

Scholars Reflect on Ecology and the Person

Highlight Man's Role as Guardian of Creation

ROME, FEB. 11, 2010 (Zenit.org) - Scholars are reflecting in a special way on the role of the person in ecology, and how theology sheds light on this area.

This was the topic of a recent interdisciplinary course in Rome's Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, commonly known as the Angelicum.

The conference, titled, "Man, Guardian of Creation; Ecologies and Theology," was directed by two professors, Giuseppe Marco Salvati and Angela Maria Cosentino. They gave a talk on Benedict XVI's repeated invitations to unite environmental ecology with human ecology.

Cosentino told ZENIT that the various addresses delivered by the speakers were well received.

The speaker on the theological dimension was Simone Morandini, who, with great clarity and many references, called for a correct reading of the theology of creation. This theology, the professor explained, requires the implementation of long-term policies for the defense of the environment.

The biblical dimension was addressed by Stipe Juric, who recalled that the Old and New Testaments narrate, with thought-provoking poetic images, the greatness of God and man, created in his image and likeness, called to eternity. He noted that man's life is like a pendulum that oscillates between egoism and the call to the divine.

The bioethical perspective was presented by Francesco Compagnoni, who warned about the risks of making nature an absolute value or of dominating it without respect.

He proposed an integral ecology that values nature, gifted with its own ontological consistency, of value in itself because it was created by God. In this model, the professor said, man, the guardian of nature, transcends it in the hierarchy of values.

God's love

In reference to the Trinitarian dimension, Marco Salvati explained that reality does not originate in chance, but rather in the love of the Trinity, the sole principle of creation.

Nature is the scene of the history of salvation, he said, in which man should express the love of the Trinity and help the whole of creation to return to the Father.

The demographic point of view was addressed by Riccardo Cascioli, who clarified some prejudices propagated to promote an anti-birth policy.

He spoke about the link between resources and development, explaining that resources must not be considered a fixed pie to be divided among many, but rather a means that also depends on man's creativity. Man, Cascioli pointed out, is not only a consumer but also a producer, though he must be careful not to waste what he has.

He noted that the present demographic decline, as Caritas in Veritate explains, is the cause and not the effect of the economic crisis.

The ecological perspective was presented by Antonio Gaspari, who said that the environmental question represents the social question of the third millennium.

This question calls for attentive vigilance given the spread of a growing eugenic mentality against man, to the point that abortion is the first cause of death in Europe, he noted.

The economic undertaking and human resources oriented to not letting children be born, instead of helping them to live, spreads the idea that man is a "cancer" and not a resource of the planet, said Gaspari.

Economy

The economic dimension was addressed by Cristiano Colombi, who illustrated the link between the irresponsible use of natural resources and social injustice. He posited that the lack of public control over vital natural resources such as water, for example in Chile, was the cause of notable environmental and social problems.

The philosophical and moral point of view was given by Paolo Nepi. He explained how the myths of Prometheus and Epimetheus, Daedalus and Icarus, and the magician's apprentice, have a lesson for today. He stressed the need to reflect on strategies for developing a science and technology that serves mankind.

The magisterial and pedagogic perspective was addressed by Cosentino, who applied Church teaching to education.

She underlined the need to help adolescents and youth understand the precious value of man, collaborator of God, and to move from the "ecological question" to the "anthropological question."

Cosentino, explained that this course she helped direct covered "an innovative up-to-date topic."

She added that the course was "an invitation to a correct 'ecological conversion,' with the assumption of sober lifestyles of solidarity that, respecting human ecology, also bring benefits to environmental ecology."