

Climate change is the visible and tangible effect before everyone's eyes, both in the North and in the South of our planet. The emission of carbon dioxide, due to the indiscriminate use of fossil raw materials, produces the so-called "greenhouse effect", with disastrous consequences for the environment and human life: increase in temperature, melting glaciers, hurricanes and typhoons, destruction of forests, drought and desertification of territories, destruction of biodiversity (experts tell us that up to 50 living species are destroyed on our planet every year); the constant threat to the survival of millions of people, forced to emigrate and to the upheaval of mother earth itself and of all species of the animal, vegetable and mineral world.

In the Second Vatican Council, the Church had emphasized that "individual and collective human activity, that is to say, the enormous effort by which men and women over the centuries have sought to improve their living conditions, considered in themselves, corresponds to God's plan" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 34, 1966). But he also said that: "the greater the power of men, the greater is the responsibility of both individuals and communities" (GS, n. 34).

In his speech addressed to scientists and representatives of the Universities of the United Nations (Hiroshima, 25 February 1981) John Paul II raised the concept of the "righteous application" of science and technology, because - the Pope states - "we know that this potential is not neutral: it can be used both for the progress of mankind and for its degradation"; for this reason, some years later (Melbourne, homily at the Victorian Racing Club, 28 November 1986) the Pope invited scientists to "use their research and technical capacity for the service of humanity". Man cannot and must not forget that the ability to transform and, in a certain sense, to create the world through his own work, must always take place on the basis of the first original donation of things by God, nor must he dispose arbitrarily of the earth, subjecting it to his will, as if it did not have its own previous form and destination, given to it by God, which man can certainly develop, but must not betray (concepts much reiterated in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus* nn 34. 37; 1991).

Man, however, in this system of market economy and financialisation of the economy, rather than being God's guardian and collaborator, has become a tyrant and predator of the goods that belong to all humankind. The plundering of natural resources and the destruction of ecosystems have generated poverty and exclusion of millions of human beings, highlighting the intrinsic relationship between nature and man, the environment and society. Everything is interconnected, affirms Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*; for this reason it becomes increasingly necessary and urgent to change this unjust system, which generates the culture of waste and the destruction of the common home.

Integral ecology, as the Pope proposes, becomes for the mission of Jesus' disciples the new paradigm of reference; defending the environment to save humanity, promoting an ecological conversion (*Laudato si'* 216-221).

The Synod of the Amazon (Rome 6-27 October 2019) together with two other events promoted by Pope Francis in 2020 follow the papal magisterium and propose an integral, pastoral, ecclesial,

ecological, synodal, economic and educational conversion. The first event will be in Assisi in March: "The economy of Francis" in search of an alternative economic system to the neo-liberal system; the other in Rome in May: "The global compact on education" in search of common foundations with other religious leaders and operators in the university world, culture and communication for an education that leads to peaceful coexistence and solidarity among peoples. A challenging program that challenges our missionary presence on the various continents and that motivates us to be true Comboni missionary disciples, living the joy of the Gospel in today's world through social ministry, as proposed to us in the General Chapter of 2015.

Further readings:

Gesualdi, F. (2009). *L'altra via*, Terre di Mezzo.

Costa, G. – Foglizzo, P. (2019). Peccato ecologico, un appello alla responsabilità, in *Aggiornamenti sociali*, n.12, pp. 797-804.

Centro Nuovo Modello di Sviluppo. (2016). *Impronta maldistribuita*.

Francis. (2015). *Laudato si'*.