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Refocusing the transformative role of the Eucharist as a means for Eco-praxis

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Since everything is interconnected, and everything is part of another, we must treat creation
with respect and love

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Statement of Independent Work

Hereby I, **Kimaryo, Colman Fabian**, declare and assure that I have composed the present thesis with the title *Refocusing the transformative Role of the Eucharist as a way for eco-praxis* independently, that I did not use any other sources or tools other than indicated and that I marked those parts of the text derived from the literal context or meaning from other works, digital media included- by making them known as such by indicating their sources.

Signature.....

Place.....

Date.....

1. General Introduction

In her article, “Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today” the Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether writes, “Within Monasticism, ecofeminism, covenantal ethics and cosmic theology, one finds ample resources for the transformation of human attitudes towards nature and a brighter ecological future”. (Ruether, 2003, p. 226). We begin this work with this quotation because Ruether does not only put her efforts, on the reality of the ecological crisis facing the world today but also proposes practical solutions by looking at the Liturgy as an option for ecological conversion. She realizes that there is a need to integrate the Church’s liturgical life with ecology where a true transformation could be found. Similarly, Elizabeth Johnson comments that “theology which seeks to understand faith more deeply in order to live vibrantly has a work to do” (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 2) Theology has to play its role to bring the awareness to the people that, God created this world not just for human beings but for all living and non-living beings. There is a need to place eco-spirituality within faith in God who created and sustained the entirety of creation and the cosmos. (Grey, 2012, p. 360).

In the celebration of the sacraments the Church uses matter from the created world. For example in the Eucharist we use wine and bread and they are all the fruits of the earth. This shows that there is a good link between the liturgy and ecology. In his Encyclical, *On Care for our common Home*, Pope Francis makes a clear link between the Church’s liturgical celebration and ecology. According to him the sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. For him through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Francis adds that the liturgical symbols like Water, oil, fire are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise.

Furthermore, Pope Francis adds that even the hand that blesses is an instrument of God’s love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. Thus, for the Christians, “all creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definite transformation. (...) Christianity does not reject matter, instead it is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit”. (Francis, 2015, pp. 127-128). Thus, our liturgical celebrations without the natural world would remain abstract and meaningless.

Elizabeth Johnson affirms this idea especially when she acknowledges the fact that the Church professes the God who created the heavens and earth. She indicates that, the creeds of the Church include the natural world in their confession of faith. She adds that, in the Nicene creed the Church confesses the one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, and in Jesus Christ, “through whom all things were made” who became part of creation through incarnation. (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 2). This shows that everything in the world is interconnected since God created them for a purpose. Even after creating all things God saw that everything was good. (cf. Gen. 1:10). Thus, the link between the Church’s liturgical celebration and creation is so obvious that one cannot deny.

Therefore, I wish to propose a thesis that: “Refocusing the Transformative role of the Eucharist as a means for Eco-praxis” will bring about an integral human, God and creation relationship. I have an assumption that the celebration of the Eucharist could be a good occasion for ecological education and the formation of the people’s attitude towards nature. Thus, our complementarity with nature as partners in the same planet could be renewed and admitted in the liturgical-sacramental celebration. This renewed friendship will help to reduce the harm we cause to our universe.

1.1 The Research Problem

The reality of the global warming and climate change as a result of environmental pollution has been a main concern to people of all kinds, countries, poor and rich. In Tanzania for example, there have been a consecutively seasons of drought and famine due to the lack of rains. Some regions like Kilimanjaro where the rains were always predictable has now become dry and even the snow of Mount Kilimanjaro has been reduced. Recently we have heard of floods taking away people’s settlements and destroying crops in the farms on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro. All these are few examples which result from environmental degradation done by the people themselves through farming, grazing, and destruction of the catchment areas by cutting down trees without replacing them.

In the recent days Pope Francis has produced an encyclical to address the ecological crisis which has threatened our planet and the life of both human and non-human beings. This thesis comes as a response to this problem which has been a point of discussion in many fields of human sciences if not all. I have an assumption that using the Eucharistic celebration as an opportunity for creating awareness and forming people will help to minimize the present-day ecological crisis to some extent. While considering the different contributions

from theologians and environmentalists, I have the impression that the Church has not done enough to address the issue. This implies that, there is a need to integrate the Church's liturgy with ecology.

Using the Liturgical symbols, signs and gestures used in the liturgical celebrations especially during the Eucharist will help to create awareness to the people that the Liturgy uses nature. Hence, there is a need to always remind ourselves of the importance of having a friendly relationship with nature since from nature we have our being and the vice versa. This will be explained in the different parts of the Mass using the Roman Missal to show how our engagement with nature can strengthen our relationship with Christ through the celebration of the Eucharist.

1.2 Research Question

Having given the background and problem at stake for this thesis, the main research question which will serve as a guide for this thesis will be the following: How can the Church's celebration of the Eucharist be used as an opportunity for the people's ecological formation, awareness and attitude?

This question will be answered in the following ways:

1. What are the current debates concerning the ecological crisis?
2. What is the relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist?
3. What is the transformative role of the different elements of the Eucharist according to the Roman Missal?
4. Finally, I will give some exploration of a pastoral experience as a conclusion to the answers given to the above raised questions.

1.3 Research Methodology and Sources to be used

The research methodology to be used in this research is hermeneutical, a method based on reading, analyzing and interpreting texts. Most of the texts we shall use for this work are academic as well as church documents especially the papal encyclicals. It is worth mentioning that the Roman Missal shall be the main source. It shall be exploited most especially in the third chapter to show the different elements of the Mass and how they can be used as the formative and transformative episodes for better ecological practices. It therefore presupposes that whatever reference that will be made outside the Roman Missal will be used as a secondary source.

Another source for this thesis will be some pastoral experiences and observations from the Catholic diocese of Moshi Tanzania. Some views about the way the priests in this

particular diocese use the liturgy as a school for ecological formation will be exploited. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter using my personal experience as a pastor, observations and the feedbacks from the Catholic clergy in Moshi diocese.

It should be noted that in most of the Church's documents with paragraph numbers I will simply give the references by showing the author, the year of publication and the page number where the text is to be found. In the case of the articles and other internet sources from the websites I will give the references by giving the authors name, the title and the year of publication, the date accessed and page numbers if any. Lastly, I will try as much as I can not to give too much direct quotations but to internalize the materials from the books I will consult while paraphrasing them.

1.4 Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate possible ways of responding to the present ecological crisis. By refocusing on the transformative role of the Eucharist as a way for eco-praxis, the thesis intends to use the Church's Liturgical celebrations especially the Holy Mass as a moment of formation, transformation of the people about the reality of the present-day ecological crisis. Thus, the Eucharist can be used as a school of learning how to relate with one another and the rest of Creation. In other words, I want to propose that everything in the world is interconnected so much so that nothing can claim independence from each other. For example the Church's liturgical function depends on nature for the species they use for bread and wine. This means that from nature we have Eucharist and from the Eucharist we are commissioned to love and serve one another where nature is not excluded.

The Fathers of the second Vatican Council in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* rightly call the Eucharist "the summit and source of the Christian life." (Flannery, 1975, p. 330) This implies that the Eucharist becomes the center and the heart of all the Catholic worship and prayer. Pope Francis reiterates this when he comments that "the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation". (Francis, 2015, p. 128). Thus, while exploring on the importance of the Eucharist in Christian life, we shall try to bring into light the necessity to use it as an occasion for ecological education. In other words, the Eucharist must bring about the transformation of the attitude and behaviour of the people towards their environment and the rest of creation. The participation of the Eucharistic celebration should help the people to be aware that what they use in the celebration like bread and wine is the

fruit of creation. The Eucharist therefore, becomes an impetus for living an integral life where all creation, both human and non-human will be at peace with one another.

1.5 Extent and Limitations

This thesis takes a pastoral dimension both on its approach and in its concern because it deals with the human relation with nature in the perspective of Liturgical Sacramental theology. This does not mean that we will avoid the doctrinal realities which might appear in the process of our writings. But the focus will mainly base itself on the practical life of the human person in relation to the environment in which he/she lives. The aim is to open up an avenue for further theological discussion on the reality of the ecological crisis and its impact on both human beings and creation at large.

Acknowledging the complexity and the ambiguous nature of the topic, I opt to use the words “nature” and “creation” more frequently in the course of writing this research to refer to the natural world which comprises of the community of plants, animals, humans and the habitats they occupy on this planet. However, I also agree with Elizabeth Johnson that a further distinction has to be made between the natural world and creation. The natural world studied by science in this context is being viewed through the lens of religious belief whereas the word “creation” is used in the light of its relation to God who creates it. (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 4).

1.6 Overview Structure of the thesis

For a systematic development of this thesis I intend to explore some current debates of ecological crisis in Chapter one. The chapter will give a brief explanation on the concept of ecology and the extent of the ecological crisis basing on the insights of contemporary theologians. I shall also dedicate special sub-topics to present some theological insights from Elizabeth Johnson and Pope Francis as a way of opening the ground for developing this thesis in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter two will give a theological interpretation of the Eucharist. The aim of this chapter is to give the readers a clue about the essence and nature of the Eucharist. This chapter will deal with the concept of the Eucharist, its institution, and its Biblical pre-figurations in both the New and Old Testament. The chapter will also discuss the matter and form of the Eucharist. This chapter is important because it will connect us to the third chapter which is the core of this thesis as it demonstrates how the Eucharist can be used as a transformative tool for people’s attitudes towards nature. In this chapter I will present the different elements of the Mass such as the Liturgy of the Word, the homily, the offertory, the

Eucharistic prayer, the sign of peace, the reception and distribution of the Holy Communion and the dismissal.

All these elements will be discussed in the context of ecology and the way they can be taken as moments for an individual's transformation towards ecological praxis. The third chapter will deal with the transformative role of the Eucharist for eco-praxis. Thus, the chapter shall reveal the ecological nature of the Eucharistic celebration and how it can be used as a transformative moment of people's attitudes and habits towards creation. Chapter four will give a pastoral theological analysis and field exploration. Then the work will be concluded in a form of evaluation and practical pastoral suggestions, depending on the research question and the different arguments exhausted in the entire work.

2. Chapter I: Exploring current debates on the Ecological Crisis

2.1 Background

In one of her writings, the feminist theologian Sallie McFague mentions climate as our planet's most important thing. At the same time she also adds that it is very vulnerable. This vulnerability is what the world experiences today in the face of global warming and climate change. For example, in places where people depend on the seasonal rains for agriculture they are now suffering from famine due to too much drought and irregular amounts of rains which cannot be predicted.

According to McFague destabilization of climate brings about these consequences. She adds that, we should not allow massive changes to take place and believe we can carry on with our lives as usual. The time has come when we have to take an action by addressing this issue of ecological crisis. It is a pity according McFague when most of us do not pay attention or even think about the importance of taking care of the natural world. She says, "We insure our homes, our own bodies on the slightest evidence that they will meet with disaster. How then can we turn from the threat of climate change as less plausible, less important?" (McFague, 2008, p. 16).

In this chapter therefore, I will present some current debates on the present-day ecological crisis. I will first give a brief explanation on the concept of ecology and the extent at which it has affected our contemporary society. For the sake of clarity and in order to keep focused on the thesis I will present in a nutshell the ideas of Elizabeth Johnson and Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*. The aim for this chapter is to open up a room for the discussions in the following chapters which in a way becomes the ground of our argumentations that the ecological crisis is real.

2.2 The concept of Ecology

In his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis defines the concept of ecology as the study of the relationship between living organisms. He writes, "Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop". (Francis, 2015, p. 79) On the other hand Elizabeth Johnson understands the word "ecology" as understood in its broad sense as the study of interactions between living things in their environment. Etymologically, it comes from the Greek word *Oikos* meaning household or home (Johnson, 2015, p. 97). Cummings defines it as talking about one's house, one's surroundings in order to understand it. Thus if we cannot understand the house in which we live, feel at home in it and treat it respectfully, we are likely to bring the whole house down around our ears.

(Cummings, 1991, p. 65) With this definition one can learn that ecology studies the life of the humans and non-humans as they interact with themselves in a given environment. In other words, ecology literally means “study of the house” which includes both the living and non-living parts of the environment. All things belong to an all-inclusive form upon which the life of each depends. We simply register the under notion of *oikos* that earth (and all creation) is the house of God’s presence and indwelling. (Rasmussen, 1996, p. 90)

Therefore, ecology in this context studies the way the humans and non-humans interact with each other in the planet earth as their home. Johnson says that this living planet earth with its spherical shell of land, water, and breathable air, is our home. To be more precise, Johnson adds that the planet earth should be understood as a home not only for the human beings but also for other beings which are not humans. Thus, it is also home to a wondrous diversity of species that interrelate to form networks of living ecosystems. (Johnson, 2015, p. 97)

The concept of ecology tries to bring into attention the idea of the interconnectedness of the whole of creation. The word connotes that our world is a home where we have to live as a family. It therefore suggests the idea of interconnectedness and interdependence of all the members in the *oikos*. McFague in her book, *A New Climate for Theology* explains this idea further when she says that our communitarian view of human beings is an ecological and economic one. It calls us to view our place in the scheme of things that sees our well –being as interdependent with all other life-forms in a just, sustainable way. Thus, its basic claims are ecological in the sense that we exist only in and with the other living beings of our planet. (McFague, 2008, p. 32).

With this idea of the earth as a home, Pope Francis’ Encyclical, gives a clearer understanding of what ecology is. In his Encyclical the Pope advocates an integral ecology meaning that whatever we do in this home we should take into consideration the life of other beings in this chain of life. For him everything in this *Oikos* is interconnected. He writes, “the book of nature is one and indivisible, it includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations and so forth”. (Francis, 2015, p. 9) Due to this, ecology entails an interaction in the chain of life between all living organisms and environment. Any kind of human action and activity must put into consideration this aspect of the unbroken relationship of living and non-living things in this *Oikos*.

We find ourselves living in the immense house which is planet earth. Eco-spirituality teaches us to live peacefully in our earth home and to let all other beings live peacefully as neighbours. We depend on one another, our existences are inseparably intertwined. The more

we live in harmony with the other inhabitants of this house, the more we can all feel at home. (Cummings, 1991, p. 66)

2.3 The Extent and Consequences of the Ecological Crisis

This section does not intend to give a scientific mathematical data on how much the ecological crisis has damaged our planet. It is rather aiming at giving the theological views on how serious the ecological crisis is for our planet earth. In one of her writings, the feminist theologian Dorothy McDougall explains the reality of ecological crisis as a global phenomenon. She says that when it comes to the dimensions of ecological crisis it has to be seen as something global, both in geographical and physiological terms. She also observes that every corner of the world and every life structure is affected by ecological decline. (McDougall, 2003, p. 11). Since the whole humanity falls victim of this ecological crisis there is a need for an immediate action.

Another author who made a follow-up on the ecological crisis was Lynn White Jr. He implicated Christianity as a religion which encourages an irresponsible behaviour towards nature. Using White's assertion, the Feminist Rosemary Ruether says that, Christianity has been faulted by deep ecologists and ecofeminists as the chief source of the ecological crisis. She goes further by saying "in 1978 Lynn White, a historian of science published a widely quoted article, "the historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" in which he pinned the blame for this crisis on the Biblical doctrine of dominion, found in Genesis.". In this text God gives humans dominating power and control of all things: "Fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:26:28). White saw this text as the major mandate in western history for the notion that humans have absolute power over the rest of the earth. (Ruether, 2003, p. 226).

White could be right to some extent especially when the text is taken literally to mean the superiority of humans over the rest of creation. However, Ruether adds that Biblical scholars sought to reinterpret this text as one of kindly, responsible stewardship. According to these scholars, humans are not given power over the earth to do whatever they wish. Rather they have simply been given a stewardship of the land, but God remains its ultimate owner to whom they are accountable. With this kind of interpretation, the question of anthropocentrism whereby humans see themselves as the crown of creation and the only ones made in the image of God could be ruled out. (Ruether, 2003, p. 266)

From Lynn White's ecological concern and awareness the problem remains unsolved. Other eco-theologians have produced articles and books as a response voicing their concern about the present-day ecological crisis. We have come to a time when we cannot predict the weather and seasons of the year as it used to be in the past. In the language of McDougall, we can say that the weather has lost a certain innocence. Today it is hard to hide from the ravages of polluted soil, air and water. The destruction of the ozone layer, pollution of every kind and the destruction of old-growth forests know no boundaries and their effects are devastating (McDougall, 2003, p. 11).

The erosion of top soil caused by unsustainable land practices in farming and forestry is so acute that seventy percent of the world's potentially productive land is impacted by desertification. Global warming is considered by many to be no longer a theory, but a reality. It is said to be a chief cause of recent unpredictable weather patterns, including high winds, hurricanes and devastating storms. A fifty percent increase in destructive storms could lead to the extinction of many island and coastal forests. Further, one-third of the world forests are at risk because of climate change. Damage to the ozone layer, resulting in severe radiation, poses a serious threat to human and ecological health. (McDougall, 2003, p. 11)

Other effects include the diminishing of agriculture yields and serious damage to aquatic life. Because of decreasing food production due to soil erosion, overfishing, water shortages and the effects of pollution and climate change, future food scarcity is a looming possibility as the needs from a rising global population and the demands of an affluent elite increase. (McDougall, 2003, p. 12)

The reality of migrants in the world can also be discussed in the context of the ecological crisis. McDougall observes that today the world has witnessed a number of environmental refugees and migrant workers. She writes, "in 1995, there were an estimated 27.4 million international refugees and probably an equal number of people uprooted within their own countries. Added to these statistics are those probably 90 million people who have been displaced by environmental disasters and large development projects such as dams, roads and water divisions" (McDougall, 2003, p. 12).

Besides the social costs and increased security tensions, this kind of large-scale migration further increases the stress on an already fragile ecology in the countries of destination, thus perpetuating the endless cycle of poverty, violence and displacement. Most people in an attempt to escape the onslaught of environmental degradation and mass unemployment search for work in cities whose economies and infrastructures are unable to support the growing populations. As a result, squatter towns, in which there is little access to

clean water and waste disposal, are being created. Diseases, poor health and high crime are escalating in these very poverty-stricken and overcrowded conditions. (McDougall, 2003, p. 13)

In the thoughts of Thomas Berry as recorded by Sallie McFague, the ecological crisis is the most basic issue of our time and one which signals a closing down of the present geological age. Berry warns that the creativity of the Cenozoic period, when the diversity of life on earth flourished and support systems that made human life possible came into existence, is being terminated by human exploitation of the natural world. He adds that what is happening goes beyond the isolated, localized destruction of renewable eco-systems. Vast numbers of species are being eliminated and the land is under major assault in every area of the globe. (Mc Fague, 2008, p. 16).

Berry goes as far as saying that the ecological crisis repudiates any cultural fixation on technological solutions. He says, “at its deepest level the ecological crisis is a crisis of meaning for western industrial societies. A re-examination of the human presence on the earth is necessary for any long term viable solution. Such a move will require more than a renewal of the humanistic-religious traditions of the past, since they are all implicated in a cultural pathology that is responsible for the present situation”. (McFague, 2008, p. 17). In the writings of Thomas Berry we read that the humans once considered the glory of creation, are now viewed as the destructive force in creation. The human has become a disaster of the earth.” (Berry, "Christianity and Ecology", 1995, p. 67) Thus, he recommends a comprehensive understanding of the integral functioning of the earth, including human/earth relations, as the fundamental basis for the reinterpretation of cultural and religious myths. (Mc Fague, 2008, p. 18). The time has come when we need to rethink our interrelationship and interdependence with other human beings and other life forms. (Mc Fague, 2008, p. 29).

2.4 Exploring the contributions made by Elizabeth A. Johnson

Among the feminist theologians who have constructively contributed to ecology is Elizabeth Johnson. In one of her books she shows that there is a growing awareness of the significance of earth as a small planet hospitable to life. However, she expresses her worries about the way the earth is being destroyed. For example, she writes, “we are struck with a terrible knowledge that we humans are inflicting deadly damage on our planet, ravaging its identity as a dwelling place for life.” (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 5) Johnson demands that attention is urgently needed to the destruction we have caused to the natural world. (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 5).

She adds that, we have today a widespread destruction of habitats on land and sea. These according to her have as its flip side the extinction of plant and animal species that dwell in them. She gives her own statistical data regarding the extent of the ruin caused to this planet by a conservative estimate. According to her in the last quarter of the twentieth century ten percent of all living species became extinct. She adds that this is due to the behaviour of the human species which kills itself, shutting down the future of our fellow creatures who took millions of years to evolve. (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 6)

Some of the things that she explains which causes the present day ecological crisis is the excess consumption, exploitation of resources and polluting practices of a growing human population. She says that these practices are dealing a sucker punch to life- supporting systems on land and sea. As a result global warming, melting ice caps, rising sea levels, rain forests logged and burned, ruined wetlands, garbage-filled oceans, polluted rivers, suffocating air poisoned soils becomes a reality. (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 5).

But Johnson realizes that there is still some hope in the process of addressing this problem. Being a Christian theologian, she looks at it with the eye of faith in God who is the creator of the universe. For her the faith approach will help to a great extent so long as this awareness is put in the people's minds. For example she acknowledges the heritage of Jewish faith and Christians' belief in God who creates heaven and earth and everything in them. She says that "the Bible and creeds of the Church give pride of place to this belief, starting as they do with the creator who makes all things, visible and invisible. In our day of undoubted ecological crisis, we do well to probe the meaning of creation with an eye to expanding nature's religious importance". (Johnson E.A, 2014, p. 97). Thus, Johnson defines creation in three dimensions while emphasizing the interconnectedness that exists in the three dimensions.

She suggests the three dimensions to be seen in the perspective of the history of salvation which begins with the first creation as we see in the Book of Genesis, Ongoing creation and the new creation at the end of time. In other words, for Johnson creation is a religious term that places the natural world in relation to God as its origin, sustainer, and goal. She goes further saying that creation is referred to an event in the past that began the history of the universe. In the classical theology, creation is understood in these three senses: *Creatio originalis*, *creatio continua*, *creatio nova* that is, original creation in the beginning, continuous creation in the present here and now and new creation at the redeemed end time. (Johnson E. A., 2015, p. 99). She explains the three dimensions in the following ways:

a) Creatio originalis

According to Johnson, when it comes to the question of being created it means that all creatures including plants and animals, receive their life as a gift from the living God. In other words, all the creatures exist in utter reliance on that gift of creation given by God. We all owe our existence to God. She goes further and explains that in ultimate terms creatures do not bring themselves into being nor does their existence explain itself. It is rather a gift out of the overflowing generosity of the creator who freely shares life with the world. She draws her insights from Genesis 1:1 when God is affirmed as the source of all creation. (Johnson, 2015, p. 99).

Johnson explains further that the phrase “out of nothing” as was used by traditional theology, emphasizes on this idea of original creation in order to stress on how divine this act is and how free. In other words, there was no pre-existing material that the creator used to fashion the world. There were no other gods or no Satan with whom the creator had to wrestle with to bring about the world. More so, there was neither pressure nor necessity involved in the course of bringing creation into being. Nothing and no one was there to bring any coercion to bear. Thus, *Creatio originalis* means that creatures, plants and animals do not ultimately ground themselves but are rooted in a power beyond them. In this light, their existence is a sheer gift. (Johnson, 2015, p. 99)

a) Creatio Continua

This second dimension of creation according to Johnson is seen in the perspective of maintaining and sustaining the created world. She stresses that, God the creator continues creating in the process of caring for his creatures. For example she writes, “in addition to their origin in God’s gracious act, plants and animals continue to be held in life and empowered to act every moment by the giver of life” (Johnson, 2015, p. 99). It should be noted according to Johnson that the living God did not retire after the six days of creation, but “divine creativity is active, here, now, in the next time or there would be no world at all” (Johnson, 2015, p. 99).

b) Creatio Nova

For Johnson the new creation (*creatio nova*) is seen in the light of God’s original plan of salvation. It means that the original creation finds its culmination in the new creation as its ultimate goal. She adds that the God of life and source of life continues to draw the world into a future marked by a radical promise. She stresses that God will re-create the world at the end of time by transforming it in an unimaginable way into a new creation in communion with divine life. (Johnson, 2015, p. 100). According to her, the living creatures are the bearers

of this great and hopeful promise. This is clearly put in the Book of Revelation when the writer writes that, “behold I make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

Having explained the three dimensions of creation, Johnson suggests that there is a need for conversion to creation. According to her, the current destruction of life on earth by human action has the character of deep moral failure. In the theological language we would say that it is profoundly sinful. She goes further by saying that through the acts of commission and omission we are perpetrating violence against life, deforming its future. It means that what we are doing is contrary to the will of God who is the author of this creation (Johnson, 2015, p. 114). “Ethicists have coined new words to name the sin: biocide, ecocide, geocide. The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines name the despoliation an insult to Christ: “the destruction of any part of creation, especially the extinction of species, defaces the image of Christ which is imprinted in creation” (Johnson, 2015, p. 114). Thus, whatever the language, the moral judgment remains that the ecological damage humans are wreaking on the earth is profoundly wrong (Johnson, 2015, p. 114).

Johnson therefore, suggests that conversion to the nature is the way forward. She explains this in terms of Christian spirituality saying that the conversion means a turn from sin to a life marked by grace. In other words, conversion is a continuous characteristic of the life of faith, an ever deepening fidelity in relationship with God.” (Johnson, 2015, p. 115). Therefore, in the context of ecology, Johnson adds that in facing the evils of ecological ruination in a spirit of repentance, the church community needs to be converted to the patterns established by the Spirit in the giving of life itself. Motivated by the love of God we need a deep spiritual conversion to the earth. (Johnson, 2015, p. 115)

2.5 Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*

One of the sources which Pope Francis uses as the opening words for his Encyclical is that of St. Francis of Assisi where Francis in his Canticle shows his disappointment about the way human beings have neglected their sister nature. St. Francis’ canticle reminds us about our common home which he personalizes as a sister with whom we share the same mother. In the same context, Pope Francis reveals the main problem in the encyclical as we read in the second paragraph of the encyclical:

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid

waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor, “ she groans in travail” we have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Genesis 2:7), our very bodies are made up of her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters (Francis, 2015, p. 7)

From the above quotation one can deduce that the Pope’s problem in the Encyclical is about the attitude of irresponsibility towards creation by human beings. There is also a feeling of anthropocentrism whereby the human beings look at the earth not as their sister but as an object to be used, to plunder and do all kinds of abuse. The Pope seems to say that our superiority towards nature has led to the violence and destruction of nature. The earth is seen as neglected, abandoned and therefore maltreated. Thus, we need to stop being indifferent and start practicing justice to our sister nature.

Using the words of his predecessor Paul VI, Francis uncovers the problem and says that, “due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn the victim of this degradation” (Francis, 2015, p. 4). In this case, he invites all people regardless of their religious affiliation to make a radical change as regarding to their conduct towards nature.

Quoting *Caritas in Veritate* of the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI Pope Francis emphasizes on the moral aspect of any authentic development. He says that our planet is in chaos today due to the lack of integral development. Thus he agrees with Benedict XVI and says that “authentic human development has a moral character which assumes full respect for the human person and it must show concern to the world around us” (Francis, 2015, p. 9). It is in this background the Pope writes his Encyclical as a way of responding to the present-day ecological crisis while proposing integral ecology as an option for this problem. The following are the points for integral ecology according to Francis which cannot be neglected as far as this thesis is concerned.

a) *Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology*

Since Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop it demands a reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society. According to Pope Francis, when we speak of environment what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. He insists that we are part of nature and we cannot separate ourselves from it. We are part of nature included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Therefore, recognizing the reason why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality (Francis, 2015, p. 79)

It is good to know that we are faced not only with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but also with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Thus strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature. Recognizing the importance of researchers, Pope Francis emphasizes that the ongoing research should also give us a better understanding of how different creatures relate to one another in making up the larger units which today we term ecosystems. We take these systems into account not because we want to determine how best we can use them but because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. (Francis, 2015, p. 80).

Another point that Francis makes is the need to be aware of the importance of the ecosystems in sustaining our life. For him although we are not aware of this importance the fact remains that we all depend on these larger systems for our own existence. There is a need to recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about. (Francis, 2015, pp. 80-81)

b) Respect for People's cultures

Ecology according to Pope Francis should respect the culture of the people. For him when we talk of the patrimony of nature we should also put into consideration the cultural patrimony which is also under threat. He explains that culture is part of shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city. He warns that care should be taken when it comes to building new cities. That means respecting the peoples environment and putting into consideration the beauty of their culture is part of ecological practices. (Francis, 2015, p. 82). It is not a matter of tearing down and building new cities, supposedly more respectful of the environment yet not always more attractive to live in. (Francis, 2015, p. 82).

This is true especially in our world today where we see people building mansions of buildings in the midst of the poor people. In most cases the investors buy the indigenous lands and the local people are pushed into the bush. The village's cultural identity changes especially in the area of art, language and people. Integral ecology implies that a people's cultural identity must be respected. Francis concludes that the disappearance of a culture can be even more serious than a disappearance of a species of plant or animal. (Francis, 2015, p. 84 no. 145)

c) Justice between Generations

Ecology is integral when it puts into consideration the needs of generations to come. In other words it links us not only with the present generation but also with the future generation. It means that we are also connected with those who are not yet born. Thus caring for nature presupposes our concern for the next generation. Integral ecology therefore calls for a sense of concern and awareness that the world belongs to generations before and after us. The Pope says that global economic activities have led to the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. He therefore asks us to start thinking not only for ourselves but also for the future generation. This is because when we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving for future generations, we look at things differently, we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and we have to share it with others. (Francis, 2015, p. 90).

Another point that the Pope makes on this topic is the idea of intergenerational solidarity. For the Pope intergenerational solidarity is not optional but rather a basic question of justice. He insists that this solidarity is a must especially when we consider the fact that the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. The Pope quotes the Portuguese bishops and he says that, “the environment is part of the logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation which must then hand it on to the next”. He concludes that an integral ecology is marked by this broader vision (Francis, 2015, p. 90). We can only reduce the effects of the present imbalance by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the consequences. (Francis, 2015, p. 91).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to explore some current debates on the ecological crisis using relevant theologians. The chapter has not only given a glimpse of the core problem facing our world today but also the way different theologians have responded in order to curb this problem. We have seen that the feminist theologians like Elizabeth Johnson, Rosemary Radford, Sallie McFague to mention but few have tried their best to put a red warning light to all of us as a signal concerning the current ecological problem.

It should be noted that the aim of this chapter was to open up the curtain for our discussion in this thesis by first proving that there is real ecological problem and theologians have started responding to it. Almost all the authors we discussed in this chapter agree that the ecological crisis is contributed to a bigger percentage by human beings. Lack of

interconnectedness with the rest of creation, indifference and negligence has been seen as the root cause of the problem. Ecological conversion is proposed as a way forward for the brighter ecological future. However, how to attain ecological conversion was not tackled by these authors. From this chapter, we still have the following questions to deal with:

1. Do people feel the ecological crisis today as a Moral failure?
2. What do people believe about God's ultimate plan for creation?
3. What is the role of the Church as a provider of ecological education?
4. What about the role of the Eucharist and liturgical celebrations?

Chapter two of this thesis will try to respond to some of these questions by explaining some relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist. In this chapter we shall discover that the Eucharist in its external signs is the product of nature.

3. Chapter II: Relevant Theological Interpretation of the Eucharist

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives attention to the relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist. Having in mind the concept of ecology and the different theological responses to ecological crisis in the first chapter, this chapter will introduce us to the Eucharist so that we may keep our focus on the third chapter which will be the core of this thesis. In other words, the aim of this chapter is to give readers a theological interpretation of the Eucharist so that they have a clear knowledge of this concept when it will be applied in the third chapter.

In his book entitled *The Sacramental Mystery*, Paul Haffner makes a relevant point on the concept of the Eucharist. While acknowledging the Eucharist as one of the seven traditional Sacraments of the Church, he also emphasizes on its precedence over all the other Sacraments. The Eucharist is central among the seven sacraments because Christ is rendered present in his Paschal Sacrifice, whole and entire. (Haffner, 1999, p. 75). Haffner adds that the celebration of the Mass is the Most perfect representation of the Church, the action in which on earth is most perfectly herself. (Haffner, 1999, p. 75)

In the code of the Canon law of the 1983, we read that the Eucharist is the most august sacrament. In it Christ himself is contained, offered and conceived and the Church grows continually through this Sacrament. Thus the Eucharist is essentially the sacrifice, memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord in which the sacrifice of the cross is forever perpetuated. The code affirms that by the means of the Eucharist the unity of God's people is signified and brought about, and the building up of the body of Christ is perfected. (CIC, Can. 897)

Thus, the Eucharist remains the Sacrament of Sacraments and all the other sacraments are ordered to it as their end. In other words, the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments because it contains Christ himself substantially while the other sacraments sanctify only when a recipient makes use of them. According to Haffner, in the Eucharist, "the author of Sanctity himself is present before the sacrament is used". (Haffner, 1999, p. 75). Haffner's point is well found in the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium*, which states that, "The Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of Christian life". (Flannery, 1975, p. 330). The Eucharist therefore renders Christ present both as regards his Incarnation and his redemption, in his Being and in his sacrificial action. (Haffner, 1999, p. 75).

3.1 The word “Eucharist”

Lucien Deiss In his book entitled, *It's the Lord's Supper* defines the Eucharist as thanksgiving. According to him, the word “Eucharist” is the Anglicization of a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving”. *Eucharistein* in Greek means to say “thank you”. (Deiss, 1975, p. 46) He goes further and cites a few biblical texts where the word Eucharist is used to mean thanksgiving. Let us see some of those texts and the way they refer to the word Eucharist. For Deiss the aspect of thanksgiving is at the centre of the Eucharist. It is so central so much so that without it one cannot talk of Mass. He adds that, “not merely one facet of the Eucharistic mystery, thanksgiving is its very centre. Without it, there is no Mass”. (Deiss, 1975, p. 67)

Benedict XVI, in his encyclical, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, defines the Eucharist as a great Mystery. The Eucharist is the mystery to be believed, celebrated and lived. For Benedict the Eucharist is a mystery par excellence. For example he writes, “the Eucharist is a “mystery of faith” par Excellency: “the sum and summary of our faith”. (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 11). Thus, the Church’s faith is essentially a Eucharistic faith, and this faith is nourished at the altar when the Eucharist is celebrated. He emphasizes that the Sacrament of the altar, that is the Eucharist is always at the heart of the Church’s life. (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 11)

Therefore, for the sake of this thesis, both the definitions given by Lucien Deiss of the Eucharist as a thanksgiving and a Mystery of faith to be believed, celebrated and lived according to Benedict XVI would be of keen interest. Ecological awareness makes sense in the Eucharist when all the four aspects of the Eucharist will be put into consideration. Thus, faith in the Eucharist will enhance friendly ecological living. Benedict writes, “the more lively the Eucharistic faith of the People of God, the deeper is its sharing in ecclesial life in steadfast commitment to the mission entrusted but Christ to his disciples. (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 12)

3.2 The Institution of the Eucharist

The Eucharist was prefigured in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. In other words, in both the Old and New Testaments we have some episodes which present a kind of aforementioned of the Eucharist. These episodes are called by theologians as “foreshadows” of the Eucharist. For the sake of this thesis I shall present some of these foreshadows in both the Old and New Testament. The aim is to give the readers of this study the idea that the Eucharist has been there even before it was made explicit by Christ himself at the Last Supper and the Eucharistic discourse in the Gospel of John.

3.2.1 Eucharistic shadows in the Old Testament

Many theologians agree that there are a number of episodes in the Old Testament prefigured which prefigured the Eucharist. For example the in the book of Genesis we read that, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he was a priest of God Most High” (Genesis 14:18). Another episode is the miracle of Manner in the book of Deuteronomy. In the same book of Genesis, the readiness of Abraham to offer his own only son, Isaac foreshadows God himself who offered his only Son. (Gen 22:1-14). Lucien Deiss comments that Abraham and Isaac remains the figure of God the Father and Jesus his Son. For him Isaac is the figure of Christ:

Isaac on the holocaustal pyre, his smiling eyes turned heavenward in ready acceptance of death, foreshadows Christ who loved us and gave himself up in our place “as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). In his Passover homily at the Last Supper, Jesus confirmed on his death: “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13) ...neither Isaac’s blood nor slaughter of a ram constitute the sacrifice, but rather the attitude of the aged patriarch and his only son. Isaac being reborn in the splendour of the resurrection are God’s answer to man’s sacrifice (Deiss, 1975, p. 57)

The Passover celebration can also be seen as one of the episodes and events which foreshadow the Eucharist. Like the New Testament Eucharist, the Passover involved a feast of unleavened bread. This feast was also an annual commemoration of the event in which God freed His people from the Egyptians: “this day is to be a remembrance for you and you must declare it as a feast in the Lord’s honour. For all generations you are to declare it a day of festival forever”. (Ex 12: 14). According to Michael Lawler, the Passover celebration in the Jewish context foreshowed the Eucharistic celebration in the New Testament. For him even the time for the celebration was symbolic in the sense that it was during the spring time realizing celebration of the rebirth of the new life. Even the lamb of sacrifice symbolized the new images of new life. Thus these rituals of spring time became the liturgical memorial and celebration of the momentous Israelite event of the Exodus. (Lawler, 1987, p. 27)

These Jewish memorial rituals prefigure the Eucharist in the way they were practiced. According to Haffner, this Jewish memorial, namely the Passover feast, or *Zikkaron* in Hebrew, brought to mind the past in an objective way, with the aim of finding once more its permanence relevance. It was a memorial of God’s wonders expressed in blessing and it was aimed at rendering thanks to God. Thus, the word Eucharist traces its Greek origins from this idea of thanksgiving. The new Passover, the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection is

made present in the sacrifice of the Mass, in which is celebrated Christ's victory over sin and death (Haffner, 1999, p. 76).

Also the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24:1-11 involved the use of bull's blood which was sprinkled over the people. In the new and eternal Covenant, the precious blood of Christ was shed for all and it is made present in the Eucharist. Bread and wine are seen as staple foods in the Old Testament, bread which strengthens man's heart and wine which gladdens it (see Ps 103:15) (Haffner, 1999, p. 76). These are some of the events which foreshadowed the Eucharist in the Old Testament. We now focus our attention on the New Testament's episodes which foreshadow the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

It should be noted that the Jewish memorial rites remain for us a pointing figure or foreshadows of the Eucharist. In other words, it should be understood that unlike the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Jewish memorial rites could not recreate. They could only mediate their saving power. It could only bring the Jewish people into the living presence of God but it could not bring back the actual event of the Exodus. (J.Quinn, 1974, p. 46) Thus the Eucharist has a power to recreate and make the past present. That is to say, in the Eucharist the believer is put in contact with the abiding redemptive effect of the death of Christ. (Marrow, 1990, pp. 393-398) Therefore for the Christians the Eucharist becomes the new creation by Jesus Christ. Through the Eucharist the Christians are enabled to live not only by experiencing the saving action of Jesus and receive its effects in their daily lives, but through the power of the Holy Spirit they are brought into his presence who is salvation in person. (J.Quinn, 1974, p. 46)

3.2.2 Prefiguration in the New Testament

In the New Testament the words and actions of Jesus are seen as the preparations of the great event of the Last Supper. There are a good number of episodes in the ministry of Jesus where Jesus implicitly performed a Eucharistic function. For example, the miracle of changing water into wine at Cana is seen as foreshadowing of the Eucharist. The Gospel of John gives this account when we read that, "and when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him everyone serves good wine first ...but you have kept the good wine until now...Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him" (Jn 2:9-11). Commenting on this episode, Haffner says that the wedding feast of Cana in which Christ changes water into wine (Jn 2:11) also prefigured the far greater wonder in

which wine would be changed into his precious blood. (Haffner, 1999, p. 77). In other words, the water changed into wine at the wedding feast at Cana foreshadows the evening at the Last Supper when wine was changed into the blood of Christ. (Haffner, 1999, p. 77).

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves can also be seen as a foreshadow of the Eucharist. In the Gospel of Matthew we read that Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. The ritual involved in this episode resembles that of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. For example the evangelist Matthew writes, “Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds” (Mt.14:18-19). According to Haffner, this miracle qualifies to be one of the figures of the Eucharist in the New Testament. He concludes that, this miracle of the multiplication of this staple human food, bread, foreshadows the far greater event in which Christ changes bread into his own Body (Haffner, 1999, p. 77).

For Jesus, breaking bread meant, first of all, sharing the love which comes from God. The symbolic meaning of this gesture of the breaking of the bread according to Lucien Deiss can be understood in the context of the Palestinian culture. He observes that in the Palestinian cultural understanding, the breaking of bread could mean either the fact of tearing or the entire rite which opened the meal as the head of the family took bread and recited the blessing then broke and shared it. (Deiss, 1975, p. 13). Thus, the gesture of the breaking of the bread could be seen as the foreshadowing of the Eucharist since Christ at the Last Supper could use the same gesture with a religious significance.

3.2.3 The Institution of the Eucharist

We read from Johannes H. Hemminghaus that, the action in which Christ instituted the Eucharist has been recorded for us in the account of the institution, which is almost identical in the first three evangelists. In other words the Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke give a similar account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist (Emminghaus, 1978, p. 4). Closely related to the three Synoptic gospels is the first letter to the Corinthians where Paul reminds his readers of the Lord’s legacy (Emminghaus, 1978, p. 4). St. Paul gives the following record in his letter to the Corinthians:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “this is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” For as

often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. (1Cor.11:23-26).

Haffner comments that as whether the Eucharist was instituted in the context of the Jewish Passover or whether it was radically a new meal which had some elements common with the Passover, this could be a tension between the Synoptics which call to mind the Paschal meal and the Gospel of St. John which links the beginning of the feast of the Passover with the evening of the death of Jesus. For him the Council of Trent reconciles this problem when it declared that “after he celebrated the old Pasch, which the multitude of the children of Israel offered to celebrate the memory of the departure from Egypt, Christ instituted a new Pasch, namely Himself to be offered by the Church”. (Haffner, 1999, p. 78).

Therefore, concerning the timing of the Last Supper in relation to the Passover meal one should learn that Jesus gave the Passover its definitive meaning. This is clearly put by Haffner when he writes; the Gospel traditions transmit a liturgical tradition, but at the same time affirm an historical event, namely the Last Supper, so intimately connected with the climax of salvation history. From the synoptic Gospel accounts of the institution by Christ of the Eucharist (Lk 22:7-20, Mt 26:17-29, Mk 14: 12-25), several themes become clear (Haffner, 1999, p. 78). For example, Jesus told his disciples that his sacrificial death was imminent and His blood which was to be outpoured for all mankind, seals the New and Eternal Covenant. Thus, the accounts indicate that Jesus offered himself as food and drink to his disciples. He then ordered his disciples to repeat this sacred action by his choice of words, “Do this in memory of me” (Haffner, 1999, p. 78)

In the Gospel of John the Eucharist is implicitly presented by the Evangelist. This can be seen in the different episodes which we called in the previous sections foreshadows of the Eucharist. For example, the accounts of the miracles at Cana (Jn 2:1-12), the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6:1-15) and the discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum (Jn 6:22-71) are clear episodes which give a clear affirmation of the Holy Eucharist. In the discourse, Jesus presents himself as the bread of life to whom the believer comes close through faith, the second part invites the believer in very realist terms to eat the body of Christ and drink his Blood. The third section portrays the negative reaction of some of those who heard the discourse and reaffirms the importance of the discourse and the truth of Jesus’ words as spirit and life (Haffner, 1999, p. 78).

Commenting on this point, St. John Paul II connects the table of the word and that of the Eucharist as one unity presented by Jesus in the bread discourse at the Synagogue of Capernaum. He states that this continuity is expressed in the Eucharistic discourse of St.

John's Gospel when Jesus begins by speaking of the mystery of his person and then goes on to draw out its Eucharistic dimension. "my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed" (Jn 6:55). John Paul II concludes that despite the trouble that this teaching brought to his listeners, it led Peter to express the faith of the other apostles and of the Church throughout history: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). (J.Paul II, 2004, pp. 10-11)

Therefore, like Lucien Deiss one can say that the biblical accounts we have seen above give us a picture of the Eucharist as celebrated in the apostolic community. Deiss does not hesitate to say that these accounts are intended to be true to the inherited tradition and the authors are convinced that they are transmitting Jesus' institution with complete fidelity to its form and intention. However, we must bear in mind that, the theological reflection goes back to men who were at the institution. (Deiss, 1975, p. 5) Thus, the biblical authors intended their account to serve as a norm for their contemporaries and for posterity: thus and not otherwise was the memorial of the Lord to be celebrated as St. Paul explicitly says in 1Corinthians 11:23. In other words, the accounts of the Eucharistic institution were more than simple reports; they were redacted with theological and liturgical purposes in mind as one may notice today whenever the Eucharist is celebrated. (Deiss, 1975, p. 5)

3. 3. As Ritual Symbol

3.3.1 The Meaning of symbol

Many theologians have tried to admit the dynamic use of the word symbol and its essential importance in the religious context. According to John Macquarie when we speak of symbols it means we are visualizing a situation in which one thing stands for another thing and throws light on some aspect of that other thing. For example, a cross can be seen as an object made of wood or metal or some other substance, but it is seen as a symbol or sign that calls to mind the cross of Christ or the sacrifice of Christ or perhaps even in general way Christianity. (Macquarie, 1997, p. 23).

However, more importantly symbols should not be confused with signs. Whereas the sign leads to something other than itself, on the contrary the symbol does not lead to something of another order than itself as does the sign, but it has the function of introducing us into an order of which itself is a part (Chauvet L.-M. , 2001, p. 74). The Sacraments of the Church therefore are prophetic symbols of the presence of God in and with his people. It then implies that in the Eucharistic celebration Christ is made really and truly present in the prophetic representation of the species of bread and wine. (Lawler, 1987, p. 22). This is also

the same when the word of scripture is read, when a priest baptizes or administers a sacrament and even when the homily is delivered, Christ himself manifests himself to the people through the symbols and signs proper to the specific ritual. (Flannery, 1975, p. 24)

3.3.2 Form and Matter

Having seen the concept of symbols and signs we can now look at the matter and form used in the Eucharist. Talking about the external sign of the sacraments, Schillebeeckx indicates that sacramental theology has distinguished between the matter (*materia*) and the form (*forma*) since the Middle Ages. The two elements namely, matter and form remains the constitutive elements of the outward sacramental sign. According to Schillebeeckx this understanding depends on a view of the actual structure of the Church's sacramental practice. Going to the scripture, Schillebeeckx observes that the matter and form in the sacraments is seen in the liturgical actions. For example, the washing with water, the laying on of hands, the breaking and sharing of the Eucharist was always coupled with a prayer or a "word". (Schillebeeckx, 1963, p. 65).

Schillebeeckx states that the Fathers thought of the sacraments as the bringing of an earthly element which was manifested externally in the liturgical action and a prayer of petition or epiclesis. Thus, the word and the element (thing or action) now come to be seen as constitutive parts without which the outward sacramental sign cannot be present. These two parts together form what is called the substance of the sacrament. (Schillebeeckx, 1963, p. 66). Let us briefly look at the two elements in connection with the Eucharist.

3.3.2.1 The Matter

Following the tradition and the reality of the institution narratives recorded in the scripture, the matter for the celebration of the Eucharist remains the bread and wine. However, the bread to be used for the Eucharist must be made from wheat, which has been mixed with water and baked. Any variety of wheat is acceptable but bread made from other types of grain would constitute invalid material. Similarly, invalid material would be bread made with milk or oil instead of water. The matter of the Eucharist is thus that which in common estimation is bread made from wheat without a notable admixture of other materials to render it no longer wheat (Haffner, 1999, p. 81). It is also recommended that the altar bread should be fresh and in good condition and not corrupted or mouldy. Haffner tells us that, according to the Council of Florence the Eucharist is validly celebrated with either leavened or unleavened wheaten bread. The tradition of the whole Church until the ninth century lay in the use of leavened bread in the Eucharist (Haffner, 1999, p. 81).

Then the first clear witness to the use of unleavened bread was rabanus Maurus. Thereafter, in the Latin Church the tradition has been to the use of the unleavened bread for the Eucharist. this absence of yeast represents purity, according to St. Paul's words : "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, let us celebrate the feast then by getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1Cor 5: 7-8) (Haffner, 1999, p. 81).

Another element used as matter in the Eucharist is the wine. It is also recommended that the wine used in the Eucharist must be naturally fermented and made from the fruit of the grape, to which a small amount of water is added at the offertory. Thus, the wine cannot be made from any other fruits or from the stems and skins of the grapes after the juice has been pressed out. In the regions where fresh grapes cannot be obtained, it is permissible to make the wine from the raisins. However, wine from which the alcohol has been completely extracted or which has more than twenty percent, is invalid material (Haffner, 1999, p. 82).

3.3.2.2 *The Form*

Like the element of bread, the Catholic Church regards the words of institution as the form of the Eucharist, namely for the bread: "take this all of you and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you". Over the chalice, the words are "take this all of you and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven; do this in memory of me". (Haffner, 1999, p. 82).

Haffner confirms that, "Saint Anselm of Canterbury made the distinction between the essential elements in the Canon of the Mass and the incidental features, and this paved the way for describing the words of institution as efficacious in bringing about transubstantiation". (Haffner, 1999, p. 83). Accordingly, the Council of Trent upheld that the words of institution are efficacious in bringing about transubstantiation are when it affirmed that the body and blood of Christ are present after the consecration. (Haffner, 1999, p. 83)

Therefore, regarding the form for the Eucharist, the Catholic Church relies on the words of the institution. When an ordained minister pronounces the words of the institution during the celebration of the Mass transubstantiation takes place and there we have the body and blood of Christ. However, the faith of the Church is a condition for this to take place. Schillebeeckx says that because a sacrament is a symbolic act of Christ in his Church, it is only through faith in Christ that the Church is able to make this spiritual signification manifest in her sacraments, and so the faith of the Church is necessary for the constitution of an outward sacramental sign. (Schillebeeckx, 1963, p. 68) .For Schillebeeckx, this outward

making-manifest of the spiritual significance of the sacrament takes place in an action and in a word, each of which is properly suited to give meaningful expression to the sacramental meaning. Thus, it is only in their signifying as the visibility of the Church's spiritual activity in faith that the liturgical actions and words belong to the essence of a sacrament. (Schillebeeckx, 1963, p. 69).

3.4. The Eucharistic Presence

There is a strong belief in the Catholic Church that in the Eucharist the Lord Jesus Christ is present in a very unique way. It is from this background that our thesis is built for the better ecological living. For the sake of our thesis I shall briefly explain the Eucharistic presence in this section so that the reader may understand the rationale of this thesis.

John Macquarie in his book entitled *A Guide for the Sacraments* clarifies the concept of presence. He states that when we talk of presence we have to be specific because there are many kinds of presence. For example one can talk of a local presence, presence in a place or vicinity. Also, one can talk of the presence of so many weeds in the garden. This means there is temporal presence, referring to what exists at a particular moment. . (Macquarie, 1997, p. 126)

Macquarie says that when we are talking about the presence of Christ, then it is to be understood primarily as a personal presence. By a personal presence it means the one in which communication takes place between two persons. Normally such a communication would take place when there is also a meeting in time and space between the persons. But it is not necessarily that the presence must have a physical space and time. That is why a person on the telephone three thousand miles away can be present as he talks to the other. Also something that a person has written many years ago may still communicate with the person and make that person present again. (Macquarie, 1997, p. 126) Macquarie agrees with Rudolf Bultmann who believed in the real presence of Christ in the Gospels, for when the word is read or preached, it is heard as the word of Jesus. (Macquarie, 1997, p. 127)

In her document on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican two clearly gives a broader understanding of Christ's presence. The Council Fathers explained that the presence of Christ is first and foremost manifested in the whole Eucharistic action. Thus, they elaborated the presence in the four different modes which makes the whole Eucharistic celebration. This means that Christ's presence is manifested in the word, presiding priest, species of bread and wine and assembly. (Flannery, 1975, p. 24)

Therefore, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a multiple presence. Because, during the Mass we read the Gospel and Christ is present in that word. Also, since it is Christ himself who presides at the Eucharist, he is present also in the human minister, the priest, who rehearses the words and actions which Christ used at the Last supper. Christ is present too in the Eucharistic community which is made one body with him, so that the members can dwell in him and he in them. And of course Christ is present in the bread and wine over which have been said his words, “this is my body”, “this is my blood”. (Macquarie, 1997, p. 127)

Therefore, like St. John Paul II one can conclude that, the Eucharist is a mystery of presence, the perfect fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to remain with us until the end of the world. (J.Paul II, 2004, p. 13). According to St. John Paul II, the entire tradition of the Church believes that Jesus is truly present under the Eucharistic species. Thus, Christ is substantially present whole and entire in the reality of his body and blood. (J.Paul II, 2004, p. 12).

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist. In order to have a clear picture of what the thesis proposes as the main research question, I dealt in this chapter with the nature and essence of the Eucharist. The chapter has revealed that the Eucharist is the sacrament of all the sacraments, the source and the summit of all Christian life.

This chapter has also shown that, the Eucharist was prefigured in both the Old and New Testament in different ways. In the Old Testament the Jewish Passover was taken as a figure of the Eucharist especially in its celebration. The New Testament foreshadows of the Eucharist were those occasions where Jesus shared meals with his followers prior to the Last Supper. The multiplication of bread and the wedding at Cana were also interpreted by the authors as the prefiguration of the Holy Eucharist. Above all, the chapter has discussed the external sign of the Eucharist where the form and matter for this sacrament were bread and wine as used at the Last supper. The words of institution according to the authors I have cited are efficacious for the valid celebration of the Eucharist. However, the chapter still leaves us with the following questions.

1. What does the species of wine and bread tell about the people’s relation with creation?

2. As a thanksgiving, how does the Eucharist help the people to express gratitude for the gift of creation?
3. How does the presence of Christ in the Eucharist be extended to nature?

4. Chapter III: Exploring the Transformative role of the Eucharist

4.1 Background

This chapter attempts to unveil the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and nature. It can be clearly seen from the previous chapter that the whole of the liturgy depends on nature for its matter. This chapter will give a clear indication that through the Eucharist people can learn the intrinsic value of nature and their responsibility towards it. In his book, *The Future of the Eucharist*, Bernard Cooke acknowledges the transformative power of the Eucharist especially when he says that there is a growing awareness among the people of this Eucharistic transformation. According to Cooke the Eucharistic transformation is not something magical. Instead it is the way people share what is happening in the Eucharist that makes a difference in its impact on them. Participation in the Eucharist ought to change people. (Cooke, 1997, p. 48).

I shall look at the different elements of the Eucharist as stipulated in the Roman Missal to show how they can be used as a transformative moments for people's ecological conversion. In other words these elements could be used to create awareness of the interconnectedness of the whole creation. There is no doubt that the Catholic Liturgy depends totally on the use of the natural world. For example we cannot have the Eucharist without bread and wine which are the fruits of the earth. Thus, this chapter will use the constitutive parts of the Mass to explain how the Holy Mass can be a good opportunity for learning and being aware about our responsibility towards nature.

The Mass is divided into two parts, firstly the Liturgy of the Word containing readings from the Old and New Testaments, a homily usually from the celebrating priest and intercessory prayers for matters of concern to the people participating. Secondly the liturgy of the Mass includes the presentation of the bread and wine, their consecration and the eating and drinking of these consecrated elements by members of the congregation who evaluate their own right to this involvement. (Tanner, 2004, p. 5)

According to the Second Vatican Council the two principle parts of the Mass make the Eucharistic celebration complete. The Council Fathers in their Document on Liturgy declared that both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely connected with each other that together they constitute one single act of worship (Flannery, 1975, p. 24). It means one part cannot do without the other. That is to say, we cannot talk about the Eucharist without the unity of the two elements of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of Eucharist. Therefore, I will explore the two parts while trying to relate them with

the topic of this thesis. In other words, each individual element of the Mass and how it relates with nature and the need for the pastors of the souls to use these particular elements as a school for environmental education will be discussed.

4.2 Approach

As concerning the approach for this chapter, I will mainly rely on the Roman Missal trying to scrutinize the dimensions of ecology in the different parts of the Mass. It is important to mention that this chapter is a close reading of the Roman Missal in relation to the topic of this thesis. I will take each individual elements of the Eucharist and explain how they are linked with nature. It should be understood that some relevant theologians will be used to back up my points and arguments in this chapter. In other words, the task in this chapter will be a close reading and interpreting of the individual elements of the Mass accompanied with reference to relevant theologians. It is worth mentioning that concerning the references of the two documents I will use, that is the Roman Missal and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal I will use the Abbreviations RM for the Roman Missal and GIRM for the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

4.3 The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy begins with the introductory rites where the priest begins by making the sign of the Cross as the way of invoking the Holy Trinity in the celebration. After the sign of the Cross, the priest will greet the people with the following words, “The Lord be with you” or “the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, The Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”. This greeting symbolizes the presence of God in the midst of the congregation. At this particular moment the people become aware of their creator and the need to pay him homage. Having invoked the name of God and the greeting, the priest celebrant will introduce the theme of the Mass and then he will ask them to do the penitential rite as the acknowledgement of their sins and fragility before God. This is the time when each individual goes deep into his/her heart and make an examination of conscience.

4.3.1 Penitential Rite

As a liturgical norm the priest calls or invites the people for the penitential rite using these words: “Brethren (brothers and sisters) let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mystery” (RM p.493). After a short pause all will recite together the formula of general confession as follows:

I confess to Almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do. Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the angels and Saints and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God. (Ibid)

The penitential rite can be an opportunity for the ecological conversion in a number of ways. In the first place the priest invites the people for the examination of consciences so that they are able to call to mind where they went wrong. This is an opportunity for them to see how they interacted with other human beings and the rest of creation. The examination of consciences is also done for the sins of omission and commission, meaning that they are to also confess the sins of Indifferences and their lack of action towards practical issues pertaining to their ordinary lives as Christians. That is where the phrase, "...that I have greatly sinned in thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I failed to do" finds its relevance (RM, p. 493)

In most cases, Christians in the examination of consciences do not think of the sins against nature as part of the sins they need to confess to God. The lack of this awareness has contributed to some extent to the ecological crisis today. The Pastoral agents need to create the awareness to the people that nature or the environment in which we live is a living reality and any lack of responsibility and concern is sinful. Thus the penitential rite could be a transformative moment for ecological living.

In his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis reminds us that the environmental degradation is a sin against nature. Thus he calls for the need to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet earth. Reiterating the words of the Patriarch Bartholomew, he says that the Patriarch has challenged us to acknowledge our sins against creation. Francis states that, to commit a crime against the natural world is sin against ourselves and a sin against God. (Francis, 2015, pp. 10-11). In this case, the penitential rite during the Mass should be used as an opportunity for ecological conversion.

It should be noted that through his Incarnation, death and resurrection, Christ has inaugurated the renewal of all creation, both human and non-human. Luke rightly put it in the Acts of apostles that, "he is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). This implies that the whole creation has been redeemed and reconciled by Christ himself. Christians are called to be co-workers in Christ's work of Universal renewal. The task before us at the end of this millennium is daunting, "for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness" to be freed from its slavery to corruption (Rom 8:19).

4.3.2 The Gloria

After the penitential rite the Gloria is sang or recited by the all the people. According to the general instruction of the Roman Missal, the Gloria is an ancient and venerable hymn by which the Church gatherer in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and petitions God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This song is sang or recited on Sundays outside Advent and Lent seasons, as well as on solemnities and feasts and at special more solemn celebrations. (GIRM, 53).

Johannes Hemminghaus comments that the Gloria is closely related to the penitential rite although the two are not the same. While the penitential rite gives the people a chance to acknowledge and repent their sins at the beginning of the Mass, the Gloria gives them opportunity to praise God. Thus the Gloria is the song of praise to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Emminghaus, 1978, p. 123). The words of praise are reflected in the Gloria in the following ways:

Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to people of Good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, and we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord, heavenly King, O God almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, have Mercy on Us. You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer, you seated at the right hand of the Father have mercy on us. For you alone are the holy one, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen (RM, pp 498-499).

During the Gloria, Christians should be aware that the act of giving praise to the creator of the heavens and the earth is not meant for the human beings only but for the whole creation. In this case, all the creatures are giving the same praise and glory to God in the Highest the whole creation is joined together during the Mass to praise, to bless, to adore and to glorify God. This is well put in John Paul II's Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace in January 1990. Using St. Francis as an example of the friends of nature, John Paul II says that as a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Saint Francis invited all animals, plants, natural forces, even brother Sun and Sister Moon to give honour and praise to the Lord (John Paul II, 1990, 16)

The Church should encourage the people to acknowledge their interrelationship with the rest of creation as they gather for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. When they sing the Gloria, they should be able to bring the whole creation into the celebration so that the peace may reign all over. The Gloria is both the song of praise and prayer for peace.

The people pray that peace may reign “on earth to people of good will”. In a sense this prayer should help the people to think about nature and their responsibility towards it. Thus in his Message for the World Peace day, John Paul II repeated this several times saying that we should imitate saint Francis, the poor man of Assisi who gives us a witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples. (John Paul II, 1990, 16).

4.3.3 The Biblical readings

Another important element in the Liturgy of the Word during the Mass is the Biblical readings. According to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council the readings of the Mass are so important that one cannot skip them. The Council teaches that “when the sacred scriptures are read in church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ present in his word, is proclaiming his Gospel” (Flannery, 1975, p. 25). It is for this reason that we take this element as one of the transformative moments in the Eucharist. That is to say if the people are given a good catechesis on the importance of the Mass readings they would pay more attention to them and listen to what God wants to communicate to them. Obviously, the Bible tells us a lot about our relationship with nature and how we should be responsible in our caring about creation.

The Bible according to Charles Cummings is an alternative way in which God reveals himself to the people. In the Scripture, God speaks to the people using the prophets of the Old Testament and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels and the New Testament Epistles. This implies that there is a good parallelism between the Scripture and nature as far as God’s self-revelation is concerned. Whereas, in nature God speaks to us wordlessly, in the Scripture, God uses words. Thus, the Scripture and nature have the same role of revealing God to us. (Cummings, 1991, p. 43)

For example when Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel to the people of Lystra and healed a man who was lame from birth; the people saw Philip and Barnabas as gods appearing in human form. In this case Barnabas helped the people to understand that there is only one God, the one who alone made heaven and earth, the seas and all they contain. (Cf. Psalm 146). They explained that the creator left clues scattered throughout creation for all to read. “He sends you rain from heaven and seasons of fruitfulness, he fills you with food and your hearts with merriment (Acts 14:17) (Cummings, 1991, p. 43)

Another point we can use as a teaching for ecological awareness is St. Paul’s metaphor of the body. For Paul, the Church is the body of Christ where each member has a

part to play in the whole body. Thus the body will always depend on the smooth functioning of the different parts.. Our interconnectedness with the rest of creation can be relevant to the body metaphor of St. Paul. For example, human beings cannot say to any creature that we have no need of you, neither can the other creatures can say it to the human beings. For Cummings, “What Paul says of the Church can be extended to the totality of living beings on this planet. Humans may not say to the dolphins or to any creature, we have no need of you, any more than the eye can say to the ear “I have no need of you” (Cummings, 1991, p. 62).

Therefore, the readings in the Mass can be an opportunity for the Christians to remind themselves about their interconnectedness with nature. As the body with many parts, the Christians should make the body metaphor their own so that they may be able to look at the rest of creation as their members. In other words, if the planet earth is taken as the body, then we and the rest of the creatures both living and non-living are members of this body. It therefore follows that as members of the same body we will always need each other. For St. Paul, each part of the body ought to show concern for each other part. Thus, “if one part is hurt, all the parts share the pain. And if one part is honoured all the parts share its joy (1Cor 12:26). This will also mean that as members of the same body we should always take care of the members who are in need like the animal, plants, bacteria, birds, and the like by giving them their rightful value. (1Cor 12:22)

Commenting on this body metaphor, Charles Cummings emphasizes that human beings are not the managers of this world but the stewards, agents or trustees of God, charged with the safekeeping of the world’s resources for the benefit of all. Using the Gospels he says that we should be like Jesus who praised the wise and trustworthy steward who gave his household their allowance of food at the proper time. (Lk 12:42). He further narrates that even Jesus pointed out the danger of a steward growing careless or being concerned only for his own welfare. Thus as stewards we are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the earth and will have to give account to God of how we have used or abused our position. “Draw me up an account of your stewardship,,” says the master in a parable told by Jesus, “because you are not to be my steward any longer” (Lk 16:2) (Cummings, 1991, p. 68)

The Biblical readings during the Mass should help the people to learn something about stewardship and what is expected of them as far as ecology is concerned. Looking at the Jesus and other evidence from the Scriptures they are able to learn that the world is not their property but they have a role to play as caretakers of God’s garden. Thus, we are the caretakers of creation because we are made according to the image of God. (Gen. 1:27.

The Psalms which are used in the responsorial Psalms after the Bible reading give a lot of witness about the way creation connects all of us together. In Psalm 104, the Psalmist proclaims the vital interdependence of wind and rainfall, birds of heaven, cedar trees and growing grass, the sea vast and wide, beasts of the field and forest, and human beings. All of these depend on one another and on God: “all of these look to you to give them their food in due season” (Psalm 104:27). Cummings states that, “according to biblical scholar M. Weiss, the psalmist was describing the bonds of mutual helpfulness that connect the creator and all creatures: “our poet does not, then sees the phenomena of nature in isolation from one another, but rather in their interrelationship. (Cummings, 1991, p. 72)

4.3.4 The Homily

Connected to the readings is the homily which is the interpretation of the word of God by the priest or deacon at the Mass. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal the homily as part of the Liturgy is strongly recommended because of its importance as it makes the readings relevant to the people. The document stresses that the homily should be made on Sundays and holy days of obligation at all Masses that are celebrated with the participation of the congregation (GIRM, 65). It is good to notice that the homily gives the priest celebrant an opportunity to explain the readings and to apply the readings to the life of the people. That is why the document boldly emphasizes that the Sunday homily should be based on the readings of the day and not from somewhere else (Ibid). It is through the homily that the Priest or deacon touches the life of the people by using practical examples in relation to the readings of the day.

The homily can be an opportunity to talk about the reality of climate change and its consequences. It is in the homily that the priest draws a link which exists between the liturgy they celebrate with nature as revealed both in the readings and the symbols used in the celebration. In other words, a priest or a deacon when delivering his homily must relate it with the reality in which people are living in that particular moment. There are numerous issues and problems that are facing the people today and ecological crisis is part of them.

The pastors of souls need to create this awareness by showing to the people the importance of integral living. Using the readings, he can explain to people how the liturgy is built on nature and the fact that in no way we can ignore this fact. Thus, the homily must be integral and a catechetical model whereby the people are reminded about the reality of our interconnectedness with the whole creation. This will help the people to have a practical engagement with nature after the Mass as a way of living the faith they profess and celebrate.

From its very etymological meaning as the work of the people, liturgy is geared to the public service and charity. In other words, the Liturgy describes and defines what the Christian people do as they come together and therefore shapes their identity in many ways. This has also a transformative impact on the Christian practices in their daily lives. The Liturgy must shape and orient the people to become more responsible as the people of God who gather in community. Hence, it has tremendous potential for ecological reflection. For instance, if our everyday practices as Christians are shaped at least to some extent by our deliberate liturgical practices of prayerful gathering, then even ecological practices can and should be rooted in liturgy. (Gschwandtner, 2014, p. 178). Thus it is the work of the priests to prepare their homilies in such a way that they touch this sensitive area of ecology which has been always neglected.

Unfortunately, our Catholic liturgy has not been much geared or rather explicitly showed concern about ecology. There is clear evidence that most of the priests, deacons and other pastoral ministers rarely talk about the ecological crisis during their homilies. There is very little if any mentioned about the reality of climate change and global warming in most of our parishes during Mass on Sundays. This thesis reminds us that Liturgy is important for ecological reflection. By its very nature, the liturgy deals with the lived experience of the church and often defines and shapes the practice of believers much more immediately than theological speculation does. Hence ecology must be part of the liturgical reflections in the Mass, the Liturgy of the hours, in adoration and in the practical life outside the church. (Gschwandtner, 2014, p. 177).

Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical *Sacramentum Caritatis*, emphasizes on the homily as the part of the liturgical action which is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it bears fruit in the lives of the faithful. According to Benedict the ordained ministers must prepare the homily carefully based on adequate knowledge of the sacred scripture. Thus the generic and abstract homilies should be avoided. For example he writes, “In particular, I ask ministers to preach in such a way that the homily closely relates the proclamation of the word of God to the sacramental celebration and the life of the community, so that the word of God truly becomes Church’s vital nourishment and support” (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 46).

Thus, through catechesis and homily the Christians will get informed about their responsibility towards nature. The proclamation of the gospel in the Eucharistic action is meant to transform people’s understanding of what it means to be human. This implies that Christian should witness to this by being charitable not to their fellow human beings alone

but also to their surroundings. Thus Christians in their daily experience of being human in their actual life should correspond to the gospel message. (Cooke, 1997, p. 43)

4.3.4. The Creed

The Creed which is also known as the profession of Faith is also an important element in the Eucharistic celebration. According to *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the purpose of the creed is that the gathered people may respond to the word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from the sacred Scripture and explained in the homily (GIRM, 67). The congregation declares and sing that there is one God who created the heavens and the earth. This act of profession of God as the creator of heaven and earth should remind the people about the relation they have with the rest of creation since they share the same source. The creed element in the Mass can play this transformative role when the people live what they profess.

On the contrary, many people do not practice the faith they confess especially when it comes to the care of creation. Johnson supports this idea especially when she argues that “our practices are wreaking damage on the life-system of air, water, and soil and on other species that share with us one community of life on this planet. Why have we who confess that God created this world not risen up in its defence?” (Johnson, 2015, p. 9). If God is the creator and maker of all things visible and invisible it means that no one has the right to misuse and abuse other creatures. In this sense we should know that if we truly believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth, then we will hand on to the next generation a faith that loves the earth. (Johnson, 2015, p. 9)

The creed we profess also acknowledges Jesus as God incarnate, the one who took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary and he became man. “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God...begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became Man”. This act of profession is an invitation for the worshipping community to see nature as sacred since the Son of God became part of it when he took flesh. If all things were created through him, it means that creation has a purpose from the very beginning and none of us has power to destroy it. By incarnation nature was made sacred since the Son of God became part of it. In other words, since Christ became one with us, he shared our humanity and we became one with him. The oneness of all men with God through Christ and the oneness with God through Christ is the foundation of all practical and affective religion as summed up in

the duty of charity. (Tyrrell, 1904, p. 159). “Begotten of the Father; not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made” it means Christ is God; and that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself (Ibid).

The creed is also an invitation for the church to recognize her pastoral responsibility towards the created universe. It reminds all the members of the congregation attending the Mass that there is one creator who is the source of all life. Thus, a reminder that as a people of God the Church is made up of human beings who exist within a complex network of relationships and a gossamer web of communication among humans, between humans and God, and between humans and non-human nature. Understood in this way, the church is seen as dynamic and alive, filled with God’s Spirit and able to have a powerful influence over all areas of creation. (Ayre, 2014, p. 141). Therefore, the aspects of this creed is a call to all people who believe in the incarnate word of God to live this faith by promoting peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The profession of faith in the Mass should help people to change their attitude and get transformed for a better ecological living.

4.4 The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Another important part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This part has got various elements which are very symbolic. The symbols used in this part are the fruits of nature and work of the human hands. This part is characterized by the presentation of the gifts by the members of the Christian community with the species of wine and bread for consecration. In this case nature is symbolically made sacred in the liturgical function.

Thus in the preparation of the gifts on the altar the priest will say the following prayers over the bread and the wine: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”, Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you, fruit of the vine and work of the human hands, it will become our spiritual drink”. (RM, p. 507). The prayer over the gifts has an ecological value since the gifts are the fruits of the earth and work of the human hands. This is an invitation for the gathered people to think of nature and how they should take care of it.

4.4.1 Presentation of the Gifts

Generally speaking, the Christian liturgy has ecological potential in terms of its uses of time, space and matter. However, the importance of material elements is vividly seen in

the wine and bread and the water put in the wine during the preparation of the gifts. It can be observed in the Catholic liturgy that the Sacramental actions involve material elements derived from nature. For example, water, bread, wine, oil. (Gschwandtner, 2014, p. 184) Therefore, the very physically sacramental practices connect us to the material world. We take for example in the Eucharistic celebration where baptism is celebrated one will observe that the sacramental action totally depends on the natural world for the sacramental matter and form. Thus, liturgy involves the physicality and materiality of creation, both in our own bodies and in the many ways in which material objects become bearers of meaning within it. (Gschwandtner, 2014, p. 185).

This humble and simple act or gesture is actually very significant: in bread and wine that we bring to the altar, all creation is taken up by Christ the redeemer to be transformed and presented to the Father. In this way we also bring to the altar all the pain and suffering of the world, in the certainty that everything has value in God's eyes. The authentic meaning of this gesture can be clearly expressed without the need for undue emphasis or complexity. It enables us to appreciate how God invites man to participate in bringing to fulfillment his handiwork. It is in so doing human labour in its authentic meaning through the celebration of the Eucharist that creation gets united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 47).

According to *the General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, offerings (bread, wine, money and possibly other things) are brought to the altar by the people to be used in the Eucharistic offering. (GIRM, 49). These gifts symbolically signify the people's surrender to God of what they are and what they have. Bread and wine are offered in view of the Eucharist so that the offering is at once a plea for the coming of Christ to the community in the Eucharistic action and thanksgiving for all that they have. The action is to be a procession accompanied by a chant. It is here that the people usually through a representative group are able to express the gesture of offering (Crichton, 1993, p. 96).

Through this symbolic action of the presentation of the gifts, the gathered community need to see how nature is involved in the celebration of the Eucharist. Practically, through the gestures and signs in the presentation of the gifts, Christians are expected to look at nature as something valuable and sacred since the sacrament they receive is the fruit of the earth and the work of their hands.

4.4.2 The Eucharistic Prayers

The Eucharistic prayers bring the liturgical celebration to the most important part where the gifts presented will be consecrated and become the body and blood of Christ. This

part begins with a preface where the priest first invites the people to lift up their hearts in a thanksgiving. In the preface the priest celebrates with the whole Christian community praise and give thanks to God almighty for the gift of creation and the wonders he has done for his people. This particular element has an ecological dimension by its very nature and the words used. For example the preface two of the nativity of the Lord has the following words:

(...)It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord God, Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord. For on the feast of this awe-filled mystery, though invisible in his own divine nature, he has appeared visibly in ours; and begotten before all ages he has begun to exist in time; so that, raising up in himself all that was cast down, he might restore unity to all creation and straying humanity back to the heavenly kingdom. (RM, p. 514).

Looking at the words of the preface above we can notice that the unity of the whole creation has been restored through the incarnate word of God. The preface reveals that God is always active in creation and we should show our appreciation by maintaining the unity of creation.

At the end of all the prefaces we have an invitation of the gathered community to join the heavenly powers to acclaim and sing the glory of God. They says, “Through him the host of angels adore your majesty and rejoice in your presence forever. May our voices we pray join with theirs in one chorus of exultant praise, as we acclaim” (RM, p. 514). This invitation is an affirmation of the interconnectedness which exists between creation and the heavens.

In the Preface for the Eucharistic prayer four, God is praised for His goodness and is called the source of life for all that is. The priest prays that all creatures will be blessed by God. We read, “...yet you who alone are good, the source of life, have made all that is, so that you might fill your creatures with your blessings and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light....with them we too, confess your name in exultation giving voice to every creature under heaven as we acclaim...” (RM, p. 582). This prayer is very ecological in the sense that the whole creation is involved in the praising and glorifying of the Creator. This is also another moment for the gathered community to think about their relationships with the rest of creation. Therefore, in all the prefaces of the Eucharistic prayers prayed at Mass we end by referring to how the glory of God is reflected in “heaven and earth” an earth made and declared “good” by God in the book of Genesis 1:31.

Then the gathered community are invited to join the prophet Isaiah and give voice to his words as we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. (Is 6:3) Along the familiar assertions about the God who

saves and redeems are the biblically based titles about the God of the covenant and the “Lord God of all creation.” (Pilcher, 2013, p. 36)

After the preface, the most important element is the prayer of consecration of the bread and wine whereby the two species are changed into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is worth mentioning that the Eucharistic prayer four gives acknowledgment to God who fashioned the world by saying these words: “we give you praise, Father most holy, for you are great and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and in love. You formed man in your own image and entrusted the whole world to his care...” (RM, p. 582). In this prayer there is also an element of ecological concern for the gathered community to take care of the world entrusted to them by God.

Another important aspect in this part is the words of consecration of bread and wine. At the end of the words over the cup, we have the following words, “Do this in memory of me.” Then follows the memorial acclamation where the gathered community will proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus while acknowledging his promise of coming again at the *parousia*, “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again”. This memorial acclamation and the commandment of Jesus to celebrate the Eucharist in his remembrance reveals the memorial character of the Holy Eucharist.

Thus, it is important to note that the Eucharistic memorial requires the followers of Christ to put into practice in a radical way the gospel values. As they partake in the species of bread and wine which are now the body and blood of Christ, the Christians are expected to acknowledge with thanks-giving the gift of Jesus who is the new creation. As they drink from the cup of salvation, they enter into the death of Jesus where their own transformation takes place. (Pilcher, 2013, p. 36)

4.4.3 The distribution and reception of the Holy Communion

The distribution and reception of the Holy Communion is an invitation to the gathered community to receive Jesus in the species of bread and wine. This symbolic act shows the readiness of the people to commune with Christ and with one another. In the ecological terms it can be said that the reception of the Holy Communion should be an opportunity for the people to transform their attitudes towards creation. If the purpose of the Eucharist is to strengthen communion among the members of the Church and with Christ who is the head of the body, this communion should be extended to the whole creation also.

In other words, the Christians who partake in the body and blood of Jesus are expected to live a Christ-like life by imitating their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ in word and

action. Thus it is important to know that it is not enough to praise God's creation unless we are also in reality stewards of the earth. Likewise, it is not enough to come to the table of communion and unity unless we are prepared to work towards equality and justice for all peoples-even in the carrying out of the church's liturgy. Active Eucharistic memorial must translate into the witness of lived experience. (Pilcher, 2013, p. 36)

Joan Ridley in her book, *The Future of the Eucharist*, comments that the substantial conversion of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood introduces within creation the principle of radical change, a sort of nuclear fission, to use image an image familiar to us today, which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transformation of the entire world, to the point where God will be all (1Cor 15:28). (Ridley, 2010, p. 62). Thus, all the followers of Christ are expected to be the friends of nature and be agents of promoting the integrity of the whole creation.

4.4.4 The Dismissal

According to the Roman Missal, the dismissal as part of the concluding rites of the Mass is preceded by the blessing by the priest celebrant or the bishop. The formula for the blessing is that of the Trinity as at the beginning of the Mass. For example the priest will give the final blessing using these words: "May almighty God bless you, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (RM, p. 594). Then the deacon or the priest himself will dismiss the people by saying, "Go forth the Mass is ended" or "God and announce the gospel of the Lord" or "Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life" or "Go in peace" (RM, p. 596).

Looking at the words for dismissal one can observe that the dismissal is the beginning of Mass. In other words, when the priest blesses the people followed by dismissal it means that the people are now ready to go and live the Mass. The dismissal in other words is a commissioning of the people to go and practice what they experienced in the Mass. One of the theologian writers comments on the words of dismissal and he says that "in Latin the command is: *Ite, Missa est*. simply translated, it means "Go, the Mass is." The Mass never ends; it continues (Vaghi, 2009, p. 157).

These words highlight that the liturgy is directed not only to the mystery we encounter in the sacred species, but also to the assurance that this encounter changes us and guides us daily once the liturgy is over. We ourselves, by the grace and transforming power of the Eucharist are challenged to be taken, blessed, broken, and given in effect, to put into action in our daily lives, the love we have just celebrated. (Vaghi, 2009, p. 157)

The “dismissal” is an invitation for the people to go and live what they heard in the readings and what they ate in the Eucharist. In other words, the Christians are commissioned to go and imitate Christ in their daily lives by showing love and care not only to their fellow human beings but also to the entire creation. The phrase “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” is communicated to all people to become ambassadors of Christ by taking care of the poor, and by their witness to charity and work for the Justice peace and integrity of the whole creation.

In his encyclical, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Benedict XVI, states that the words of dismissal uttered by a priest or deacon help us to grasp the relationship between the Mass just celebrated and the mission of Christians in the world. For Benedict XVI, the word “dismissal” has come to imply a “mission”. That is to say, the people after the Mass are sent or commissioned to be the salt and light of the world. This is what the transformative element of the Eucharist relies. Hence a need for the pastors of the souls to help the people to understand this essential dimension of the Church’s life taking the dismissal as a starting point. (BenedictXVI, 2007, p. 49)

It should be noted that any liturgical celebration is geared to improve the life of the people both spiritual and physical. This means that by going to the Church every Sunday the Christians are expected to live the life of witness by showing the difference especially when it comes to environmental conservation and ecological awareness. Joan Ridley explains this when she says that “the liturgy opens out into everyday life; it goes beyond the church precincts ...liturgy is not the private hobby of a particular group; it is about the bond which holds heaven and earth together and it is about the human race and the entire created world”. (Ridley, 2010, p. 63).

4.5 Conclusion

I have suggested in this chapter that any Eucharistic celebration is a moment of renewal and transformation of the people. In the context of this thesis the chapter suggests that, through the Eucharist the Christians are renewed and transformed by the different elements that constitutes the Eucharist. For example the penitential rite is an opportunity for the people to think of their responsibility towards nature and see how they have responded either positively or negatively to their stewardship responsibility. This implies that the examination of their consciences and the confession of sins will signal a movement towards ecological conversion expected from all the members of the Church.

This chapter also concludes that the liturgy of the word should be an opportunity for the people's transformation for better ecological living. In other words, the readings in the Mass can be used as a pedagogical moment whereby the people are reminded about their relationship with the rest of creation. Through the homily, the priest should explain and connect ecological themes drawn from the readings while applying it to the present situation of the people. This catechetical instruction should be demonstrated in the presentation of the gifts of bread and wine.

Thus the whole Mass will be linked with the ordinary life of the people and their daily interaction with nature. Christians at every end of the Mass are sent to go and live the Mass. This has been the aim of this chapter, to show that the ecological crisis today demands that Christians carry out their very mission. In other words, after the Mass the Christians are told to go in peace, to go and live the Mass, implying that their mission to care for creation begins immediately after Mass. But is this true from the usual pastoral experience in the local parishes?

1. Can we talk of liturgy without mentioning nature?
2. To what extent do the pastors talk about creation in their Sunday homilies?
3. What does the experience of receiving the Holy Communion imply for the people's attitude towards creation?

5. Chapter IV: Pastoral Exploration and field Communication

5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to synthesize the findings in chapters one, two and three. Since the main objective of this work is to propose the Eucharist as a means for ecological conversion, this chapter will also give a practical experience of the ministers of the Eucharist in the context of the Catholic diocese of Moshi. In other words, the chapter will discuss the experience, observations and suggestions of the various priests from this particular context.

The relevance of taking Moshi diocese as we shall see in this chapter is due to the fact that people depend more on nature compared to Western Europe. About eighty five percent of the population are farmers who depend on the rains. Another reason is that the diocese is situated on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro which is the source of tourism attraction and water. In the recent years, there has been a period of drought and floods due to overgrazing and deforestation by the indigenous people of this place.

We shall investigate some ways of curbing this critical issue by consulting the priests in the diocese to see how conscious they are of with this ecological problem. The reason for taking priests only for this exploration is due to the fact that they are the ones who are *a priori* involved in the Eucharist. I have an assumption that as Eucharistic ministers they have a role to make the ecological dimension of the Eucharist known to the people.

Another reason is that priests are the chief organizers of pastoral activities in the parishes. So, as chief managers and organizers of pastoral activities they need to see the ecological crisis as a pastoral problem to be addressed. Thus, our question for this chapter which relates to the main research question is: *To what extent do the clergy perceive themselves as educators of ecological awareness within their parishes?* This is where we shall take a close look at the clergy's pastoral concern on the present-day ecological crisis.

5.1.1 Approach

As regards the approach for this chapter, I conducted a consultative research in the Catholic diocese of Moshi. The research was consultative (Grimes, 2006) and collegial because I consulted my fellow priests and in a way I was also involved through experience in the parish pastoral activities during the last summer 2015. I was able to make some observations and consultative research in regards to the topic of this thesis. According to Ronald Grimes, "rites can attune participants to nature." (Grimes, 2006, p. 134). Is this assertion true in Moshi diocese?

Grimes agrees with Roy Rappaport's idea that ritual is "the paradigmatic means of establishing obligation, thus of generating social and ecological order" (Grimes, 2006, p. 142). Looking at the Eucharist as a ritual, I made a list of relevant topics for this and sent them to seven different priests in the Catholic diocese of Moshi. Together with my own observation and experience, I was able to gather some information which I think will be useful for this exploration.

Thus, as regards to the structure for this chapter, I will first present a synthesis of the three chapters, then a brief presentation of the context of Moshi diocese followed by the field exploration whereby the views of different priests will be analyzed and presented as a practical evidence of the real situation of the world's ecological crisis. This will be followed by a brief evaluation of the chapter based on the findings from the priests and finally a practical pastoral suggestion will be offered. It is important to mention that we shall quote the correspondents directly by just putting in brackets the month and year in which the correspondent was consulted.

5.2 A Synthesis of the previous three chapters

In the first chapter I made an exploration on the current debates on the ecological crisis by looking at the views of some prominent ecological theologians on the present day ecological crisis. The chapter defined the concept of ecology from its broad sense as a study of the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they live. In other words, ecology concerns the study of the home of all beings, both humans and non-humans.

The definition implies the idea of the concern and responsibility of human beings towards other beings existing on this planet earth. The chapter also reveals that our planet is at risk due to our negligence and irresponsibility. Using various theologians like Elizabeth Johnson, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Pope Francis among others, the chapter concluded that there is an urgent need for ecological conversion. This conversion according to this thesis can be achieved through the Eucharist. In other words, through the various elements of the Mass, people can see the interconnectedness which exists between them and nature.

In the second chapter, attention was given to the relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist. The purpose of this chapter was to pave way for the third chapter which explained how the Eucharist can be used as a school for ecological conversion. Thus, the concept of the Eucharist was defined as a thanksgiving. The Eucharist was also seen as the source and summit of all Christian life and the greatest of all the sacraments. The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was also discussed and this was seen as the reason for the

transformation of the people's attitude towards nature. The chapter argued that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist should be a lived experience of the people who attend the Mass and it must be manifested in their daily interaction with nature.

The chapter also dealt with the matter and form of the Eucharist where the matter is the bread and wine the fruits of the earth. According to the finding of this chapter, the Eucharist exists because nature provides the matter. Thus, the celebration of the Eucharist is made possible because nature provides us with bread and wine. This shows that our irresponsibility towards nature, might lead to the disappearance of these precious gifts of bread and wine. In other words, the chapter suggested that ecological conversion can be attained through the transformative elements of the Eucharist. This was discussed deeply in the third chapter.

The third chapter made an exploration on the transformative role of the Eucharist using different elements in the celebration of the Mass. The elements such as the penitential rite, the Gloria, the Biblical readings, the homily, the creed, the presentation of the gifts, the preface, the Eucharistic prayers, the distribution and reception of the Holy Communion and the words of dismissal were discussed in this chapter. All these elements revealed ecological elements and their connectedness to the life of the Church's liturgical celebration. The chapter concluded that for the Church to be able to celebrate the Eucharist there must be bread and wine, the fruits of the earth and work of human hands. Thus, there is no celebration of the Eucharist without nature since the two are like two sides of the same coin. Nature and liturgy are inseparable.

Having seen the synthesis of the three chapters, we can now look at the relevance of this work in a particular pastoral context. We shall make a pastoral survey in the context of the Catholic diocese of Moshi. The pastoral experiences of various priests and religious from this particular diocese will be used as a guide for practical recommendations and for the conclusion of this work.

5.3 The Context of Moshi Diocese and the Ecological crisis

The Catholic Diocese of Moshi is situated in the Kilimanjaro region of the north eastern part of Tanzania, East Africa. The Diocese stretches along the slopes and low plains of the volcanic Mount Kilimanjaro, covering an area of 5,029 square kilometres. This diocese was officially inaugurated on March 25, 1953. (2015 Moshi Catholic Diocese). To the east and north, the diocese shares a common boundary with the republic of Kenya. To the south it is bounded by Lake Jipe, the Pare mountains and the man-made lake Nyumba ya Mungu. As

it extends to the furthest south-west, it touches the Arusha-Chini hills. To the west it forms a common boundary with the diocese of Arusha. From almost every corner of the diocese, it is possible to see the snow-capped Kibo the highest peak of Mount Kilimanjaro. (Committee, 1990).

According to Severian Mafikiri, Diocese of Moshi has an intrinsic connection with Mount Kilimanjaro in the sense that the mountain is the source of water, fresh air due to its green vegetation, rich volcanic soil and the like. It is for this reason that the people of Kilimanjaro region depend on the mountain for farming, animal husbandry and clean water. Also a good percentage of the diocesan economy depends on the good climate of this mountain. (Mafikiri, 2010, p. 10).

Kilimanjaro region is one of the regions which are affected by the ecological crisis. We take it as an evidence for our thesis because the impact of climate change affects the people who depend on nature more than Western Europe. This is because almost all the people in the region are farmers who depend on regular rains. The natural streams of water from the mountain are also the source of clean water for both domestic use and gardening.

In the past, the region used to have rains throughout the year, farming was always possible and the people never lacked water, food and other basic needs from the mother earth. Today the region is experiencing a drought and sometimes floods due to change of climate. There are also some evidences that the snow of Kilimanjaro is gradually disappearing and it may be completely gone by the end of this century. More than 85 per cent of the ice that covered the three peaks of Africa's highest mountain has disappeared in the last 100 years and the rest is melting at such a rate that it will be gone by 2030. (Alleyne, 2009). This is the evidence that there is an urgent need for action.

The Church has a special vocation to teach the people about the importance of environmental conservation. We shall see in this chapter the extent to which the Catholic priests in Moshi diocese use the Eucharist as a means for environmental education. These and other related reasons suffice for the intent of taking the diocese of Moshi as a special case in this thesis. Experience shows that the human activities like farming and overgrazing of animals near the mountain has led to the destruction of the natural forest in Kilimanjaro. This is also caused by the irresponsible cutting of trees for charcoal and firewood.

5.3 Field Exploration and Findings

In the Catholic diocese of Moshi, Sundays are days set aside for worship. In many parts of the diocese there is an atmosphere of silence and normal functions like markets and

shops do not operate. Even those who do not go to the church observe this rule and everybody is aware of the sacredness of this day. This kind of scenario is related to the Genesis story of Creation where God on the seventh day he took a rest from the six days of work. (Assenga, 2009, p. 226) The book of Genesis thus report that, “on the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing. He rested on the seventh day and made it holy... (Gn 2:2-3). It can be observed in the diocese of Moshi that all the Churches are full on Sundays and they have four Masses for different age groups. For example there is Mass for the adults, the youth Mass and the children Mass.

This research looks at this kind of phenomenon in the diocese as a good opportunity for educating people about their responsibility towards nature. In my interaction with the priests in the diocese of Moshi, a good number of them agreed that the ecological crisis is real and it is felt all over the diocese. Lack of rains and ongoing climate change was mentioned as signs of the ecological crisis. One of the correspondents commented that ecological crisis is “manifested in the irregularities in the annual climatic patterns, severe droughts, excessive rainfalls and higher temperatures than usual” (Correspondence: May, 2016) He added that “man was made an *‘Imago Dei’* and thus by extension he is charged with responsibility to relate to creation the same way as God would.” In this case environmental degradation and lack of responsibility towards nature is going contrary to our very nature, the *Imago Dei*. This point was also affirmed by another correspondent who said that, “farmers are complaining of the changing seasons which have been unpredictable” (Correspondence: May 2016).

Looking at the Eucharist as the opportunity for creating people’s awareness and transformation towards nature some priests agreed that the Eucharist can be a good opportunity for ecological conversion. One of the priests responded that, “the Eucharist is everything”. For him interconnectedness of all creation does not exclude the Eucharist since the Eucharist depends on the fruits of the earth. However, it was acknowledged that the creation themes are rarely mentioned to the people during the Mass. (Correspondence: May, 2016).

In most cases the priests put more emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the Eucharist without relating to the natural world which is the source of the Eucharistic species of bread and wine. For example a priest reported that in most cases he does not talk about creation unless the readings of the day present a theme related to that topic. He said, “Occasionally I do depending on the nature of the readings”. (Correspondence: May, 2016). This shows that if the readings do not mention something about nature nothing will be mentioned about the people’s responsibility towards nature.

On the other hand, one of the religious nuns supported the idea that the Eucharist can be used as a moment to bring the awareness about the ecological crisis. She said that during the liturgy of the word, it would be nice for the preacher to pay attention to the references of nature and creation. According to her, Jesus' attitude towards nature should be the point of reference. For example she said, "as we are all familiar that Jesus loved nature...during his quiet and prayer time he went up to the mountains, walked on the sea in order to be with nature. Also during his teaching he referred many times to things in nature to enhance his teaching. (Correspondence: May, 2016). She recommended that the priests could invite the people to reflect as they go through the day to note how God shows his love through the creation around us. Thus, the readings could be used for more reflection and awareness of climate change in today's world.

Another correspondent agreed that there is a direct link between the celebration of the Eucharist and ecology. According to him, when the church gathers together for the Eucharistic celebration, the presence of the earth and all its creatures, the whole universe is brought to the altar to be offered. In the presentation and consecration of the gifts we are reminded that we are gifted by what the earth has given us. The implication is that the gifts are the fruits of the earth and everything connected to it has a place in the Eucharist. He acknowledged that, in most cases this understanding is not emphasized. He said, "However, most of the time we do not do or see things this way. Our reflections are sometimes too limited and focus only on our spiritual side and take the rest for granted" (Correspondence: May, 2016).

Unfortunately, the use of the homily as a moment of catechizing people about the ecological dimension of the Eucharist and how it should be carried out in their daily life is rarely done in most of the parishes. This was acknowledged by one of the correspondents who said that the theme of ecology is only mentioned when the readings say something about the environment. He says, "Quite few times I relate it to holiness and respect for the environment and ecological realities". (Correspondence, May 2016).

All the correspondents agreed that the presentation of the gifts during the Eucharistic celebration has an ecological dimension. However this dimension is not known to the people. For example it was said, "people offer gifts expecting God to bless them". On the other side, it was commented that, people know much that what is offered are the fruits of the earth but he emphasized on the need for more catechesis to the people about how the Eucharist and nature are interrelated. He said, "however, I would say that more and more catechesis is

needed in order for them to see the gifts in relation to the care for the earth. (Correspondence: May, 2016)

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist as we discussed in chapter four, needs to be extended to the ordinary life of the people. This is true especially when we think of Christ as the incarnate Word of God. According one of the correspondents, incarnation affirms the dignity of the created world and how it is embraced and not rejected by God. He affirms that, incarnation “kills off the dualistic conception of sacred and profane realms. (Correspondence: May, 2016). This is connected with the words of dismissal at the end of Mass where the people are commissioned to go and live the Eucharist. Unfortunately, many people are ignorant about the meaning of “go in peace” after the Mass. It was concluded that the link between the words of dismissal “Go in Peace” is “very poor because is still looked at so much as a spiritual exercise that has to do with the soul and not much beyond that. Many live two lives, the Christian life of the Church and the everyday life” (Correspondence: May, 2016).

5.4 Evaluation

This exploration shows that the role of the Eucharist as a moment for ecological education is not well known to many people. The responses from different priests and religious as we have seen above seem to be inconsistent. The chapter reveals that in many places in the Catholic diocese of Moshi, very little is being said about how the Eucharist depends on nature and the need of the people to be stewards of creation. There is a problem of a dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical whereby the spiritual is given precedence at the expense of the physical. In other words the Eucharist is much stressed to the spiritual benefits of the people without having any connection with the physical world.

This kind of dichotomy should not be encouraged if we want to build the church which is truly missionary. It is good to note that the missionary dimension of the Mass manifested in the words of dismissal “Go in Peace” demands of them to go and live the word they have heard and the Eucharist they have shared. That is so, since the word of God read at Mass and bread and wine shared remind the people of their responsibility towards nature. The role of the priests as pastoral ministers and teachers in the Church needs to be re-visited so that environmental concern could be part of it.

This work has shown that there is a lot of work to be done especially on the role of the priests as educators of people about environmental conservation. Almost all the priests whom

I engaged in the field communication said that they never preach about the ecological crisis in their parishes during Mass unless the readings are connected to this topic. This implies that even the elements of the Eucharist like the penitential rite, the creed, the presentation of the gifts, the Eucharistic prayers have never been seen as the moments of ecological transformation or reminders about the people's attitude towards nature.

This raises a number of questions about the relationship between the faith we celebrate in the Eucharist and ordinary life. In other words, the people's life in the church needs to be integrated with their ordinary life after church where the ecological concern must play its part. If the priests in their pastoral engagements cannot explain to the people the way the Eucharist is connected to the campaign for ecological conversion, little will hardly be achieved. For example, many priests responded that the presentation of the gifts during the Mass has only a spiritual value. This is a clear indication that there is a serious need for more education on the meaning of symbols and signs used in the Eucharist for both the priests and lay faithful.

This shows that even many priests are not aware of the ecological dimension of the Eucharist. For example when we talked about the symbolic meaning of the presentation of the gifts in relation to nature, many of them referred it to only a spiritual meaning. It is good to take into consideration that in the Liturgy creation is lifted up especially when her fruits are brought for consecration. Therefore, there is a need for the pastoral ministers to explain it to the people the ecological dimension of the Eucharist so that they are able to see the connection. Through the homily, the priests can explain how the whole celebration is connected to nature. It is by so doing, we can reduce the impact of the ecological crisis in our world today.

5.5 Practical Pastoral Suggestion

The challenges we have seen above show that there is a lot to be done by the church both in Tanzania and the world at large. Since all things are interconnected and any change in climate can change and affect many related aspects of life we must take an action. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* St. John Paul II, presents the continent of Africa as the continent with many gifts and values. He says that Africa has cultural values which are a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel. He mentions some of those values like religious sense, a sense of sacred, of the existence of God the creator and of spiritual world. (John Paull II, 1995, p.33).

This affirmation is also true in the Catholic diocese of Moshi where a good number of people still believe in their traditional religions and nature which reveals the God who is the Creator of all things. For example there has been a belief among the people of Kilimanjaro that Mount Kilimanjaro is a sacred place. This is true when we look at the old churches in the region like Kilema, Kibosho and even the cathedral where the people face the mountain side while in the Church. There were also some trees which were regarded as sacred and the traditional leaders used to offer sacrifices there. All these kind of belief could be used as a approach for teaching about environmental conservation. Thus, there is a need to use the available resources and the traditional belief of nature to bring an of the ecological crisis. This can be done through Catechesis, reviewing the training of the priests, inculturation, ongoing formation of the priests and lay faithful through seminars.

5.5.1 Catechesis

Catechesis among the people will be a good opportunity to explain to them the intrinsic link between the Church's liturgical actions and the care of the environment. Through Catechesis the people will be informed about their responsibility towards nature and the consequences of unchecked consumption of the goods of the earth. In the process of catechizing people, the instructor will explain the intrinsic value of the created world and the link which exists between the Eucharist and nature. Through catechesis people get to know their mission as Christians and stewards of God's creation. The ecological dimension of the Eucharist could be explained in both the adults and children catechesis. This will help them to develop a sense of awe and respect towards nature.

5.5.2 Reviewing the Training of Priests

The document of the Second Vatican Council on the training of priests, *Optatam Totius* demands that attention should be strictly paid to the pastoral training of the students for the priesthood. According to this document, the pastoral preoccupation which should characterize every feature of the students' training requires that they should be carefully instructed in all matters which are relevant to the sacred ministry. The documents explains the principal matters of training such as catechetics, preaching, liturgical worship, the administration of the sacrament, works of charity, and other pastoral duties. (*Optatam Totius*, 19).

This research work suggests that some relevant environmental topics should be added in the curriculum of the priestly studies. This could be also emphasized in homiletics and

liturgical studies whereby the students learn how to incorporate ecological topics in their homilies and catechesis while in the parishes. Students in the major seminaries should be taught how to deal with ecological issues in the parishes. Thus, by introducing ecological topics in the seminaries future priests will be able to see the intrinsic value of nature and how the Church's liturgical celebrations depend on it.

5.5.3 Inculturation

According to A.J. Chupungco, inculturation implies the use of relevant symbols and signs available in the particular culture in the liturgical celebrations. He adds that the process of inculturation can as well be called "indigenization" from the word "indigenous" referring to the process of conferring on Christian Liturgy a cultural form that is native to the local community. It means adaptation of the Christian liturgy in the framework of the culture of the particular people. (Chupungco, 1992, p. 14)

Normally, most of the symbols used in many cultures are taken from the natural world. For example in Moshi the leaf of a plant known as *Isale* is traditionally used for reconciliation. This leaf can be incorporated in the Church's liturgy especially during the penitential rite as a way of reconciling with nature, God and one another. It is good for all the pastoral ministers especially the priests to ask themselves whether they are using enough symbols in the liturgy. The use of symbols taken from the people's environment will help people to see the connection between the liturgy and nature.

In his book *Liturgy and Inculturation* Kabasele Lumbala stresses that liturgy must do justice to humanity and to the cosmos. (Lumbala, 1998, p. 7) For example in a place like Moshi diocese priests could use symbols like *Isale* for reconciliation, the local brew (*mbege*) for wine, and banana which is the staple food of Kilimanjaro as a symbol of the Eucharist. The symbols of banana and local brew must not replace the wine and bread but they can be used to explain the nature of the Eucharistic species. This can create a good awareness of the interrelationship between the Eucharist and nature.

5.5.4 Seminars

There is a need for seminars from time to time for both the priests and the lay faithful. Through the seminars the priests will be reminded of their pastoral responsibility especially in the area of ecological crisis. The priests can also learn about the importance of talking about ecology and climate change during their homilies. It is by so doing that the lay faithful will see the connection which exists between the Eucharist and nature.

Priests should also organize some seminars on the environmental awareness for the parishioners. Through seminars the Christians will learn the importance of taking care of nature by planting trees in their surroundings. Christians should be taught alternative means of power like the use of gas instead of firewood and charcoal. They should also be advised to re-use and recycle those plastic bags which are always thrown everywhere in the surroundings. The intrinsic link between the Eucharist and nature could be the topic during the seminars so that the Christians will be able to live the Eucharist by taking care of nature. Small Christian communities can be an opportunity to discuss environmental issues in relation to the spiritual life of the people.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I set out a ground on which I think the ecological dimension of the Eucharist should be based. I feel that there is a need to explore more on this topic since there is much to be studied especially the link between the Eucharist and nature. In the chapter I argued that nature and the Church's liturgical function cannot be separated since the lack of one will lead to the lack of the other. In other words, the chapter revealed that if we cannot take care of our planet earth, the time will come when we will not be able to celebrate the Eucharist due to a lack of bread and wine.

Thus, I have a feeling that a lot is still yet to be done especially in the area of education for both the clergy and the lay faithful. From this chapter I learned that most of the priests are not aware of the intrinsic link which exists between the Church's liturgical action and the natural world. This chapter has opened the ground for creating an awareness of what has been always neglected. There is no way we can talk of the love of God in the homilies, there is no way we can talk of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the Mass at large if we are not able to link them with our love for the natural world.

Therefore, as a way of summing up this chapter, I can say that we still have a long way to go if we want to live a life which is integral. The ecological crisis remains a reality and to curb it concerns every individual. Thus, the obligation of the church to take practical measures remains a big concern. Priests, religious, and lay faithful must learn how they should be truly Christ's followers by loving nature just like Christ did. And this is drawn from the celebration of the Eucharist and other liturgical functions.

6. General Conclusion

“How can the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist be used as an opportunity for people’s ecological formation, awareness and attitude?” This has been the main research question for this thesis and it is good to revisit it as we wind up this work. It is worth mentioning that from the main question we had four small questions which were used to develop four chapters. As we conclude this thesis it is good to make a recap of these questions: what are the relevant debates of ecological crisis? What is the relevant theological interpretation of the Eucharist? What is the transformative role of the different elements of the Eucharist according to the Roman Missal? What about the pastoral experience of the priests?

I began this thesis by giving a background on which the thesis was built. The thesis began by using the words of the feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether which said that, “within Monasticism, ecofeminism, covenantal ethics and cosmic theology, one finds resources for the transformation of human attitudes towards nature and a brighter ecological future” (Ruether, 2003, p. 226). From these beautiful words, I developed my thesis looking at how the Eucharist can be an opportunity for ecological education, transformation and conversion as reflected in the main research question.

Having explained the background of the thesis using other theologians whose thinking is like Ruether, I explained the research problem whereby the reality of global warming, and climate change were mentioned as a serious concern for our world of today. I took the region of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania as an example of the places in the world which have enormous experience of climate change. With reference to the new Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, I uncovered the problem saying that ecological crisis is a threat to our planet and the life of both human and non-human beings.

Looking at this reality, I sought to propose a way of reducing this tragic experience of the world. The research question above was given as a guide for the discussion in the subsequent chapters. In the first chapter I discussed how different theologians have shown concern about the topic of ecology and how the Church must take it as her preferential option today. The concept of ecology as a home reveals the idea of interconnectedness and the chain of life of all things in this world. Thus, I argued that the ecological crisis must use a theological lens since theology studies and talks about God who we believe are the creator of the universe. Conversion to creation as mentioned by Elizabeth Johnson was seen as an important element and the way forward.

In chapters two and three, I argued that the Eucharist as a celebration of God's saving love to humanity must be used as a school for ecological conversion. The use of bread and wine in the celebration of the Eucharist is the evidence that nature provides us with the Eucharistic species. In this case, the link between the Eucharist and nature is very clear especially when we look at the different elements of the Eucharist. For example, we saw in chapter three of this thesis that almost all the parts of the Mass have an ecological dimension. From the beginning of the Mass up to the time when the people are dismissed by the priest celebrant we can see this link between the Eucharist and nature. I was convinced that the Eucharist should also be seen as a celebration of nature. If the penitential rite, the biblical readings, the creed, the homily, the presentation of the gifts, the Eucharistic prayers, the reception of Holy Communion and the words of dismissal are ecological, then it is shameful for the Christians to be unfriendly to nature.

It was not my intention to give a solution to the present day ecological crisis but my intention was to propose a possible way of dealing with this problem. This thesis unveiled the Eucharist as one of the good moments where Christians can be informed about their relationship with nature. In the fourth chapter I argued that there is still a lot to be done on this topic since my findings showed that a good number of priests are not aware about the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and nature. This was clearly seen in the field consultation correspondence.

From the evidence from the material gathered above, from the first chapter to the fourth, I feel that the topic for the main research question is not yet answered. This thesis has given a glimpse of what should be done as the Church to respond to the ecological crisis. To see ecological crisis with a pastoral eye is what the thesis proposes. This was well demonstrated in the fourth chapter where a good number of priests I engaged in the conversation acknowledged the ecological dimension of the Eucharist while at the same time never mentioning it in their homilies or having any program concerning environment and Liturgy.

Therefore, in this thesis I have just given a preliminary procedure about this study which according to me is a beginning for further research. I therefore conclude this thesis by suggesting that a further research should be done especially on seeing how our engagement with nature can bring us closer to God through the celebration of the Eucharist.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Many times in this thesis especially in the conclusion I mentioned that the main objective of this project was not to give a specific and definitive solution to the present ecological crisis. I rather made it clear that the aim was to propose a way by which can be used as a means to provide education and awareness about the ecological crisis. We have seen from the conclusion that some more study is needed so that the Church can engage entirely in the mission of promoting the integrity of creation.

From this study, I therefore suggest that further research is needed since I have only given a glimpse of what should be done. Since I could not reach many people and different places I suggest that this study could be broadened by utilizing more findings and experiences. For example, instead of consulting only priests, the lay faithful can also be consulted. We can even go further and interview even the people of other religions.

While acknowledging my awareness about the limitedness of this thesis in terms of its scope, I also suggest that it is good to broaden the analysis of the liturgical texts in an ecumenical context. This can be linked with different traditions to see the ecological dimension and how they can be used as tools for people's transformation of attitude and behavior towards creation. This can be done not in a small context as we did in this project but it can take a broader perspective for more objective and reliable results.

Finally, I would like to suggest that there is a need to do more investigation on how the both priests who are the main administrators of the Sacraments explain the symbols they use to the people. For example, the Sacrament of Baptism uses a lot of symbols from nature such as water, candles, oil and white cloth. Since these symbols come from nature it is equally important for the people to see how this sacrament is linked with nature. Irresponsible using of the natural world could lead to the disappearance of these symbols just like the Eucharistic symbols of water, wine and bread. Could not this be a good area to investigate as one of the way of broadening this study?

Appendix I: Field Consultation Questions

1. For how long have you been a priest?
2. How long have you worked in the Parish as a parish priest or Parochial Vicar?
3. Do you experience any ecological crisis in your parish/place?
4. Do you believe that the Bible can give instruction on how we should relate with Creation?
5. What about the purpose of creation? Does Creation have any purpose in the plan of God?
6. Do you give any environmental education to your parishioners?
7. What does the incarnation of the Son of God imply for creation?
8. To what extent do the people know the meaning of the presentation of the gifts during the Mass as regards to creation?
9. To what extent is the presence of Christ in the Eucharist reflected in the ordinary life of the people and the environment?
10. What is your experience of the species of wine and bread in relation to creation?
11. To what extent if any, do you use the sermon or homily on Sundays to teach about creation/ecology?
12. To what extent does the Eucharistic celebration act as an opportunity for ecological conversion?
13. What does the experience of the Holy Communion or the Eucharist imply for our attitudes towards creation?
14. To what extent do the people know about the meaning the words of dismissal after at the end of Mass “Go in Peace, the Mass is ended” or to what extent do the people understand their mission as stewards of God’s creation after the Mass?
15. If there is something you would like to add or to comment about this topic especially from your pastoral experience feel free to comment.

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