

Re-envisioning a Holistic Educational Model: Lessons from the Healthy Biotic Community Life Cycle

Sung Sohn at Myra House

An ecologically holistic worldview centers upon people making intentional connections with their surroundings—people, structures, systems, communities, and nature, both locally and globally. This worldview aims to preserve the abundant and life-giving planet earth by increasing human consciousness in an ever-expanding universe.

The ecological crisis we find ourselves in today is rooted in dualistic, mechanistic and anthropocentric attitudes toward nature and resources from our planet. Against the mainstream attitude of domination, many scholars propose alternative worldviews, such as Edward O. Wilson (1984) and Peter Marshall (1994) who delineated relativistic biocentric views, and George Hendry (1980), Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme (1994) who focused on theistic biocentric views. John Cobb and Charles Birch (1981), in particular, contend that life is fundamentally interconnected, sustained by the vital living energy of Earth. They envision vibrant, interdependent “ecological models of life” from single cells to the community, as each living entity transforms as well as liberates. A decade after Cobb and Birch’s book, James Nash (1991) asserted an argument identifying the subject of ecological integrity. This integrity consists of “Holistic Health,” which requires healing and justice in all areas of our ecosphere and biosphere—economic, racial, cultural, institutional and international.

Holistic educational models interconnect religion, education, and spirituality. The primary intention of these models is to guide people toward an ideal of holistic health where there is an appreciation for the natural environment, spiritual awareness, community, and sustainability. Examples of such models are The Native American Tribe Center Model (Cajete, 1994), The Stewardship Model (Moore, 1998) and The Eco-Therapy Model (Clinebell, 1996). Holistic development happens when a person enters into a unified mind-body-spirit relationship with the self, along with others and the surrounding environment. During this process, a person begins to appreciate one’s wholeness and change the way they envision their lives when their emotional or physical wounds are healed and relationships are restored. However, these models are challenged by being less applicable in different contexts. And each model, more or less, does not go beyond the indoor classroom, weekend workshops or a seasonal/yearly event. Such education models, if they truly want to be transformative, must be continuously and consistently applicable to any context, such that they help one to learn completely new habits for life-long wellness of the individual, the community and the Gaian earth. [1]

This paper will examine the following biotic entities within the context of the four stages described above: the monastic communities (both Cistercian and Franciscan), the garden community, and the intentional family of Myra House. It will also examine the constraints of the small-scale educational model in communal settings. I will explore the following pressing questions regarding creating and sustaining such communities: How much renewable technology support is required? What are simple and practical ways to be more holistically sustainable? What kind of eco-program is necessary to educate ourselves and our children to act in more harmony with nature?

Twenty years ago, the Myra House project began to meet this need for a holistic way of living; the studies mentioned above were directly integrated into its model and curriculum. During my studies in ministry, I discerned my call to ordination in the United Methodist Church, I became acutely aware of not only how much people suffer physically and emotionally, but also of our planet Earth becoming less inhabitable and sustainable. I became convinced that a small-scale intentional community could be a holistic model—and thus begot Myra House. At the start, the house was renovated for the Sohn family and a few residents, but I hoped that many new residents from a spectrum of ethnic and cultural backgrounds would be eager to strive for such an ecologically sustainable way of life when they live with us moving from their away homes.

Within the ideology of Myra House, especially important was the conviction that ecological consciousness is the core of a healthy mind (Roszak, 1992). A person's wholeness can be recovered by unlocking the repressed unconsciousness, which is facilitated by positive interactions with other people and the natural environment. Thus, taking care of fruit trees, vegetables, and herbal beds could be beneficial for both themselves and earth as everyday chores even though most of us had lived in urban settings with no experience in gardening and landscaping.

In observing biotic community of plants and animals, at each stage of development, there is a set of specific tasks to be accomplished, through which a particular direction and idiosyncratic characteristics emerge. Accommodating: In its growing process, the organism has to modify existing circumstances over time due to both the organism itself and its surrounding environmental changes. In this breakthrough process, both the organism and the surrounding environment require structural changes, both internally and externally, and they co-evolve synergistically toward a renewal stage. Cross-pollinating: During the mature growth stage of a plant, pollen is transferred from one flower to another flower on the same plant or to a different plant altogether. This process requires pollinating agents like water, wind, animals or human beings. Many plants need to have pollen spread from one plant to another flower in order to reproduce and increase genetic diversity. Whitehead explains that an organism becomes an ultimate entity as each individual goes through organic relations with the larger structures of nature and the enduring structures of activities. I contend that each biotic community goes through its natural and healthy life-cycle in four stages: Germination, Differentiation, Accommodation, and Cross-pollination.

Whitehead's process and relational world view is categorized in four major stages—the Germinating stage refers to actual entities that are “being present with consciousness.” Its very being becomes as it is constituted by its process experiencing lure feeling. During the Differentiating stage, particular characteristics of an organism are noticeable that entail concrete facts of relations with certain value and purpose, similarly known as the "prehensions" stage in process terminology. The Accommodating stage can be identified with concrescence of mental activity feeling togetherness as all actual entities are composed of other entities. A set of actual entities felt in the unity of prehensions, i.e. “nexus” in particular situation. Each organism gets along with other organisms and the surrounding environment as defining characteristics are crystalized. The Cross-pollinating stage entails a universalized platform in which each organism multiplies in great numbers conveying certain characteristics such as “ultimate matter” and “novel entity.”[3]

Correlating to Whitehead's conception in his *Philosophy of Organism*, it could be explained how an organism evolves and becomes gradually in the sequence of developmental process in continuous flow of life cycle. Since each stage entails non-stop, ongoing dynamic interaction, the present participle is preferable to the noun form. **Germinating:** Once a seed is planted in a good soil environment, its outer

shell softens, and a tiny root begins to grow downward. Soon the root start to take nutrients from the soil to help the seedling grow, and a small shoot starts growing upward as its tiny leaves unfold and begin to grow. Germinating often turns out to be a second birth stage for leading individuals who have radically changed their life journey in the social ecology sphere. **Differentiating:** When an organism begins to grow, each living cell's identity is shaped differently from others. For example, there are muscle cells, nerve cells and skin cells. At each stage of development, there is a set of specific tasks to be accomplished, through which a particular direction and idiosyncratic characteristics emerge.

Accommodating: In its growing process, the organism has to modify existing circumstances over time due to both the organism itself and its surrounding environmental changes. In this breakthrough process, both the organism and the surrounding environment require structural changes, both internally and externally, and they co-evolve synergistically toward a renewal stage. **Cross-pollinating:** During the mature growth stage of a plant, pollen is transferred from one flower to another flower on the same plant or to a different plant altogether. This process requires pollinating agents like water, wind, animals or human beings. Many plants need to have pollen spread from one plant to another flower in order to reproduce and increase genetic diversity.

As the Myra House continues its journey in search of a holistic way[4] of life for all, it is evident that each living organism grows organically, generating its own biotic community. Biotic community refers to a local ecosystem for plants and animals in biology in which each living organism interacts with other organisms coexisting within a given limited area. Every biotic community goes through the processes of birth, growth, and multiplication. Inanimate objects are lifeless matter such as dust, minerals, and rocks. When an organism uses inanimate objects, an ecosystem arises. Within a certain rule of the life-cycle, a life with strong adaptability is born from water, soil, air, heat, and light, and the balanced eco-environment is being emerged. As a good example, the soil contains nutrients that promote trees to grow such as nitrogen, phosphoric acid, and calcium, as well as minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and sulfur. Trees use these basic elements and minerals to provide us with oxygen, essential energy for all living creatures and things. The tree's stable roots keep the ground and soil sturdy, so it won't be easily wiped out by floods. Its abundance of leaves gives us shade, not to mention beautiful scenery. Birds prevent overpopulation of the harmful insects upon the trees. The natural ecosystem is intricately related to our human lives. Such specific habitat by interconnected living and nonliving participants represents a particular structure and certain characteristics; this term can also apply to humanity's faith, family, social, and garden communities.

Among the various intentional living communities I have studied and visited in the beginning stage of Myra House planning, the Cistercian community was the most inspirational. [2] Cistercian monks not only live in a community of solitude, but they also create a contemplative architectural style and built environment by conserving the natural environment and realizing their imagination through diligent labor. The Myra House implemented the Cistercian ideals by creating contemplative space, adding guidelines for living which are centered upon each resident's holistic growth, integrating spiritual practices, living communally and adopting environmentally sustainable practices. Once the house was built, a small group of residents formed, sometimes with as many as twelve residents living together. Communal living has provided the key momentum that has helped us break through each impasse—for example when the whole household was subject to financial instability, rainstorm flooding, dangerous wild brush fires and much else. When Ecoterra Health Market was opened in 2008 at the Claremont

Village in order to bring in income for the Myra House maintenance, a diverse group of young adults was able to join the community through the Intern-Resident Program.

Communal living and intentional self-discipline through farming helped us stay in tune with the regenerative cycle of life-sustaining energy. One project that emphasized communal living and collaboration was our mini-farm project where all residents got involved to make the 'farm-to-table' possible in our backyard. Additionally, the house was frequently open to friends and neighbors for Sunday evening meditation, community gardening and special events, such as sustainability seminars and eco-spiritual workshops. For the last couple of years, Myra House's communal activities have decreased, keeping only occasional garden tours and daytime group retreats since we are not currently recruiting communal-living residents. I now spend much of my time at Ecoterra Holistic Health, a new rendition of the old market, running a holistic clinic that provides acupuncture treatment and herbal remedies for patients.

As people's visitation dwindled, the garden became a place just for birds, bees, dragonflies, and butterflies. In the absence of outside visitors, I took particular notice of the Francis of Assisi and Clare's statues which had been gifted to the garden by guests who dearly appreciated the peaceful and tranquil setting of our garden. Frankly, I had not previously noticed their direct and profound cohesion with the ideals of Myra House and the garden. Francis' humble ideals and passion for harmonious living with all creation have been subjects of meditation for me, particularly in these days and important facets within Myra House. Those two communities can be illustrated by four stages as a biotic community along with Myra House community and garden community as follows.

Cistercian Community:

Germinating (New Beginning): The Cistercian community, which is different from other monastic communities in that individuals seek poverty and solitary lives. The Order of the Cistercians was started by a group of monks in the second decade of the twelfth century. Although there was an abbot, Robert (c. 1027-1110), who left the Benedictine monastery at Molesme in 1098 with 21 other monks to found a new monastery at Cîteaux, and also Alberic (1099-1109), who followed Robert and was chosen as second successor, the genuine Cistercian identity was actuated by a third abbot, Stephen Harding (1050-1134).[5] *Exordium Parvum*, a long narrative source, reveals some details of the struggles for monks during the earlier stages of the settlement: there was some despair after failures in securing new recruits and failures to cope with harsh living circumstances.[6] Stephen's leadership and his having good relations with noble neighbors made it possible to acquire more land and to build more buildings. During Stephen's abbacy, lay brothers, or *conversi*, were admitted as necessary helpers when Cistercian building projects increased. The defining features of Cistercian Monasticism are (1) the exclusion of secular lords from holding court during important feasts in the monastery, (2) the realization of great simplicity of church buildings without decoration by gold and silver, and (3) the acceptance of lay brothers—not as hired labor but as co-workers, with the arrangement of their dormitory next to the monk's cloister.[7]

Differentiating (Key Discipline): the Cistercian community was originated from the early medieval Benedictine monastery. Since the early tenth century, certain Benedictine monasteries were particularly influenced by the Cluny abbey became symbols of wealth. Their church buildings were splendidly decorated and their worship hours were long and elaborate. Cistercians simplified the liturgy

from its long hours and lavish rituals, and manual labor, especially fieldwork, became an integral part of daily life. The Daily Office began at daybreak with Lauds and ended with Compline at sunset. Meditative reading (*Lectio Divina*) and meeting for daily Chapter were also included along with six hours' sleep.[8] Elderly and ill members were excused from this daily schedule. The daily tasks of physical labor consisted of whitewashing walls, greasing boots, gardening, chopping wood, and other miscellaneous duties. Twice daily frugal meals were offered, though they were rich in fruit, vegetables, fishes, and beans. Communion and feet washing (*Maundy*) were held weekly, and occasional bloodletting was added except on feast days and during harvest season. During harvest, the monks (and also nuns) would join lay brothers and hired helpers to work in the fields.[9] For Cistercians, both natural and physical environments were considered as "a window onto the Divine" and the taming of the landscape was symbolic of the "soul's return to God." [10] Their devotional practice, which was especially based on Bernard's commentary on the Song of Songs, developed further into Cistercian mysticism.[11]

Accommodating (Naturo-Physical Topo): The *Exordium Cistercii*, a shorter version of the narrative found in *Exordium Parvum*, states that Robert and his brothers arrived at their new place, Cîteaux, a "place of horror, a vast wilderness," though the name Cîteaux, rooted in the old French word *Cistel*, was identified with the marsh plant gorse or rush.[12] Robert's initial desire was to look for a place that was "desert" or "solitude"—what the early desert fathers looked for, though this type of land was only available in valleys. Kinder clarifies that this was not an ideal place to live since monks needed to work hard in order to be supplied with fresh water for drinking, cooking, liturgical functions and washing.[13] Often, monks were required to dig canals, build dams and change river-run paths in order to deviate flooding.[14] Such accommodating skills made Cistercians alter valley sites into fertile properties. Cistercians built their abbey by accommodating the basic concept of the human body to the basic needs of building around the cloister, i.e. the heart of the abbey: body (*corpus*) implies the refectory and dormitory; mind (*animus*) refers to the cloister, chapter room, sacristy, and library; spirit (*spiritus*) entails church or place of prayer. Monks also built a garden, planting edible vegetables and medicinal herbs for their meals and also for recuperation. For Cistercians, placing the lay brothers' building adjacent to one side of the cloister was a most innovative aspect, though only monks were allowed into the cloister of the Benedictine abbey.[15]

Cross-Pollinating: Early Cistercians were known as great farmers, and their farming skills were applied to other monastic and civic communities. Their communities multiplied all over in Europe as more monks and nuns joined. The inclusion of women in the order began early, since the first abbotcy. Right after Robert's death, Bernard's oldest brother joined Cîteaux, and his wife, Elizabeth, became the first prioress. Humbeline, Bernard's own sister, became the second prioress.[16] Since the late eleventh century and early twelfth century, Cistercian architecture developed in Burgundy, where Gothic-style merged with traditional Romanesque style. The bare stone walls, rounded arches and massive building structures of these styles exemplified great simplicity. The juxtaposition of playful light and shadow between buildings and open space generated a local aesthetic identity. A half-century after their first attempt at searching for a new monastery, a Cistercian monk, Eugenius III (1145–53), was elected as a pope in 1145. The Cistercian community has grown to be the most vital monastic "order," sustaining their pursuit of the life of solitude and community. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cistercians were divided into three bodies: The Common Observance, The Middle Observance, The Strict

Observance, or Trappist, with about 100 Cistercian monasteries and about 4700 monks in total, including lay brothers.[17]

Franciscan Community:

Germinating (New Beginning): Thomas of Celano, the earliest biographer of Francis' life in his first two books, covers a good portion of Francis' life, though the legend of three companions tells more detail about his youth, struggles with his father, conversion and keen sensitivity and listening to the voice of his consciousness in taking responsive action. John, the name given in his early life, was changed to Francis when his father returned from France.[18] Francis' father, Bernatoli, was a wealthy merchant who owned several properties in Assisi and often took business trips to various countries outside Italy.[19] Francis also traveled many places assisting his father's business. Celano says that, as a young man, Francis was "very rich; not greedy, lavish; not a hoarder of many, but spent with great vanity," helping business and having many friends.[20]

Francis (c.1181-1226) joined the war between Assisi and Persia (1202-1209), and he was detained as a prisoner for about a year when he was 22 years old. He had to return home due to his illness in the spring of 1204. During his recuperation in his hometown, his interest grew greatly in the nature that surrounded Assisi. While he was charmed by the beauty and harmony of his mountainous rural village, he gave up his planned "trip to Rome" with his friend. Instead, he withdrew himself into the "lonely wilderness" and went through a remorseful stage, reflecting on his pride and lofty ambition.[21]

After having a mystical vision of Jesus and hearing the call to "go and repair my house" at San Damiano, Francis went to the town and sold his horse and clothes. After he returned to the church, Francis gave all his earned money to the priest and told the priest of his desire to be a servant of God. When Bernatoli sought the monetary loss back, he filed a complaint against his son, but the city officials couldn't take the case since Francis was already in the service of God.[22] Bernatoli punished his son with an angry temper, cast him off half-dead and put him into a dark closet at his house. During his confinement, Francis' mother set him free. But the father found Francis at St. Damiano and ordered him to leave the country. Francis renounced all claims to his inheritance and retreated back at San Damiano. After his time alone, he began to repair the church building, stone by stone and by himself. Having the conviction that "I should live according to the form of holy Gospel," Francis' life changed by preaching the gospel, making friends with beggars and lepers and increasing the numbers of his friends.[23]

Differentiating (Key Discipline): Francis, when his followers were emerging into a community, said, "If people ask, 'Where are you from, what order?' simply say, 'We are penitents, natives of the City of Assisi.'" However, discerning his community's future, Francis had to get permission from the Church for official recognition, regulation, and supervision. The Pope granted them an order with the name "Friars Minor", which, in English, was "The Lesser Brothers." [24]

Francis' health was getting worse due to his habitual malnutrition and frequent malarial fevers, and he began to lose his eyesight, beginning two years before his death.[25] Francis' unapologetic beliefs and discipline built his community characteristics:

1) Begging alms in poverty. Begging alms was considered an important expression of the bond with the poor. In poverty, brothers were able to mingle with the poor and speak to them with authority, freeing them from all material anxiety and thus allow them to live harmoniously with nature.[26]

2) Living under utterly basic need and caring for one another in humility. Self-reliant living was emphasized such that personal earnings should be from one's own labors.[27] Riding horseback or keeping pets should be avoided since it was a sign of affluence. Full support in love and care among brothers was to be like a "mother for his son." Obedience to superiors was absolute in theory but, in practice, liberty of action was adopted for brothers, except for a particular novitiate stage.[28]

3) Harmonious living with all beings with reverence. Francis' later life was filled with poetic stories. For Francis, the bird of Bevagna was one of his brothers; the swallow of Alviano was his own little sister. Francis considered every being—from the sun to earthworm, wild beast, and every kind of plants and fruit tree—brothers and sisters because all beings were originated from the same Holy Father. Francis even was careful not to trample on water after washing, walking over rocks with fear and reverence. In another incident, he wanted not to hurt brother fire when his linen pants over his leg caught fire. Especially Francis' Cantic of Brother Sun, beginning "Laudate Sia lo Signore! [Praised be my Lord God with all creatures]," became a distinctive mark of how he appreciated the relationship to nature and celebrated harmonious co-living.[29]

Accommodating (Naturo-Physical Topo): For Francis, his hometown of Assisi was a most formative place; it is where his baptismal Church of St Peter and its piazza are located. St. Damiano church and its surroundings were full of cypress, pine and olive trees where Francis walked along a stony path amid lavender and rosemary. St. Damiano was the first church Francis repaired, and he walked around it with praising hymns with bursting happiness. At St. Damiano, Francis recited the Cantic of the Sun and was taken care of by poor Clare during his illness before dying. Santa Maria Degli Angeli was the second church Francis repaired, and it was a cradle of the Franciscan community. Santa Maria of the Portiuncla was the first place for the brothers' living and sleeping and was also where leper hospital was located.[30]

To build a place for brothers' living according to Francis' guidance, there had to be "first, the holy poverty we have promised and the good example we are bound to offer others." And he specified: (1) Build little houses by mud and wood after digging a large ditch around the land, with a low hedge fence instead of a wall. (2) Furnish a garden where brothers can produce wild plants, flowers and fragrant plants of every variety in their season. (3) If possible, build little cells where brothers can withdraw and pray [31].

Cross-Pollinating: Francis never had in mind creating a new monastic community. Sabatier argues that Francis, full of compassion with beggars and lepers, was purely drawn into his contemplation-filled consciousness while he himself was critical about assessing his words and deeds each time in order to see whether they issued from his disguised selfishness. Francis was determined "to save others only through saving yourself." Sabatier also points out that Francis' personality had a particular strength in avoiding a systemic, polemical viewpoint from which spiritual pride can spring out. Francis' only weapon against the wicked was his own endeavor of striving toward a holy life. It was Francis' way of love that made people be enlightened, revived and compelled to love.[32] Sabatier identifies the growing early Franciscan community as an Umbrian movement which was known as a most humble, sincere and practical attempt to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Because the people of the local region had changed their lives, in addition to Francis' friends, Clare of Assisi and her sister Agnes joined in taking the oath at St Damiano.[33]

Francis never had a formal study at church or school and had no officially recognized degree or certificate. In fact, he always refuses to be ordained a priest. Yet, Francis' record was highly praised as a prime symbol of ecclesiastical obedience, upright to doctrine and devotional depth; he was endorsed by numerous Popes. Pope Honorius III placed the papal seal on the documents of the Gospel-vision of the Franciscans' first Order, of the Sisters of Saint Clare and of the Religious & Secular 3rd Order.[34] According to Heimann, on the six-hundredth anniversary Francis' death in 1826, Francis was hardly known anywhere outside of Italy. Yet, 100 years later, Francis was known universally around the world. Many Protestants have converted to Catholicism since the early nineteenth century[35]

In 1902, the British Society of Franciscans study group estimated that 2 million people went on pilgrimage to Assisi. For the Church of Rome, Francis was a model for Catholics; for Protestants, he was a reformation pioneer and social revolutionary who attempted to create a just society—a kingdom of heaven on earth. In 1931, during an ecologists' convention, 4 October, the feast day of Francis, was declared World Animal Day, symbolizing a pan-theistic union with nature. Pope John Paul II officially made Francis the patron saint of ecologists.[36]

Current Pope, Jorge Mario Bergoglio choosing his papal name “Francis” when he was elected in March 2013. His encyclical letter “LAUDATO SI,” appealed to protect Earth as a common home for all denouncing acts of pollution, waste, and the throwaway culture, depletion of natural sources water, diversity loss, environmental deterioration and ill quality of human life and global inequality.[37] The Francis Effect with a theme of living in Harmony with Creation seems to spread out powerfully with the effect of mass media since 2017 when a conference was holding for theological educators, pastors, lay leaders, and students, particularly in the San Antonio region and beyond, inviting ecumenical participants across all spectrums.

Myra House family community:

Two dozen years ago, when my vocation was taking a turn from architecture to religious study my ecological sensitivity was heightened. I became acutely aware of not only how much people suffer physically, mentally and emotionally, but also of our planet earth becoming less inhabitable and unsustainable. Rachel Carson's now old book *Silent Spring* (1962) detailed how birds and animals died by contaminated water and disrupted the natural food chain. Her report waived a red flag about the harmful effects of DDT and other pesticides, which caused cancer and genetic damages to people. Over four decades after her book, numerous books and articles followed in support of her findings, which revealed how excessive human activities altered the planet's environment, biodiversity, land ice masses, ocean temperature, and the climate cycle.

I also learned about the Gaia perspective during this period. Built on the co-evolutionary theory of earth science, it argues that all life is interconnected and interdependent. The well-being of the planet is directly related to the well-being of people. Asserting the ecological unconscious as a core of the human healthy mind, leading theorist Ralph Metzner identifies three metaphors: addiction, amnesia, and autism as for understanding our disconnection from the earth. I became convinced that the wellness of my home and family is interconnected with the wellness of our planetary home. Nevertheless, the idea of restoring the planet remained a remote global issue and a marginal concern within academia.

Similar to other immigrant families, Myra and I wanted to settle down in the US for a better future for our children. After fifteen years of harsh struggles, we realized each family member's emotional fluctuations, unstable mentality, and physically unhealthy condition. We were desperate to

search for another way and yearned for healing and renewal. But I only knew of few communities such as the Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies at Cal Poly Pomona University and the Eco-Village co-housing community in Los Angeles. When I was about to discern my calling to get ordination, we visited a monastery in Saint Joseph, Minnesota. The community was named after St. Brigid, the lady of belief, who provided food and shelter to the needy during the 5th Century in Ireland. We returned with a hope that our family can capture peace in simple life.

Germinating (New Beginning): After we returned from the trip, we began to reorganize our lives. The first thing we did was to get rid of the TV so that our family could talk more often. Our two teenagers resisted for several days at the time. Nevertheless, as parents, we were convinced that our children would understand when they grew older they would eventually understand why we made a choice to live in different way from their friend's families. Then we instituted family chatting time after dinner. Later we added reading a passage from the Bible, listening to one another's sharing and praying. At first, it seemed awkward giving full attention to one another's sharing. We got rid of our luxurious car, cherished oak furniture, cell phones, and even our credit cards which until then were used daily. In the meantime I was searching for a new place to live as we continued to get accustomed to our new ways of living together as a family. After a property was found I began to remodel it converting old house to be suitable for 12 people to live in. The common area includes the kitchen, family room, library, living room, and a chapel. The water is heated by solar heat, and wastewater can be recycled for garden use. The eighteen solar panels located on the southern roof are rated to generate average 1.8 kilowatts per day. The waste from food, vegetables, and fruits is mixed with dried leaves and weeds and made into compost. We did everything we could to minimize waste and maximize the amount of recycling and reuse possible. The garbage bins are classified so that each can be recycled for use indoors and outdoors.

Though the house's construction was not completed The Sohn family had to move into this new house in the beginning of summer 2001. We named it Myra House because the word Myra originates from ancient Greek, and has connotations of abundance and limitlessness. It was intended that the house would not only be a place of residence but also a spiritually nourishing home for all who live there. Starting with Sohn family, the Myra House community first formed in earnest when a young white man who had just come back from his missionary service in Peru moved in. For the next dozen years we lived with the young adults from all kinds of cultural and ethnic and educational background.

Differentiating (Key Discipline): When the number of family members increased, several community living guideline was introduced as follow:

(1) Communal living: In order to reaffirm the fact that we were all one family, we had a special dinner every Wednesday. Also, Sunday night was the night of reconciliation, and we listened to one another's stories. The about ten minutes of silence which followed the sharing a short story one another brought us closer, induced a feeling of togetherness. Besides each member's personal chores, everyone had to participate in communal work such as feeding chickens, collecting eggs, cleaning up the chicken coop, picking fruits, tending vegetables, making pottery, crafting woodworks and so on.

(2) Eco-spiritual living: We set times for sharing time and gardening. We gathered for Morning Prayer. There we talked about the dreams we had the night before, shared our plans for the day. Complete silence was observed from 11 o'clock at night to Morning Prayer. Every Sunday evening Myra House residents and guests participate in an Open Compline service in the chapel and pray for reconciliation. The

gardening chores were assigned to each resident as they took turns tasks like tilling the soil, weeding or growing vegetables. Residents were encouraged walking prayers at labyrinth garden.

(3) Conserving and regenerative living: We strived to recycle and reuse materials placing designated bins and containers at every common area. Leftover food was separated from other waste. We also tried to save electricity by relying on our own solar-generated electricity and using energy efficient lighting bulb. We further relied on local heating and cooling units, like small gas fireplaces, and built-in thermal insulated materials, such as baked floor tiles and high efficiency glass windows. We also dried our clothes under the sun instead of using an energy-consuming dryer machine.

Accommodating (Naturo-Physical Topo): Convinced as we were that a changed environment makes reshape our habits possible an “organic, earth-friendly environment” was the animating main concept for our new place. I intended to build a house where we could live pollution-free, conserving energy and practice the recycling goods and reduction of wastes. Recruiting residents were occasionally challenging. We were able to host young adults through WWOOF (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) program. Our Internship Program was started when our natural pharmacy and market Ecoterra opened.

Myra House began to invite friends and neighbors when we began holding public seminar, event such as Earth Day celebration. “Solutions to Sustainability” was such event annually as local people and guest speakers were invited. Community garden day was a seasonal event where participants tour the garden and learn about gardening tips and application. We also took the opportunity of creating partnerships with local restaurants swapping our harvested edible greens to designated dollars’ gift tickets. The Myra House facilitates a network of interactions from the home to the farm to the local community. The house was open to the public occasionally for short-term retreat including garden tours and learning sustainable features.

Cross-Pollinating: Almost two decades has passed. Now we no longer have communal residents whom we can pray with, share and work together at the house. Instead, long-term residents moved in and lived more separately from us. The house does still keep open to visitors for specific functions like holding workshops or meditation sessions. Our children have grown and live with their own families. Instead we have grandchildren whom we are sure they are the ones most enjoy the house and garden. And we extend our connection with local people through Ecoterra, which is now a local compounding pharmacy and acupuncture clinic that we own and operate.

Garden Community:

For outdoor work on the property, we began with clearing off dying trees and stone piles. A wooden utility pole that stood in the middle of the lot was removed, and we then needed to draw electricity through an underground line from the other side of the street. We also had to dig out the old septic tank and connect the pipe to the city sewer line under the main road. Building a grand-size water pond and planting fruit trees utilizing sloping land was main part of outdoor landscaping. As for the house itself, the cost and time for the remodeling of the structure exceeded our initial plans and had to be completed over time as we were living there. So although the house was not yet equipped with everything we wanted it to have, we resided there as finishing and detail work continued on.

Germinating (New Beginning): The land of the property was extensively worked on and changed. We collected the stones littering the vast yard area and used them to build low stone walls and pillars. We built a composting structure on the west corner of the lot along with a chicken coop with a raised floor for nesting. A large amount of rock and dirt were dug out in the middle of the lot and a large water pond was placed there. We call it the “Life-Giving Pond” since the water flows from the water-fall as a life-giving force. At over thirty thousand gallons, the water pond was very empty at first. The only creatures living in it were carp, which we brought from St. Andrew’s Abbey, a nearby monastery in the desert north of Mt. Baldy. Now, all sorts of flora and fauna propagate, and we even occasionally find frogs and toads. Our planted water lilies cover the surface of the pond and daffodils and other water plants have spread out considerably. As the years have passed by, the pond has become filled with and surrounded by all sorts of living organisms. Along the oval border of the pond, we planted fruit trees, vegetables and herbs. We have successfully grown a wide variety of fruits here: apples, persimmons, pears, figs, peaches, apricots, dates, plums, and avocados. The deep green leaves of the orange trees, tangerine and lemon trees stand at north side fence beside the cedar trees. One of the hardest parts for us was changing the alkaline soil to neutral or mild acidity.

Differentiating (Key Discipline): Then Myra House garden community took on three key techniques:

- Permacultural farming: We implemented several ancient farmers’ land use techniques conserving water by irrigating from the lily pond to the farm, enhancing the soil quality by applying the crop rotation method on a four year cycle and using homemade fertilizers, green manure and earthworms. The application of fertilizer for us entails brewing a compost tea with microbial food sources like molasses, kelp and humic acid. We often make composting tea with chicken manure and sometimes goat manure picked up from a local dairy farm..
- Organic farming: Instead of using toxic spray or placing wire traps in order to kill the moles that gnaw on tree roots and kill the trees, we blocked them with a natural mixture of vegetable oil and soapy water. We also deterred unwanted pests and weeds by inter-planting and companion planting; these processes foster interactions within species and to other related species—for example, between dry land and wetland plants or native shrubs and fruit trees. A 220-gallon water container was installed to irrigate the farm and vegetable beds with biologically balanced pond. And the worms’ shelter, composting drum and tea stations were placed in this area as well. Any excavated soil was always to be saved and reused for refurbishing new plots or for creating composting mix.
- Regenerative practice: The soil condition of the Myra House land was initially rough, alkaline and rocky. It needed the renewing cycle of the soil organisms and the rich diversity of life this provides. Inanimate matter often changes and becomes very beneficial to organisms. When messy scraps of food rot to a certain degree, the pieces begin to interact and they engender the growth of fungi and bacteria. Enzymes grow, and the whole mass turns into natural compost. In order to prepare the ground for compost piles, much material was recycled: discarded cardboard boxes, newspapers, green waste, PVC tubes and other plastics.
- Garden project as a memorable family celebration: One item on the wish list for the Myra House garden was to plant local, native trees. For Earth Day one year, which also fell on my own birthday celebration, I asked family members to contribute financially so we can purchase a coast live oak tree. The tree is considered a food plant for the beautiful California butterflies that make their nests in this oak. Family

and friends gathered together, offering blessings for newly planted the tree. The ceremony also included the blessings for recently arrived baby chicks and their new home.

Accommodating (Naturo-Physical Topo): Earth-centered chores became the most challenging and required immense physical labor. Spring season seems to require relentless work. To keep at the optimum level of land use, we had to explore particular biotic communities and then create clusters of particular plants and vegetation. Oftentimes, natural disaster disrupted our surroundings. A wild fire that burned down 10,000 acres of the neighboring mountains reached our fence. Due to the sudden turn of the strong Santa Ana winds, the fire's flames rushed down to our fence, though the property was thankfully largely spared from fire damage. A year after the fire, our house was flooded by the runoff mud during a rain storm. Aggravating the circumstances, the water flooded our pond with muddy debris and knocked down a fence along the west side. It was one of the historic, massive floods in the area. Half of the whole house was also sunken in the muddy water. After each of these events and at many other times, we explored new possibilities for the garden:

- **Cultivating mini farm:** The north corner of the lot was neglected for many years. The cultivation of that corner seemed impossible and overwhelming in terms of how much labor and financial resources it required. Convinced that our choice of crops has significant consequences for both our human health and the planet, we have converted that corner of land from an insignificant landscape into a sustainable source of life.
- **Creating a lavender farm:** Mediterranean perennial plants—mainly *Lavendula Augustifolia*—were planted where the rose garden was previously. We chose this particular evergreen shrub of light purple-blue spikes over the French or Spanish varieties because of its evident simplicity and resiliency. It is aesthetically pleasing, spiritually tranquilizing, and practically suited to our soil and weather in north Claremont.
- **Cluster bed of chamomile flowers:** The name “chamomile” originates from Greek and means “earth-apple,” suggesting the apple-like scent of the flowers. German chamomile, known to be medicinally more potent than other kinds, was planted several years ago; every year they have come back to life from the dropped seeds of the previous year's harvest.
- **Tending Chickens:** In the past there were several incidents when we lost chickens. In one case, 9 chickens were gone but only one dead body was found and her head was missing. Another year, in the early evening I was shocked to notice the chickens' playing yard was utterly empty. The remaining three chickens disappeared again after already losing five chickens during the past two days in a row. There was a fence but no protective roof, so the yard was not safe against such threats as the climbing opossum or snappy raccoon. After these horrible incidents, we made a most daring decision: relocate the coop to the farm inside. So, a new chicken barn was made by converting an old greenhouse. At the new location, we tried several different breeds—from common Black Australorp to the extremely rare Olive Egger. In early April, 13 chickens of seven different kinds were brought in. Now they are laying eggs of different colors: olive from the Olive Egger, bluish ones from the Ameraucana, the darkest brown from the Cuckoo Maran, light brown from the Red Cochin, tan color from the Black Wyandotte and giant-size brown ones from the Blue Jersey.
- **Dying and Regenerating:** The jujube trees and citrus trees are growing very well among the many trees were planted. Some trees, however, were never healthy and eventually died. The vitex tree could not survive a gopher intrusion. The weeping willow was another one that eventually died. The tree was just a bare root when she was planted ten years ago. Withstanding all sorts of harsh weather, the tree grew to

over 20 feet high. Standing by the entry gate, she is the first one to greet everyone who passes by. Enduring many days and nights, the trunk has become strong and big. After thriving, she suddenly died due to a disease caused by powdery mildew.

- Earth dome project: a bamboo teepee was built at north east corner when the farm was created in 2008. I am planning on building a dome, known as Whole Earth Building (WEB), which originates from ancient earth building techniques. Its construction and operation use existing soil for more than three-quarters of the building material. The dome will be constructed from earth bags filled with muddy soil. This superadobe structure can be coiled into vaults and domes in the same way a potter coils clay to make a pot. Barbed wire reinforcement makes the structure resistant to windstorms, flood, and earthquakes. (Khalili, ESS 14-15). I plan on creating pouch and apse windows and doors, sitting areas, a skylight and wind-scooping curves so that the dome can catch cooling winds.

Cross Pollinating: As years go by, a variety of birds have come to the pond looking for shelter. Bashful scarlet tanagers, bustling flocks of mockingbirds, arrogant California quails, which fly in a rush, egrets with long bills and legs, and all sorts of other birds gather around the pond. Since our house is located near the mountains, wild animals often come down. Why are certain things more beautiful than others? In a landscape, intermingling one beautiful color with the beauty of another escalates the intensity of both. Despite of these stunning scenes stay in the blink of an eye, beauties complimentary to one another signal a healthy ecology.

Every spring season shows more colorful displays with a more stunning wonder and pristine peace than any other season. Our garden exhibits the virtues that humans have strived for since the ancient times: truth, goodness and beauty. Ralph Waldo Emerson was right in saying that nature awakens the ears of our ears and opens the eyes of our eyes, calling us to be more attentive. Nature's splendid scene pulls our undivided attention in. As we open our ears to the bee's hums and our eyes to the butterfly's flights, our amazement knows no boundaries. And our senses stand in awe of the bees and butterflies and their jest. How swiftly the bee moves from sage to daisy to rosemary and then to the apple tree. Their diligent work makes it possible for the flowers to bloom and the apples to ripen. Without the bees' pollination, oranges, blueberries, avocados and cucumbers could not exist. How exquisite are the patterns of the butterflies' wings, how freely they fly near and far. Without the butterflies' cross-pollination, our lavender and hollyhock would never produce seeds to regenerate.

Gophers still dig their holes and leave dirt mounds. Rabbits continue to visit and snip away fresh greens. Bull frogs have made a home in our pond and their bellowing sounds amplify after sunset. These creatures have been a nuisance to us by hindering our gardening efforts. But the truth is that they are worthy of life as they hold the key for a healthy environment and balanced ecosystem. Our garden represents a sacred space where transformation takes place by many bearers of good news-new life and new fruits. They are truly worthy of worship. To battle against the gophers, we have tried most of the natural methods—using juicy gum, blocking the paths with thorny branches of thorny rose twigs and bougainvillea and filling the holes with chili pepper powder. No matter how thoroughly we try these methods, the gophers still make their ways in and mess up the plant roots and soil beds. But all in all, these are daily hindrances that are a part of this great gift of our encounter with nature.

Conclusion:

Recent news that the earth has reached its “point of no return” has alarmed us that we are heading down a devastating path. The ozone depleting process is warming our earth and ice is melting. Six glaciers near the North Pole will melt entirely no later than 800 years from now. (Scott Gold, “Irreversible collapse of Antarctic glaciers has begun, studies say,” May 12, 2014. *LA Times*). And the day will come when gophers will no longer dig holes, rabbits will no longer steal our lettuce and frogs will no longer bellow. And the bees and butterflies will be nowhere to be found.

The story of the Myra House community is not a success story! Save the earth? Save the people? I am no longer so optimistic. However, in carrying on the Myra House project of maintaining the building and garden in a sustainable way, unexpected challenges never go away. We seriously thought about quitting every day. But how could we let go of such a grateful task of realizing whom we love most, what we can do for their healthy living and why we ought to continue this daunting journey.

As we continually re-vision the mission of the Myra House, always reflecting on our original mission “to educate future leaders of the local and global community facing emergent ecological crises and human illness,” we hope to continue to live out a strengthening of our interdisciplinary practices in the areas of integrative health and sustainable living. As we connect with the inspirational stories of other people and communities, it is crucial that our mission can be reflected on, reviewed and refocused. We can envision a new model to be germinated by reframing **the Way of Eco-Biotic Community Life in Seven Rules:**

1. Not being overly competitive, driven by selfish genes, but instead collaboratively working toward symbiotic cooperation. Observing a garden in a small lot, it is evident that there is unique beauty in the diversity; each plant and tree contributes its own distinctive features and the natural beauty is heightened as many contributors are collaborating. Applying this to the human family dynamic, we seek opportunities to live together across racial/ethnic divides, generational gaps and cultural boundaries. Healthy, sustainable community can be achieved through the symbiotic interaction of diverse contributors—bacteria, bugs, worms and insects as well as humans. True beauty is certainly not created by a select few who succeed in the game of the survival of the fittest through dominating and manipulative tactics. Rather, there are other means that can open up imagination, creativity and moral excellency for all.
2. Not relying on super high-tech industrial automation systems, but instead what our hands can do. Our homes and workplaces have already become organized with techno-computerized network systems that promote an easy, convenient and comforting life. Applying new, upgraded technological devices for energy or water saving is not necessary. Most likely, these would only add to the waste pile once they break or become outdated. We should avoid this default solution of searching for better electronic devices and instead go back to conventional, manual ways of recycle-reuse-renewal in order to conserve natural resources, water, gas, electricity. This will help us to simplify our life.
3. Not just one time/short-term/ seasonal gardening workshops and event but instead keeping the daily living curriculum a priority. We seem to plunge ourselves into a battlefield everyday—securing chickens, fixing the leaks, cleaning the filter, stopping rancid smells, unclogging the greywater leach line, deterring wild intruders, giving trees enough water—all of this in addition to our daily endeavors to minimize our carbon footprints so on. Let us give our full attention to the small, individual tasks at hand that meet us each moment. Let’s commit our best each day, then nature will respond to our commitment, offering another solution for our struggles.
4. Not using the commercially promoted industrial products but instead applying primarily the earth’s raw materials for building housing or garden structures. Earth domes are one type of ancient building that

are constructed simply with one's own hands, for instance, and they have minimal environmental impacts, yet they can withstand brushfires or earthquakes and provide better air quality and a regenerative, healthy and comforting space. Other exciting possibilities exist for our imaginative exploration. For instance, creating a playful courtyard with curvy low walls and a sitting area, setting a star watch platform on the top of the dome and creating colorful walls and openings with recycled glass bottles and so on.

5. Not relying on commercially promoted entertainment for gatherings but instead creating ecologically conscientious nature celebrations. The mentally and physically exhausting work and family life of our postmodern era leads us to look for more entertaining pleasure seeking gatherings for personal or family celebration. However, a small garden project can be as memorable and meaningful an activity for people in the community. Family and friends can gather for planting trees or harvesting crops. The ceremony also can include blessing pets, memorable hikes or garden party celebrations.

6. Not just thinking about and acting for the current members of one's immediate family but instead for a healthier life for the generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We tend to burn out and give up when the work is too daunting or too demanding. However, how can we give up our garden project when our grandchildren and great-grandchildren play and enjoy themselves so much in the garden? When I look at them playing in the garden, I can appreciate true happiness and tangible wellness—"convivial wholeness" as Wendell Berry puts it.

7. Not just taking care of our physical bodies but also replenishing our souls. In my clinical practice seeing patients, I have become acutely aware of how much people suffer physically, emotionally and mentally, even though each one appears outwardly to be content. At the center of our home is a place where we can share our failures and tragedies, as well as our joys and successes. It is a foundation that works like an immune system cell that is essential to the whole body of the planet earth. Thus, the health of ourselves matters to the health of the home and planet earth. We become holistically healthy as we immerse completely into solitude while simultaneously being able to share our personal story of joys and wounds in a safe communal environment.

An organism is a form of life that has a definite life span. Every organism goes through the process of birth, growth and multiplication. Inanimate objects are lifeless matter such as dust, minerals, and rocks. An organism can take in inanimate objects and an ecosystem arises. According to a certain rule of the life-cycle, a life with strong adaptability is born from water, soil, air, heat, and light, and the balanced eco-environment thus emerges. The natural ecosystem is intricately and intimately related to our human lives. Nature provides us with enormous benefits. As a good example, trees provide us with oxygen, an essential element for nearly all living creatures. The stable roots keep the ground solid, so it won't be wiped out by floods. Their abundance of leaves gives us shade, not to mention beautiful scenery. And birds prevent the overpopulation of the harmful insects upon the trees. Good soil contains nutrients that promote trees to grow. In addition to nitrogen, phosphoric acid, and potassium, fertile soil also contains beneficial minerals such as calcium, magnesium and sulfur. Also, it is necessary to maintain an optimal hydrogen ion exponent (pH) for the plants to grow well. Proper amounts of air and organic matter in the soil promise a good harvest.

The cycle of healthy biotic organisms teaches us what stage will be next so that we can predict and prepare, thus avoiding anxiety and the fear of uncertainty—take a deep breath and be still no matter what, stay attuned to the flow because we are fundamentally interconnected to one another and sustained by the vital living energy of planet earth. Therefore, take each day as a new beginning. Inhale deeply the

air that planet earth breathes to sustain her ecosystem. Let's try to live each day fully, imagining that it is the day before the last day of our life. In this way, we can live responsively and with more pleasure than if it were the last day of our life. Slow down. Walk humbly, trusting that planet earth has sustained her life for billions of years without fail. It is our responsibility to choose to live creatively and harmoniously in order to contribute our part to the whole beauty and wonder of planet earth.

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[1] Geophysicist James Lovelock demonstrates his theory based on a co-evolutionary theory about Earth as Gaia in which "the living organism and material environment are tightly coupled and evolve as a single system." Emphasizing a sense of belonging to the earth system as a whole, for Lovelock, the Gaian earth is full of living organisms and co-evolves with non-living things.

[2] Among those communities are Arcosanti, Arizona built by the Italian architect Paolo Soleri; Taize, Bruderhof and L'abri communities in Europe; St. Andrew Benedictine monastery, Prince of Peace Abbey and Franciscan monastery and an Episcopalian monastery in Southern California.

[3] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. Corrected Edition. Edited by David Griffin and Donald Sherburne. New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1978, p22- 26.

[4] "Wholeness" is defined as a state in which each part develops to create the whole in three aspects: (1) perfection in the ethical sense; (2) fullness of knowledge in the educational sense; (3) a wholesome stage that represents peace and eternity. My research claims that a person can achieve wholeness psychosocially, ethically and spiritually as they go through following six

dimensions: Abyss; Nature; Self; Other; Culture; Zenith. “Holistic” means interconnecting all parts in an ecological framework of human development that root word, “Holism” comes from the Greek “holos” which means “totality,” as a whole connection beyond the mind and body dichotomy by focusing on the heart, mind and body. The principle is about the connection of the sum of the parts into a whole, and it relates each to the other in an even greater whole.

[5] Stephen was born of noble Anglo-Saxon parents, had been pledged as a child to monastery of Sherborne in SW of England, Norman conquest forced him to flee to Scotland, then studied at France, after making pilgrimage to Rome joined at the Cluniac Abbey Molesme (1085), then followed Robert 1098 founded a monastery at Cîteaux. Stephen was known as erudite scholar, able organizer, experienced administrator, excellent relations with noble neighbors. Stephen’s abbacy as a seminal point in the beginning of creation of Cistercian identity. Bernard (1090-1153) was sent by Stephen Harding to establish Monastery at Clairvaux. Terry N. Kinder. *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation*, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication, 2002, 32-33.

[6] origins c1147, chapter xv, Burton,11.

[7] At Clairvaux in 1135 about 200 monks and 300 conversi however lay brothers declined during 13th century rapidly due to changing economic development, Kinder. 309.

[8] 7 canonical hours (offices) of Laud, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and the Compline. At 8th office of vigils were celebrated at night (Ps 119:62).

[9] Janet Burton and Julie Kerr. *Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, Boydell & Brewer, 2011, 103-111. ProQuest Ebook: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=951593>

[10] Bernard of Clairvaux to Henry Murdac (1168 c?) in the Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, no. 107 (pp15-6) in Burton and Kerr,56. Bernard of Clairvaux emphatically stated in his letter, “you will find much more laboring amongst the woods that you ever will amongst book. Woods and stones will teach you what you can hear from any master.

[11] Which entails spiritually growing process: conversion, compunction and purification of heart, and union with Christ in metaphorical spiritual marriage, Burton and Kerr, 146-147.

[12] According to a legend those marshy plants grew abundantly thriving in that area. Kinder, 32.

[13] Burton and Kerr,69.

[14] Greek physician, Galen, who formed the basis of medical understanding from late Antiquity to the Renaissance-closed valleys possess stagnant air mephitic vapors the clouds rising from rivers as well as pools, swamps, and marshes, contained air that was contained the dangerous. Description of Cistercian sites may almost like a Galenic list of health hazards. Planning, imagination and hard work transformed many “vaporous sites” into quite habitable. Kinder, 83.

[15] Kinder, 109-110.

[16] Kinder, 340.

[17] <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cistercians>

[18] Thomas of Celano, *Legend of the Three Companions* 68.

[19] This statement is similar to Peter Waldo who undertook to bring gospels to merchants “if anyone should ask you to what religious order you belong, tell him the order of the gospel, which is basis of all rules. And let this be your answer to any inquires. As for me, I would not allow myself to be called monk, or canon, or a hermit; these titles are so exalted and holy that it would be presumptuous to apply any of them to myself”-resolution of Stephen of Muret (d.1124), leader of self-styled paupers Christi a group became order of Grandmont in Chenu, 239.

[20] Celano, *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis*. Jacques Dalarun, ed., 323.

[21] Paul Sabatier 48-50. Compare Celano 185-187.

[22] Celano, *Legend of the Three Companions* 79.

[23] Paul Sabatier 99-100. Compare *Legend of the Three Companions* 81-86.

[24] Celano highlighted that Franciscan order earned merit strengthening its foundation of true humility and building various type of spiritual virtues when they perform the church duty as they remained at lowest position of the Church at Thomas of Celano, *The Life of St. Francis*, I:214-217 compare Sabatier 125-126.

[25] Francis was already sick especially from eyes having trachoma-contagious conjunctivitis granulosa absent teary secretion progress sensitivity to light consequently impaired vision. It was aggravated by his poor diet and frequent illness. *The Assisi Compilation*, 184.

[26] Sabatier 177-177 compare Francis’s own writings, 61-63.

[27] “You are blessed and it shall be well,” *Psalms* 128:2.

[28] Francis’s own writing, 68-71 compare Sabatier 177-181. For earliest Francis’ circle of brotherhood ‘burst of laughter’ was noticeable, Sabatier 257.

[29] After the Chapter 1215, Francis was going through one of crisis driven by sadness, doubt, discouragement. Francis returned from Syria (Aug 1220), became ill and weaker arrived at St. Damian. He became complete blindness for 15 days not able to distinguish light, then slowly recovered gain strength able to be out olive trees and pines. Suddenly Francis began to meditate a new “Praise of the Lord” for his creatures, appreciating each creation how people use every day, cannot live without such great grace. *The Assisi Compilation*, 185-186, 192.

While suffering intensely for his physical sickness Francis noticed that humans greatly offend their creator often quarreling between the civil and religious authorities. Francis asked brothers to go before them these verses of *The Canticle of Creatures* (1225), acknowledging creatures are symbol of their creator. Francis’ poetic use of adjectives 8 times (Be praised, my Lord) is important to comprehend his image of God while the sun, moon, stars, wind, water, fire, earth that entire creations seen as instruments of praise also implies praising God. *The Assisi compilation*, 191. Francis’s own writings, 113-114 compare Sabatier 177-181, 235-237. Sabatier argued that last line is missing which must be kept in his heart, “Be praised for sister Clare though made her silent, active and spacious by her light shines in our hearts.” Sabatier 394-396. Professor Kenneth Wolf shared with me that the *Canticle* was originally written in the dialect that Francis would have spoken as an inhabitant of Umbria, the province of Assisi. Then it was translated into other languages. The original poem begins:

Altissimu, omnipotente bon Signore, Tue so le laude, la gloria e l'honore et onne benedictione.

Ad Te solo, Altissimo, se konfano, et nullu homo ène dignu te mentouare.
Laudato sie, mi Signore cum tucte le Tue creature, spetialmente messor lo frate Sole,
lo qual è iorno, et allumini noi per lui. Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande splendore:
de Te, Altissimo, porta significatione.

[Most High, all powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all
blessing. To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention Your
name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his
splendour! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.]

And Celano presents 157 miracles of Francis illustrating him a portrait of new man who obtains
new miraculous power over creatures such as quieting down swallow, taking shelter on Francis's
arm, fish leave when Francis give permission so on.

[30] Rivo-Torto, an hour walk distance from Assisi, was served as leper hospital, one of quietest
spots and undisturbed little hermitage was also Francis's favorite place of solitude. Sabatier, 95,
156, 104-120 and 220.

[31] The Assis Compilation 160-161.

[32] Sabatier 10-13 and 79.

[33] Sabatier 195-217. Clare was a daughter of native Assisi noble family and 12 years younger
than Francis. At her 16 she heard Francis' preaching that opened her heart speaking directly to
her secrete sorrow and personal anxiety. Clare vowed in few weeks (1212).

[34] Sabatier 7 compare Heimann, The secularization of St Francis of Assisi, 405.

[35] In 1839 the Quaker Frederic Lucas converted to Catholicism emphasizing "idea of giver
receiver equally holy" and lesson of Francis 5 virtues: humility, obedience, self-restraint, love of
poverty and patient prayer" which became the popular prayer list across the denomination.
(Heimann 409-410).

Francis' deed—likeness of Christ, simplicity of heart solidarity with poor—influenced the
London based labor party that they put their faith in revolutionary socialism London affiliated
with in 1884 (Heimann 417-418).

[36] Heimann 418.

[37] May 24, 2015. http://m.vatican.va/content/francescomobile/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html