



## Presentation by Joe Holland

On the occasion of  
Jesuit Forum's tenth anniversary celebration  
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### **Introduction by Anne-Marie Jackson, director of the Jesuit Forum**

*Joe Holland, who is our guest speaker tonight, is a longtime friend of Bill's. They worked together at the Center of Concern in Washington, DC., along with our friend Peter Henriot and others. We are delighted that he is here tonight. Joe is a philosopher and a Catholic Christian theologian exploring a postmodern global ecological civilization and world church. His most recent book is called Post-modern Ecological Spirituality.*

### **JOE HOLLAND**

Thank you so much, Anne Marie. It's a delight to be here. I would like to congratulate you, and everyone at the Forum, on the important work that you are doing.

I would also like to congratulate the authors of Bill's biography, *Faith and Freedom: The Life and Times of Bill Ryan SJ*, by Bob Chodos and Jamie Swift. When it first came out, I read the book with an eye to Bill's life. It was done so well. Then, I read it again last week, as part of getting ready to come up here. In doing so, I also realized that the book's analysis of church and society in Canada and North America, and in the Vatican and the wider world, is extraordinary.

Bill was, as you know, very concerned with "reading the signs of the times," and with what he called "following the energy." So, I would like first to say a little bit about Bill, just from personal experience. Second, I would like to say something more about the reading the signs of the times and following the energy, namely in relation to Catholic Social Teaching and ecology. Finally, I would like to say something about the laity, which was a central theme in Bill's consciousness, and speak

especially in relation to Ecological Spirituality and what I call a lay ecological "new monasticism."

### **PART I About Bill Ryan**

About Bill, just a few words. There have been only two major mentors in my life: one was Gibson Winter, an Anglican priest-sociologist with whom I studied at the University of Chicago; and the other was Bill Ryan. The thing that always struck me about Bill is that he was a psychic. He really was. Some people are born to be talented basketball players or ballet dancers, but Bill, I believe, was born psychic.

Bill's psychic skills were unbelievable. He would meet people and immediately know all kinds of things about them. It was as if he could see into their souls. He knew immediately whether they had good energy or bad energy.

Again, being psychic is a natural gift that some people have, and he had it. It explains a lot of why he was so successful. Most of us fumble through life, but Bill knew immediately that this thing was possible here with this person, or impossible there with that person. He would say: "Do not waste your energy over there; go over here." It is the way his psyche worked, differently than for most of us.

You might think that Bill was ambitious, and it might appear that way, but I do not think he was. Ambitious people always try to gain advantage for themselves. But for Bill – I would say from early on, probably when he got the call to become a Jesuit – there was always a guiding mission in service of others.



Socrates once said he had a *daimon* (as in "demon," but which in Greek is like an angel) telling him what to do. I suspect there was a guardian angel for Bill, always telling him where the mission is and where to go.

We know that Bill always went with powerful people, but only with the good powerful people, and then only with the good powerful people who would support the mission that guided him.

In the midst of such serious business, however, Bill was humble and fun loving. He also had an incredible capacity for deep levels of dialogue with people who welcomed that. He was someone you could confide in.

Finally, if you read Bill's biography, a subliminal theme (found all through his Jesuit life) is that of the laity. And by laity, I do not mean laity versus clergy and religious.

In Christianity for the first three centuries, there were no "clergy" and there were no "religious." There were certainly offices of deacons and presbyters and bishops. There were also intentional communities, particularly of women, that played important roles. But the entire thing was lay. I do not know if Bill explicitly understood that, but I think that was driving him.

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a subliminal but clearly seen  
theme all the way through is  
that of the laity.*

By the way, a pivotal experience in Bill's life – and incidentally also in mine, even though we were not working together at that point – was the 1987 Synod on the Laity. That Synod, because of its failure, was a negative turning point in the life of the Catholic Church, and a source of great disappointment for very many.

## **PART II Reading the Signs of the Times, Catholic Social Teaching, & Ecology**

Let us now turn to reading the signs of the times. Today, and especially in terms of ecology, I will reflect from the viewpoint of Catholic Social Teaching, and particularly in regard to Pope Leo XIII, Pope John XXIII, who was a pivotal figure, and Pope Francis.

### **Three Stages of Catholic Social Teaching**

More than a century ago, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) started what was then the new *modern* stage or strategy of Catholic Social Teaching. It constituted a complete reversal of where the Catholic Church had been during the 19th Century,

I call this *modern* strategy initiated by Leo the second stage of Catholic Social Teaching, while I see Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) as inaugurating a third *postmodern* stage.

The first *anti-modern* stage of Catholic Social Teaching had begun in 1740 when Pope Benedict XIV finally used the printing press to publish an encyclical letter.<sup>1</sup>

In that first stage, the popes were attempting to preserve, and later to restore, the classical European aristocratic civilization that had been central to both the classical and medieval paradigms of evangelization in the West. That alliance between the European aristocracy and the European Catholic bishops had been central to evangelization in the past, and it had been working for approximately 1500 years.

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<sup>1</sup> At that time, the pope wanted to reassure people that, even though his document came from a machine (the printing press), it still had the same authority as if it had been written by hand. It took the popes a while to catch up with the printing press.

But, by Leo's time, that project had become a hopeless cause. The Western European aristocracy had been defeated and a new bourgeois class was taking power.

In response, Leo, through his new second stage of Catholic Social Teaching, sought to reform the Modern Industrial Civilization in its bourgeois liberal form, but also to resist its communist or socialist form, especially because of Marx's atheistic teachings.

Leo shifted the papal strategy by allying with moderate Catholic members of the liberal bourgeoisie, by defending unions for industrial workers, by promoting the regulatory and social-welfare state, and by proposing a reform of the philosophical foundations for modern Liberalism.

Later, Pope Pius XI would write in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1941) that moderate socialism and Catholic Social Teaching were almost the same thing, except for the atheism, but that, because of the atheism, Catholics were forbidden to cooperate with socialists.

Pope Pius XI continued Leo's strategy of seeking to reform Modern Industrial Civilization in cooperation with the moderate Catholic bourgeoisie and in alliance with workers' movements. That was the Catholic social project right through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To some degree it succeeded, and so it seemed still promising.

Leo also firmly believed that the reform of the philosophical foundations of modern Liberalism was a necessary condition for his proposed societal reforms. The way he thought that modern liberal philosophy could be reformed was through the neo-Thomist revival but this ultimately failed. neo-Thomism never achieved his proposed reform of modern liberal philosophy.

Perhaps in the future, neo-Thomism could have stronger intellectual influence by undergoing a still-needed cosmological shift at its grounding level, but that did not happen during the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, and it still has not yet happened. Yet to-

day, Leo's proposed philosophical reform is needed even more than before, because modern liberal philosophy is now pursuing its logical devolution into Nietzschean nihilism.

As a result, we already live today in a Nietzschean nihilistic society, where economic wealth is intensely concentrated, where political power is intensely concentrated, and where celebrity fame is also intensely concentrated. Those are now the only public meaning systems that are left. But their meanings are hollow and even vicious.

### **End of the Modern World**

We have indeed come to the end of what I call "Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization," or in shorthand "Modern Industrial Civilization." It is also what has been called "The End of the Modern World."

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Colonial Civilization."*

Some of you have probably read the writings of Romano Guardini, a German-Italian philosopher who was influential in Catholic intellectual circles during the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1950, Guardini published in German an important book titled *Das Ende der Neuzeit* (*The End of the Modern World*). It was a prophetic book. The time was not quite the end of the Modern World, but Guardini saw it coming.

Guardini said that the modern, uprooted, scientific understanding of power – what Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* called "technoscience" – had caused the plundering and exploiting of Nature. Further, he claimed, it had been undermining human civilization and human life. In reaction, Guardini argued, Nature would inflict its revenge.

In the same year of 1950 when Guardini's book was published, and when Pope John XXIII was still Papal Nuncio in Paris, John met with Guardini for three hours. Guardini said he came away from

that meeting so impressed; before that meeting, he had no idea that he was so intellectually profound.

A decade later during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the two great ideological systems of the world almost caused the destruction of much of life across planet Earth, John worked with Norman Cousins of the Saturday Review to serve as a secret go-between for President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev in defusing that terrifying crisis. But most historical accounts do not report that John was central to defusing the Cuban Missile Crisis.

John's initiative also led to a religious opening for the Soviet Union. From that time forward, Premier Khrushchev kept on his desk a papal medallion that John XXIII had given him. When important Soviet officials would come to his office for a meeting, he would play with that medallion. Whenever they would ask "What is that?" he would mischievously reply: "Oh, just a medallion the pope gave me."

### **Pope John XXIII's New Stage of Catholic Social Teaching**

John XXIII understood, I believe, that history had indeed come to what Guardini named "The End of the Modern World," that is, the end of Modern Industrial Civilization, which has now also become both globalized and unsustainable.

### *John XXIII understood that history had come to the end of Modern Industrial Civilization.*

John did not use the word "ecology," yet in his first social encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, he emphasized that we must not only have urban development; we also need to retain, and further develop, the rural roots of human society in Nature. Of course, John was the child of a large peasant family, and he understood well that Nature remains always foundational.

Even Pope Leo XIII, way back in *Rerum Novarum* (1891), wrote that workers should be paid enough so they could eventually buy little farms, and could leave the city and go back to the country. This rural/Nature-rooted theme runs deep within the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

By the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after two world wars, the Holocaust, and the atomic bombing of Japan, and later with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the crisis of "third-world development," it became clear to John XXIII that Modern Industrial Civilization, which was now being globalized, had not been reformed. The very opposite had happened.

For that reason, John XXIII created his new strategy. Since John's papacy, we have been in the third stage of Catholic Social Teaching.

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John was a brilliant man, but he had decided early not to let most people know that, because as a young scholar he had been almost excommunicated for Modernism. At that time, he wrote in his diary that he would never let anyone else know what he truly thought. He decided in effect to play dumb, and always to be obedient and docile. But he remained a deep intellectual and an historical scholar with prophetic instincts.

This third stage is explicitly the new Global Stage. But, now looking back after *Laudato Si'*, we may also call it the Ecological Stage. In addition, I would call it the Postmodern Stage, though not in the sense of what I call "academic postmodernism" (deconstructionism, post-structuralism, and other intellectual fads that spread through academia in the past several decades), but simply in the sense of "after the modern."

In a wider perspective, this new period also constitutes the birth of a new postmodern Cosmology that theologians like Thomas Berry, and scien-



tists like Brian Swimme, Fritjof Capra, and others, have been attempting to articulate.

### **Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, & Integral Ecology**

Interestingly, in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis cited Guardini's book, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, eight times! As a young Jesuit, Francis had gone to Europe to do doctoral studies on Guardini. Thus, Francis' critique of "technoscience," as a conquering power devastating Nature and the human family within it, is from Guardini. Again, Guardini had warned that Nature was going to inflict its revenge.

(In my book *Postmodern Ecological Spirituality*, I have tried to explore the past roots and future implications of Guardini's critique in relation to the "New Cosmology" by correlating spirituality and civilization.)

Also, in *Laudato Si'*, Francis first wrote about "Integral Ecology," which weaves together Human Ecology (especially in relation to the poor) and Natural Ecology, and later then about the need for "Ecological Spirituality." But I would also include "Spiritual Ecology" within Integral Ecology, as part of a still fuller ecological understanding that embraces the natural world, humans within the natural world, and the spiritual energy of the entire natural world.

Sister Kathleen Deignan once helpfully wrote that, when Thomas Berry spoke about spirituality, he was not referring to a human spirituality concerned about Earth. Rather, she pointed out, he was referring to the spirituality of Earth itself, in which we humans share. Thus, I propose, we need to understand Integral Ecology in its fullness as the interwoven fabric of natural, human, and spiritual ecology all together.

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### **Deep Cosmological Foundation**

The cosmological foundation of Modern Industrial Civilization, both in its liberal-capitalist and scientific-socialist forms, came from the atomistic-mechanical Cosmology of the classical Greek philosopher Epicurus. Early modern scientists (at the time called "natural philosophers") consciously adopted the atomistic-mechanical philosophy of Epicurus as their paradigm for Modern Science. Epicurus was, of course, also anti-religious and a pure materialist.

Later, René Descartes tried to combine Epicurus' Materialism with a revisionist but schizophrenic Neoplatonism – envisioning a spiritual soul linked to an Epicurean universe that had no spiritual meaning. But that schizophrenic dualism could not be sustained over the long run, and it was not.

Ultimately, Descartes' schizophrenic dualism collapsed into what the British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead called "Scientific Materialism." Today, that scientific reductionism is degenerating into Friedrich Nietzsche's voluntarist Nihilism.

Such, I propose, is the disintegrating late-modern cosmological framework within which we are now living at the end of Modern Industrial Civilization, and at the end of its late-modern globalization across planet Earth.

By the way, the Chinese Communist Party now understands that terrible truth, and so for some time it has been on record calling for a new "Ecological Civilization." For that reason, the Chinese Communist Party is rapidly turning to solar energy.

But I fear that it is still locked into the reductionist cosmological paradigm of Modernity. So, it now needs to go deeper, because otherwise it will simply reproduce Modernity's problems in other

ways – again, unless it transforms the cosmological foundations.

### **Still Deeper Symbolic-Mythic Dimension**

In addition, there is a still deeper dimension than Cosmology, which is limited to Philosophy and Science. (Science presents new data and Philosophy interprets the data; that is how we get a cosmological view of the universe and of everything in it.) But there is the deeper level of *myth and symbols*, and this is where spirituality operates.

Paradoxically, Epicurus would have been angry at how late-modern technoscience is devastating Nature, because he loved Nature. Despite his irrational atomistic-mechanical philosophy, he still saw Nature as 'feminine,' as artistically creative, and as alive – again, contrary to his reductionist philosophy. I suspect that Epicurus was unconsciously continuing the ancient Greek cultural tradition of the Earth-Mother Goddess, without being aware of what he was doing.

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At this deeper level of symbol and myth, I have also concluded that, lodged at the foundations of classical and modern culture, there is a male mythic-symbolic flight from the feminine face of the Divine Mystery.

That flight appeared first in classical civilizations as *patriarchy*, which tried to subordinate the reproductive cycles of Nature into a 'lower' and 'feminine' symbol system, misunderstood as passive and disempowered. But Nature is also symbolically masculine, yet it was symbolically deformed as only 'feminine' and supposedly 'lower' in that passive and disempowered deformation.

Later in Modernity, there emerged something more destructive than patriarchy, which I call "*hyper-masculinism*." Patriarchy had tried to *rise above* the cycles of Nature, but hyper-masculinism has tried to *destroy* Nature's cycles of *reproduction*, and to replace Nature's reproductive cycles with a techno-scientific *production* that is linear and hence male-phallic in its distorted symbolism.

This deformed hyper-masculine symbolic consciousness is what I call at the deep cultural level a rejection of the ancient myth of the Noble Warrior, in favor of what I call the modern corrupt myth of the Deformed Warrior – not the noble warrior who defends the community of life, but the ignoble one who destroys it.

### **PART III Laity, Ecological Spirituality, & Postmodern New Monasticism**

Let us now explore a bit more this deep symbolic-mythic level of spirituality.

#### **Modern Psychological Spirituality**

The modern Catholic spirituality that we know so well from Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross (with older Neoplatonist roots) is the modern *Psychological Spirituality* of Interiority.

In their Catholic cases, Ignatius, Teresa, and John remained in touch with the wider spirituality of the Cosmos. Thus, while their spirituality was indeed psychological, it was not separated from Cosmic Spirituality. But as Modernity advanced, its Psychological Spirituality of Interiority became detached from Cosmological Spirituality. It became privatized and confined to the psyche.

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We hear older forms of that disembodied spiritual consciousness in the Neoplatonist language of "saving souls" and "going to heaven." But those phrases are not from Jesus. Rather, they come straight out of Plato.

Jesus indeed did not preach "saving souls," but rather the "resurrection of the body," and not "going to heaven," but rather the "eschatological renewal of the Heavens and the Earth."

Modern Catholic spirituality has often collapsed into that non-biblical and Neoplatonist understanding. Further, the deeper we go into the psychological without the cosmological, the more privatized our spirituality becomes. Eventually, this trend becomes unsustainable and spirituality begins to disintegrate. Then, it tends to collapse into the Materialism of the consumer society, where the vacuum is filled by Nietzschean Nihilism.

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**Five Past Long Waves  
of Christian Spiritual Energy**

To set a wider historical context for that late-modern spiritual degeneration, we need to recall the multiple historical waves of spiritual energy that rose and fell within the history of Christianity.

**Early Christian Wave.** The earliest wave was the early Christian *Laos*, the purely lay movement of disciples. Jesus, who was martyred by the Roman Empire, and those early Christians who were also martyred, were all lay. They were all resisting imperial idolatry and choosing the freedom of the Gospel, to the point of sacrificing oneself in love.

That was early Christianity's powerful and foundational lay spirituality.

**Late-Classical Coenobitical Wave.** Then, in the early 4th Century, the Emperor Constantine began construction of what I call "the Imperial Church." That new construction inverted the meaning of the Cross. Instead of being the symbol of Jesus as persecuted and executed by the Empire, the meaning of the Cross became inverted to "*in hoc signo vinces*" (*in this sign you will conquer*)<sup>2</sup>.

The Cross thus became the symbol of imperial conquest and devastation. That terrible inversion of the meaning of the Cross much later continued into genocidal conquest of the First Peoples of the Americas, into the horrendous Atlantic Slave System, and into Modern Industrial Colonialism. So many conquered peoples experienced the Cross of Jesus as a symbol of conquering and killing people.

Back in the Imperial Church of the late-classical period, ordained leaders became clericalized and were imperially mandated to "rule over" the laity. In response, some lay mystical-prophetic disciples, faced with the anti-prophetic compromise of the Imperial Church, chose to become the "Desert Fathers" and "Desert Mothers." They, and the wider lay coenobitical communities around them, grew dramatically.

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<sup>2</sup> "The historian bishop Eusebius of Caesaria stated that Constantine was marching with his army, when he looked up to the sun and saw a cross of light above it, and with it the Greek words "(έν) τούτω νικά" ("In this, conquer"), a phrase often rendered into Latin as *in hoc signo vinces* ("in this sign, you will conquer"). At first, Constantine did not know the meaning of the apparition. But on the following night, he had a dream in which Christ explained to him that he should use the sign of the cross against his enemies." (Wikipedia)

Today, the Vatican Museum still has its "Room of Constantine," used for official receptions, with giant murals of Constantine's vision of the Cross, and of the bloody military battle that gained him control over the entire Roman Empire.

Such people left the Imperial Civilization, supposedly to live in harsh self-sacrifice of the desert. But they loved living in Nature. Like the later St. Francis of Assisi, they befriended the animals and the plants. They found it a wonderful way to live. They also created what I call ancient Christian "*ecovillages*."

There were plenty of married families, couples, and children in the coenobitical communities. One community following St. Anthony reportedly had 10,000 people living in the Egyptian desert. But it must have been a fertile part of the desert to support so many people.

**Early Medieval Monastic Wave.** Later, however, the Western Roman Empire began to collapse, so there was little point in going to the desert to protest spiritually against it. That is where *monasticism* came in. It evangelized the migrating Germanic tribes and, with them, began to rebuild Western Civilization in Medieval form.

But it was not Latin Benedictine monks, with their non-missionary vow of "stability," who did that. Rather, it was the nomadic Irish Keltic missionary monks, along with British, Welsh, and Scottish monks trained by Irish scholars, who went among, and befriended, the migrating Germanic tribes. They successfully evangelized them, and together with them they rebuilt Western Civilization.

Because the Keltic monks were tribal people themselves, they were welcomed by leaders of the Germanic tribes. Together, they created the Medieval intellectual renaissance, and they also planted the foundation for many European towns and cities. Vienna in Austria, for example, was developed by Irish Keltic monks. (In pre-Roman times when Keltic culture spanned much of Europe, Vienna had probably been a small Keltic village.)

By contrast, Latin Benedictine monasticism carried the imperial legacy. In partnership with the theocratic papacy, it gained vast political-economic control over high-Medieval Europe.

Further, as noted, Benedictine monks did not have a mobile missionary drive, and Benedict had reportedly denounced nomadic missionary monks.

Gradually, Benedict's Roman form of monasticism began to displace Irish Keltic monasticism, which had been Nature-centred. That monastic shift eventually gave rise to an imperial, wealthy, hierarchical, and heavily masculine form of the Western Church.

As is well known, the great early sociologist Max Weber wrote, in his now classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that Jean Calvin was the father of Capitalism. But he also wrote that Benedict was its grandfather.

The Industrial Revolution began in the English Midlands, a territory that was once controlled by Benedictine monasteries. Because of their wealth, they were later "secularized" by King Henry VIII and given to his friends. These wealthy monasteries had been involved in large-scale commercial sheep-raising, and they had vast numbers of lay workers for their wool industry.

That region later became the geographic foundation of the modern capitalist Industrial Revolution. So, there was indeed, as Weber wrote, an ancestral line from high-Medieval Benedictine monasticism to Modern Industrial Capitalism.

During the high Middle Ages, Europe's Medieval commercial cities developed out of the Crusades, thanks to the re-opening of the Silk Roads into Asia. Thus, small commercial cities like Assisi, Sienna, and Perugia began to trade profitably with the East.

**High Medieval Mendicant Wave.** At that same time, there arose the Medieval Mendicant movements, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans, who launched a new historical form of spirituality. This new form was also mobile, and it contrasted with the "stability" of Benedictine monasticism.





Saint Francis' form of Mendicant Spirituality challenged the new rising bourgeois class at its individualistic, exploitative, and non-ecological foundation. He did that by identifying with the poor, by recovering the ancient spirituality of Creation, and by supporting popular democracy.

**Modern Apostolic Wave.** But when Modern Industrial Capitalism developed as a more sophisticated form of the modern bourgeois project, Mendicant Spirituality became no longer sufficient. And so there appeared what I call (with humour, but also with great awe) the "Catholic Department of Health, Education, and Welfare." It was created by the modern "Apostolic" stage of "Religious Life."

Apostolic Religious Life, based on the modern Psychological Spirituality of Interiority, provided fresh spiritual energy for Modern Industrial Civilization. Also, it was Apostolic Religious, and primarily women-religious, who built the modern Western church. And their work generated a great deal of loyalty among the people whom they served with heroic self-sacrifice.

Today, however, for this "Catholic Department of Health, Education and Welfare" to continue ministering to the collapsing Modern Industrial Civilization it is like trying spiritually to protest against the ancient Roman Empire when it was in fact collapsing. Again, at the end of the Western Roman Empire, there was little point in going to the Desert as a spiritual protest against the compromised Western Imperial Church, for both the Western Empire and the Western Imperial Church were falling apart.

Also today, it is no longer spiritually meaningful to provide supportive ministries for Modern Industrial Civilization, because it is now collapsing. Correlatively, the modern form of the Roman Catholic Church, designed to function within the Modern Industrial Civilization, is also collapsing.

### **Emerging Postmodern of Lay Ecological Spiritual Energy**

Therefore, we now need a fresh and regenerative spiritual wave of what I prefer to call "Mystical-Prophetic Intentional Communities" (rather than calling it "Religious Life"), as one more new and now lay postmodern-ecological stage of Catholic spiritual energy.

This new stage follows the past historical stages of spirituality, again: the early lay Church; the late-classical Cenobites; the feudal Monastics; the high-medieval Mendicants; and the modern Apostolics. Further, this new stage is now self-consciously *lay*.

### *We need a new wave of "Mystical-Prophetic Intentional Communities" that will be ecological.*

However, when early forms of new spiritual movements appear, they are often somewhat distorted and often carry errors. So too with many of the newly emerging lay movements.

In that vein, Saint Francis did not invent his form of the Mendicant movement. Rather, he copied, but also corrected, a similar and wider movement in Italy at that time. Because he corrected the errors of those other examples, his model flourished, while the others did not.

Now we need a new postmodern lay wave of Mystical-Prophetic Intentional Communities that will be *ecological* – based not on the modern Psychological Spirituality of Interiority (again, so often detached from Cosmic Spirituality), but rather a comprehensively Ecological Spirituality that includes the psychological dimension. That is the great spiritual challenge before us.

### *These communities will be based on a comprehensive ecological spirituality that includes the psychological.*

By and large, we do not yet have that. I am certainly not going to create it. (Far too old!) But

many young people are already “planting seeds” of integral-ecological regeneration. Some of them may be gathered here today. And there are many more creative young people across planet Earth planting similar seeds.

In reading the signs of the times, as Thomas Berry told us, we discover that we are now at the end of the long Cenozoic Era. Others argue that we are now living at the beginning of the new Anthropocene Epoch, which may cause the collapse of all civilization. Some are even predicting that the majority of the human race could soon be wiped out. That sounds dramatic, and I am not sure if that is true, but it could be.

So, we indeed live in turbulent times! We will not be able to save Modern Industrial Civilization. But we can plant creative “seeds” for a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Civilization, in which lay Ecological Spirituality will be regenerative.

### Three Strategic Paths for Apostolic Religious Communities

Meanwhile, Apostolic Religious Orders are not going to disappear, but they will be diminished. Within the late-modern transition, there are *three strategic alternatives* for modern Apostolic Religious Congregations:

**Restoration Strategy.** Apostolic Religious Congregations can pursue a *restoration strategy*, as Mother Theresa did, which is still valid. People following that model will always be loved for their good work, but they will not transform the world.

**Integration Strategy.** Apostolic Religious Congregations can pursue an *integration strategy*, by trying to adapt to the late-modern but collapsing corporate world, especially through large corporate apostolates. But their institutional integration with late-modern capitalism will make them spiritually sterile. It will also probably precipitate their institutional death.

**Regeneration Strategy.** Apostolic Religious Congregations can finally pursue a *regeneration strategy*, becoming midwife and mentor by working with new young creative lay leaders in Ecological Spirituality. They can help create regenerative *eco-villages*, as experimental contributions to a lay and ecological “new monasticism.” By doing so, they can slowly but creatively transform themselves into the new emerging spiritual form.

Of course, pursuit of the regeneration strategy would have to be done in prudential ways, perhaps beginning with small experiments, but eventually reshaping larger institutions into regenerative postmodern models of Integral Ecology and Ecological Spirituality.

*What we can do is plant  
“seeds” which will model this  
new spirituality.*

I think this third strategy will prove fruitful. It may prove more fruitful, however, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, than in North America and Europe. But things can still be done here, although they may be more difficult. Again, this new lay Ecological Spirituality is already emerging, even if it is still small. Right now, it may not seem too important, but it is like the Gospel’s mustard seed.

In conclusion, I believe that this new ecological spiritual energy is good energy. I also believe that, if Bill Ryan were physically present with us, he would boldly tell us to “follow that energy.” But Bill is still with us spiritually, So now, perhaps in a gentler manner, he will help to guide us toward regenerative paths of Integral Ecology, which are grounded in Ecological Spirituality and Catholic Social Teaching, and which will seek to create a regenerative lay ecological “new monasticism.”