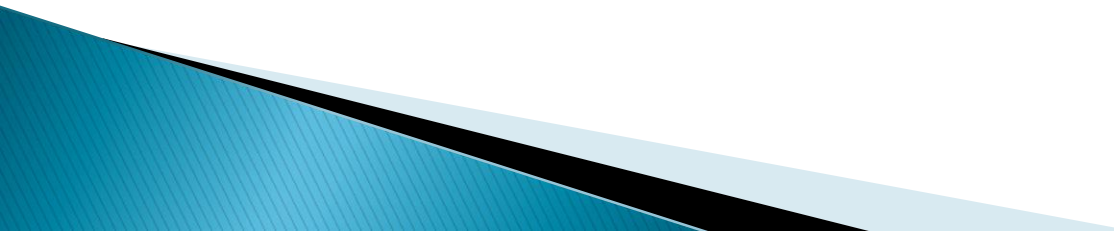



The Pope, the Poor, and the Planet

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Pope Francis I

- ▶ Born 1936 in Argentina
 - ▶ Elevated to papal office on 13 March 2013
 - ▶ First pope from the Americas
 - ▶ First pope from the Southern Hemisphere
 - ▶ First non-European pope since 741 AD
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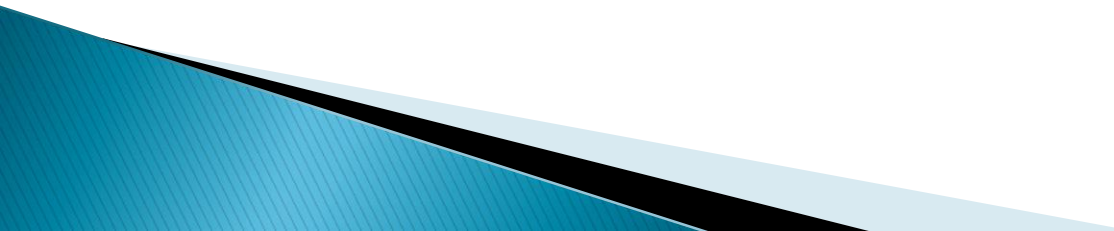
Evangelii Gaudium

- ▶ November 24, 2013
 - ▶ Evangelization in the context of a consumer society
 - ▶ Consumerism breeds greed, individualism, self-absorption, complacency, and anger
 - ▶ This presents a spiritual danger and challenge to evangelization
- 

Francis on the economy

- ▶ Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an **economy of exclusion and inequality**. Such an economy kills. (53)

Evangelii Gaudium

- ▶ “No to an economy of exclusion!” (53)
 - ▶ “No to the new idolatry of money!” (55)
 - ▶ “No to a financial system that rules rather than serves!”(57)
 - ▶ “No to the inequality which spawns violence!”(59)
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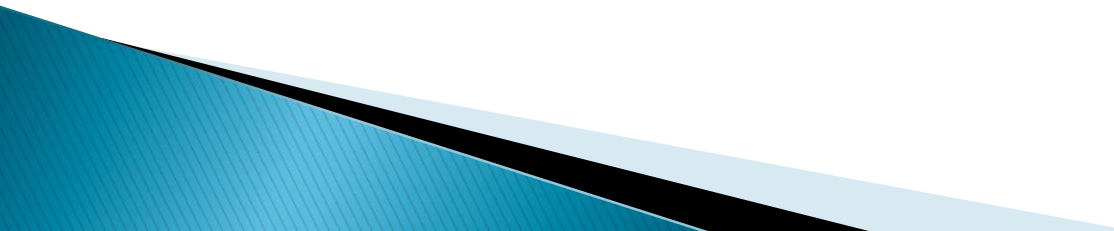
Francis on the idolatry of money

- ▶ We have created **new idols**. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex* 32:1–35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the **idolatry of money** and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. (55)

Francis on tyranny of money

- ▶ This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the **absolute autonomy** of the marketplace and financial speculation.
- ▶ A new **tyranny** is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules.
(56)

Economy as means not end

- ▶ Economy and market as instruments to serve human beings
 - ▶ Humans are an end, not a means
 - No one can be excluded.
 - Innate dignity of human person
 - “Universal destination of goods”
 - ▶ Idolatry of money dehumanizes us all
- 

Economic inequality

- ▶ The current economy rewards financial speculation
- ▶ Indifference to rising inequality
 - Credit Suisse report: Richest 1% own half the world's wealth
<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/14/worlds-richest-wealth-credit-suisse>
 - Growth in number of millionaires outstrips global population growth
 - Growth in ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNWIs) is 5X faster than world population growth

Baum on Polanyi and Francis

- » Critique of the unregulated market system

The Great Transformation

- ▶ The Market Society
 - Modern nation–state
 - Unregulated market system
 - Supply–Demand–Price mechanism
- ▶ Totalizing and self–regulating
 - All is submitted to market discipline
 - Nothing should interfere with the Supply–Demand–Price mechanism.

Karl Polanyi: what is a market society?

We **buy** things in various markets (housing, food, utilities, clothes, etc.) based on **supply-demand-price** mechanism

► Using income...

That we earned by **selling** things in various markets (labour, land, goods, capital, etc.) based on **supply-demand-price** mechanism

The supply–demand–price mechanism

Useful articles

• Prices

Use of capital

• Interest

Use of land

• Rent

Use of labour

• Wages

“Disembedded” market is totalizing

- ▶ But what makes a market economy is its **self-regulation character**. This springs from the inclusion of the factors of production, labour, and land into the system. No society before our own ever permitted the fate of labor and land to be decided by the supply-demand-price mechanism. Once this is the case, society is economically determined. Why?

“Disembedded” market is totalizing

- ▶ **Because labor is only another name for man, and land for nature.** Market economy amounts to the handing over of man and his natural habitat to the working of a blind mechanism running in its own grooves and following its own laws.
 - Karl Polanyi, “Economic History and the Problem of Freedom”, in *For a New West* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014), p. 41.

Commodity fiction: labour

- ▶ Labor as a commodity has a human being attached to it as an appendage. This makes it almost a satanic joke to regard labor actually as a commodity. Except in economic theory, it has, of course, never been regarded so.
- Karl Polanyi, *For a New West: Essays*, 1919–1958, (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), p. 185.

Abandoning “labour” to the supply–demand–price mechanism

- ▶ But could our civilization accept the principle of human sacrifice as an integral part of its methods of producing material goods? Not if it wished to continue as a Christian society.
 - *For a New West*, 187.

Commodity fiction: the land

- ▶ Once it is parceled out to individuals to dispose of at their discretion, for profit – including the right of indiscriminate use, nonuse, and abuse as well as that of unrestricted renting, letting, and sale – **the land is doomed**, with all that this implies: the ruin of the owner, the occupier, and the laborer and the destruction of the amenities and resources of the surroundings, **including the “indestructible” forces of the soil itself, together with the climate**, health, and security of the country.
 - Karl Polanyi, *For a New West: Essays*, 1919–1958, (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), p. 207

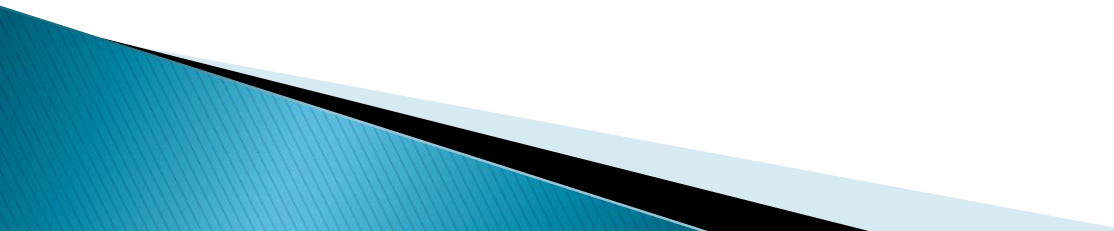
Polanyi on the ecological crisis

- ▶ Not even the soil itself can withstand commercial treatment. Eroded, denuded, pulverized, all regions may revert to the primeval forest, swamp, or desert. Wastage of assets undermines the future of the people. Alienation of resources threatens national safety. Forms of tenure that do not allow stable settlements and sound family conditions or wholesome shapes of living sap the strength of the race, which dwindles away.
 - *For a New West*, 207.

The Satanic Mills

- ▶ To put this in more general terms: economic liberalism, if it were to take hold of the whole of the material life of a society, **would almost instantly destroy society**. ...Society would disintegrate.
 - *For a New West*, pp. 185–86.
- ▶ Therefore society moves to protect itself.

The Double Movement

- ▶ As soon as state/market starts to create Market Society, protectionism arises.
 - ▶ Protection of labour: factory laws, social insurance, trade unionism, health and safety laws, etc.
 - ▶ Protection of the land: land use restrictions, agrarian laws, tenancy and homestead laws, etc.
- 

The Double Movement

- ▶ Need to subsume economics in social relations, i.e., ethics
- ▶ Pursue human goals and allow markets to serve those goals.
- ▶ Markets must be regulated ethically.
 - Gregory Baum, “Tracing the Affinity between the Social Thought of Karl Polanyi and Pope Francis”, 13th International Karl Polanyi Conference, Concordia University, 6-8 November 2014.
 - <https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/research/polanyi/docs/conference-2014-papers/Baum%20Gregory%20Montreal%202014.pdf>

Francis and ethics

- ▶ Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, **because it makes money and power relative.**
- ▶ In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are **absolutized**, God can only be seen as **uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous**, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 57)

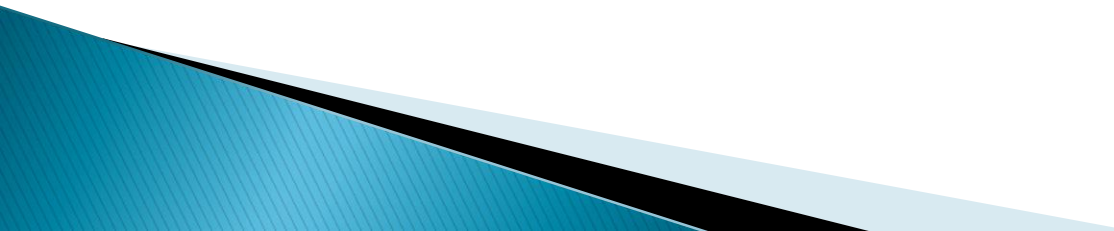
The Ecological Crisis and Social Injustice

»» Pope Francis I, the Poor and the Planet

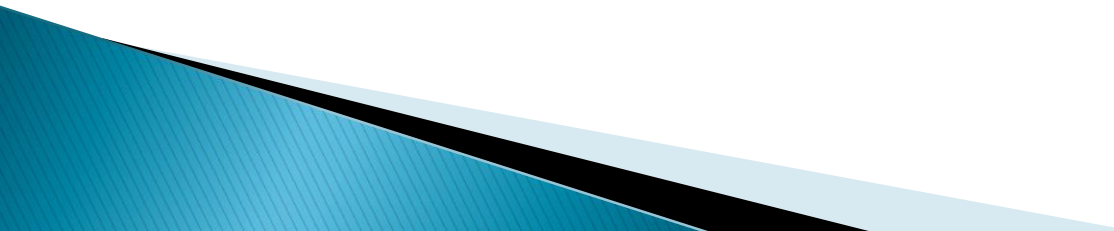
Laudato Si!

- ▶ Literally, “Praise be to you!”
- ▶ “On the Care for our Common Home”
- ▶ Released May 24, 2015

The ecological crisis

- ▶ Pollution, waste, and the throwaway culture
 - “an immense pile of filth” (21)
 - ▶ Climate change
 - ▶ Misuse of water
 - ▶ Loss of Biodiversity
 - ▶ Decline in quality of human life and breakdown of society
 - ▶ Global inequality
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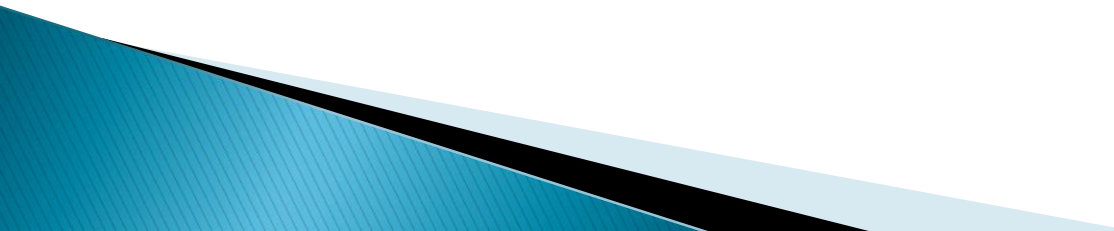
The poor and the planet

- ▶ One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. (29)
 - ▶ Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a **commodity** subject to the laws of the market. (30)
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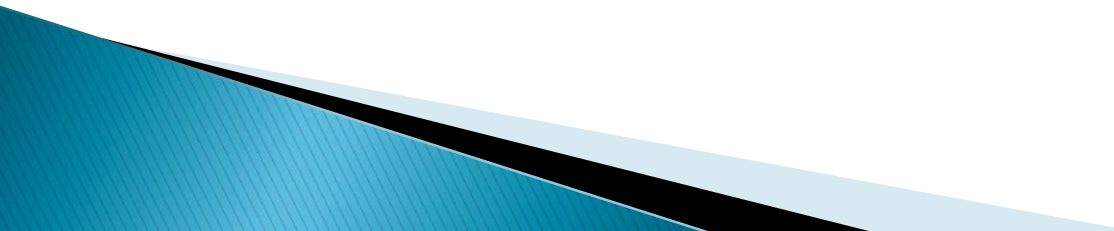
Absolutization of the Market System in Practice

- ▶ In the meantime, economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment. Here we see how environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked. (56)

The material harm

- ▶ The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. (195)
- 

The spiritual harm

- ▶ Culture of indifference
 - ▶ Culture of distraction
 - ▶ Self-promotion, self-absorption
 - ▶ Desperate, obsessive consumerism
- 

Redefining idolatry

»» The influence of the Theology
of Liberation

Gustavo Guitierrez: Idolatry, death and evil

- ▶ *The God of Life*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).
- ▶ *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

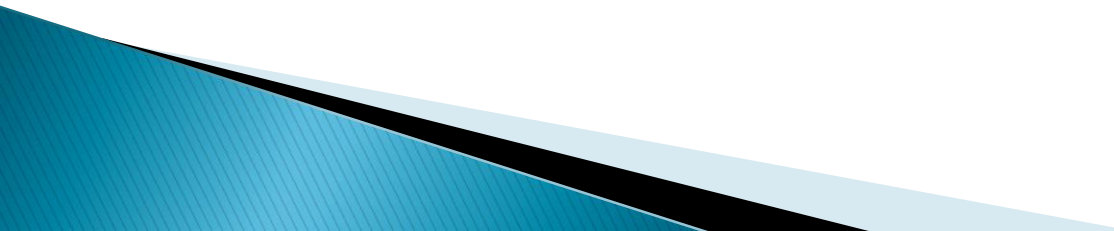


Gustavo Gutiérrez on Idolatry

Cognitive dimension

- ▶ Acceptance of something finite as absolute
- ▶ Opposite of faith: idolatry

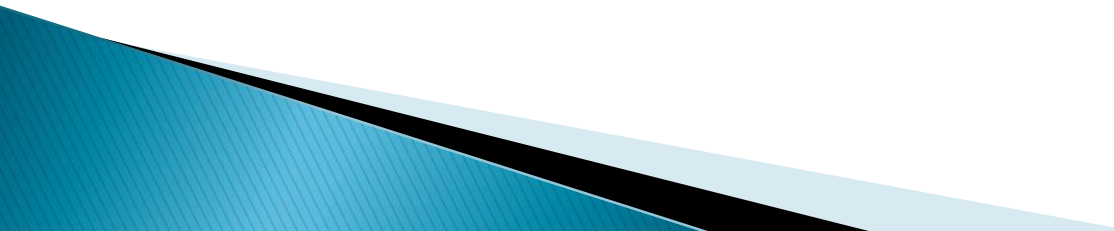
Practical dimension

- ▶ Trust and submission
 - ▶ Work of human hands
 - ▶ Demand for human victims
- 

Laudato Si'!: Idolatry, not atheism, is the problem

- ▶ Letter addressed to “all people of good will.” (62)
- ▶ Calls for dialogue among Christians, among world religions, with science (199–201)
- ▶ No call to conversion *except* in “Ecological Conversion” (216–17)
 - “Profound interior conversion” addressed only to Christians to overcome cynicism and passivity

Ideology and idolatry

- ▶ The idolatry of money (absolutization of the market) turns people into objects, instruments that serve the market and the interests of the wealthy
 - ▶ When an ideology is complete (becomes a closed system), we are closed to others: no need for dialogue or self-criticism; no need to listen to the “Other” (the poor)
 - ▶ Our needs become totalized.
- 

Pope Francis and I–Thou relations

- ▶ Our openness to others, **each of whom** is a “**thou**” capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility as human persons. A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our **openness to the “Thou” of God.** (119)

St. Francis as model

- ▶ He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them “to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason”. His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. (10)


St. Francis as model

- ▶ Cannot think of other species as “resources” for us to use. “We have no such right.” (33)
- ▶ Francis’s mysticism: treat animals and nature *as if* they had subjectivity and could therefore be in an I–Thou relationship
- ▶ Seeing animals and flowers as “Thou” is no more artificial than seeing animals and flowers as “resources” (It). Except the latter leads to destruction and the other to justice, peace, and harmony.

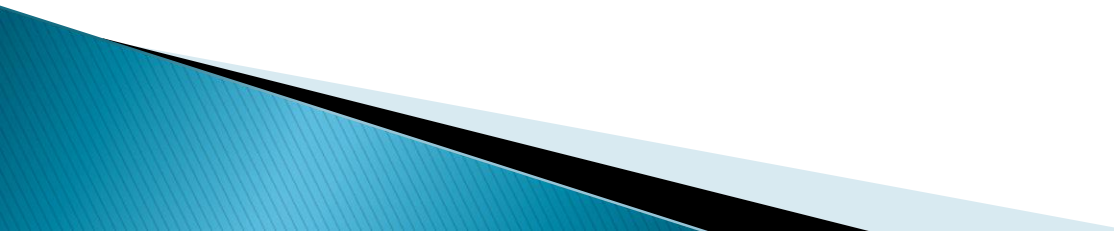
Spirituality and Globalization

» Alexander and Francis

Alexander and Francis: parallel discourses of transcendence

- ▶ Shared human impulse for seeking identity, purpose, community
 - ▶ Defense of human dignity and freedom
 - Humanism of Erikson, Polanyi, etc.
 - Dignity of the human person
 - ▶ Social analysis v. individualistic moralizing
 - ▶ Protest against absolutization of market–society
 - ▶ Interpretation of consumerism (and ecological crisis) as response to social dislocation
- 

Spirituality and connection

- ▶ Both Alexander and Francis interpret globalization in terms of disconnection
 - ▶ Disconnection from
 - One another
 - Tradition, culture, ethics, and community
 - Nature
 - A transcendent frame of meaning
 - ▶ Both use the language of spirituality to promote reconnection
- 

Horizontal v. Vertical Transcendence

▶ Alexander wants a this-worldly or immanent transcendence

▶ Francis wants a this-worldly transcendence that leads to an experience of or a participation in an other-worldly transcendence

“Horizontal”

“Vertical”

Thank you!

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