and seas. Thus, aside from environmental education at schools, parishes, or families, individuals must educate themselves and establish good pro-environmental behaviors. Moreover, through prayers, contemplation, and meditation, individuals can develop a more profound sense of connectedness with all living things on the earth since each person and nature are united in connection with God and promote environmental protection. By cultivating a reverence for the natural world, individuals can be inspired to act for preservation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that ecological degradation adversely and dramatically affects the life quality of the poor. The poor are the most vulnerable in these environmental crises, even though they receive the most negligible benefit from utilizing natural resources. The study used the See-Judge-Act methodology to address the Catholic Church's responses to the cry of the poor amid the ecological crisis in the light of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, written by Pope Francis in 2015. This study discussed the interconnection between the poor and environmental degradation and the adverse influences on the life of the poor due to the global environmental crisis, such as a shortage of safe drinkable water, issues of food security, and healthcare. These problems are viewed from different perspectives, including biblical texts, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the common good, theologians, and researchers. God is the Almighty Creator, and He created all creatures on the earth with His love and granted it to us as a gift of God. He entrusted humans to care for His creation as a steward of God. Besides, natural resources are the common good of humanity, so no one or any country can possess and use them alone. Thus, each person is responsible for caring for the environment and sustaining natural resources for future generations. Due to the interconnection between the poor and the environment, the Church should first launch environmental protection from different levels and collaboration with official world leaders to respond to the poor's cries. The Catholic Church cooperates with official leaders and strives to bring the voice of the poor to the table of policymakers. The Church inspires religious leaders to encourage a movement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and oppose injustice against the poor. Besides, Catholics from different levels in the Church, including the popes, bishops, parishes, families, Catholic schools, and individuals, actively participate in environmental protection activities. Particularly, Catholic schools and universities should integrate environmental education into their curriculums and provide workshops and programs regarding ecosystems to enhance students' awareness of ecological issues and motivation for pro-environmental protection. Besides, teachers should apply different methods to convey ecological content and leverage technological development to continue engaging students in environmental discussions. They can also encourage their students to participate in service-learning projects, waste and recycling investigations, and artwork events on ecosystems. In addition to teachers, students should actively learn about environmental topics and activities in classrooms and schools to enhance their understanding of the current situation of ecosystems. They can also contribute to the sustainable development of the earth through their habits and environmentally friendly consumption behaviors.

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