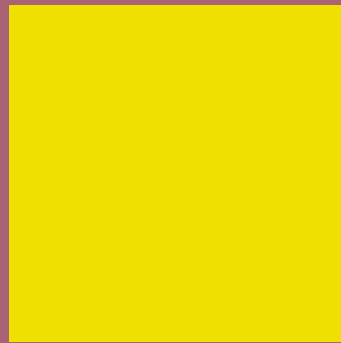


3



ENCOUNTER WITH THE
ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND
ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

MODULE THREE

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

3.1 TEACHING AIMS

Whole books have been written and lots of discussions have taken place in recent years about the ecological crisis the world is facing. Individuals but also collective bodies have become aware and are struggling in various ways to fix the ecological problem. Orthodox theology highlights the main causes of the problem and, at the same time, suggests ways out of it. In the text that follows, the Ecumenical Patriarch describes in general terms the ecological crisis, briefly pointing at its essential causes and at our great responsibility for the protection of the environment.

Modern ecological problems are one aspect of the crisis of a culture focused on economy, a culture which is technocratic, individualistic, arrogant, a culture of quantitative criteria and numbers, of profit and consumption, of bliss and of unfettered freedom. The destruction of the environment is the result of a specific mode of economic, technological and social development, which despises both the human person and nature. For the first time in history, man has the capability to destroy life on Earth. Nuclear weapons are the pre-eminent symbol of the Promethean titanism of present day man. Facing the fact that today we can go beyond the limits, the idea of “moderation” – “moderation is the best thing” as the ancient Greek saying goes – acquires unprecedented relevance and value. As science penetrates deeper in the depths of the mystery of life and manipulates it, our responsibility to protect life becomes greater.”

(Excerpt from a speech by the Ecumenical Patriarch
on the protection of the Environment

Source: https://ntsireve.blogspot.com/2019/03/blog-post_9.html)

In our approach to the topic “Encounter with the Environment”, we will, therefore, give the students an opportunity to discover the teachings of biblical and modern theological texts in order to examine and redefine values and attitudes connected with this issue. The central motive in the planning of our lesson is to provoke the interest of the students and encourage them in their own search for solutions to the environmental crisis which, unless we act immediately, is leading us to a total catastrophe.

3.1.1 GOAL OF TEACHING

Goals of Teaching

The lesson aims to help the students to discover and evaluate the Christian understanding of the sanctity of nature and to raise their awareness about the protection of the environment through their acquaintance with the ecological theological teachings of the Orthodox Church.

Goals for the students

- To gain an in-depth understanding of the interpretation and ecological implications of the Orthodox Christian teaching regarding the creation of the world and of man in the image of God.
- To discover the importance of eco-theology in Orthodox Christian thought and to become acquainted with representatives of these concepts.
- To evaluate the Christian teachings about the environment and human responsibility towards it, both locally and globally.
- To determine the personal responsibility of the believer, as well as their own responsibility, towards the ecological crisis.

Expected learning outcomes for students

- To learn the Christian teaching about the creation of the world and the mission of man to protect the environment, according to the Bible.
- To evaluate the Christian positions on the natural environment.
- To discover contemporary cases of important personalities inside the Orthodox Church who translated their words into inspirational action for the protection of the environment.
- To recognize the believer's responsibility for the ecological crisis locally and globally.
- To raise awareness and make environmental protection a top priority in their lives.

3.1.2 THEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

To provide sound foundations for our the theological approach to the topic “Encounter with the environment”, we quote excerpts from the relevant literature, which formulate some basic theological positions of the Orthodox Church on the relationship between humanity and the environment::

1. The Christian believer respects the world as sacred, because the world is in a dialectical relationship with God, receiving the energies of the Holy Spirit. Thus mankind is the link between the world and God and functions as a priest who freely and consciously accepts the world that God gives to us and returns it as a gift to the Giver. Our task, then, is to transform the world into a “thanksgiving offering,” which has the potential to be integrated into every form of culture that preserves the sanctity of nature.

It seems that the ecological crisis is a crisis of culture. It is a crisis that has to do with the loss of the sacrality of nature in our culture. And I can see only two ways to overcome this. One would be the way of paganism. The pagan regards the world as sacred, because it is penetrated by divine presence; he therefore respects it to the point of worshipping it explicitly or implicitly. He never worries about its fate, for he believes in its eternity. The other way is that which we have tried to describe here. It is the Christian way, for the Christian regards the world as sacred, because it stands in dialectical relationship with God; thus he respects it (without worshipping it, since it has no divine presence in his nature), but he always worries about its fate: a breach of communion with God will amount to its extinction. Of these two ways it is the second one that gives to man responsibility for the fate of creation. The first sees man as a part of the world; the second sees him as the crucial link between the world and God, as the only person in creation that can lead it to survival. Unless we are to return to paganism, this second way would appear to be the only way to face the ecological crisis and respect again the sacrality of nature.

(John Zizioulas (Metropolitan of Pergamon),
“Preserving God’s Cration”, *Theology in Green* 7.1993, p. 31)

There are three words that we Christians usually use to describe man's relationship with creation: king, treasurer and priest. The first of these, kings, has serious foundations in the Bible. In the description of Creation at the beginning of the book of Genesis, immediately after the creation of Adam in the image and likeness of God, man is given dominion over all animals (Gen. 1:26) and then he, exercising his right sovereignty, names every living creature (Gen. 2: 18-20). What is remarkable is that, in the description of Genesis, the royal office seems to be bestowed on man as a consequence of his creation in the image and likeness of God. God, as the king of the universe, is generous, has a tender and merciful heart. And man, therefore, as a king, if he wants to be a true image of divine majesty, he must display these very qualities. Ownership does not mean tyranny. Unfortunately, this has not been understood by Christians over the centuries, and the term king, otherwise legitimate, has practically encouraged an arrogant, insensitive mentality that is responsible for the current ecological crisis. That is why, in both America and Europe, efforts are being made today to avoid this term. If we recognize that we have misunderstood the meaning of our royal office, perhaps it would be better to speak of man as the steward of Creation. This at least has the advantage of making it clear that our power over Creation is not absolute but a giver. We are not its owners or bosses, because it belongs to God. It was just given to us with confidence. But even this term, of the housekeeper, has some disadvantages. We can consider it to imply a utilitarian, managerial approach to nature, such as to see it as an asset that we must cultivate and exploit. Here we must be careful not to objectify and depersonalize Creation. Do not see it as "something" but as "you". In view of these possible abuses of the terms "king" and "treasurer," it is wiser for us to adopt a third model: our calling as human beings is to stand as priests of Creation. Absolutely consciously, he takes the world into his own hands - the world that God gives to us - and offers this gift to the Giver, thus invoking His blessing on the whole physical order. Through this act of priestly offering, Creation communicates with God, and thus is saved, fulfills its purpose, and is transformed. This is the essence of the priesthood, a call that only human beings can fulfill. Our human duty, then, as priests of Creation, is to transform the world into a "thanksgiving offering"».

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*,
Akritis, Athens 2008, pp. 36-39)

Human beings have a vital need to be in a *koinonia* of love, not only with the rest of humanity but also with the world of nature and the entire universe. If we continue to abuse nature rather than “use” it, there is a danger that the development of our technology will lead us to terrifying feats of self-destruction. Christianity delivered humanity from the fear inherent in magical beliefs and from the deification of nature; moreover, by cultivating an active rather than a passive attitude in human beings, Christianity also encouraged the development of science. In the end, however, modern humanity has lost any and all sense of the sacred and in fact has already arrived at the opposite extreme, gazing at nature with impious eyes that lack respect and are often filled with hostile cynicism rather than love. We have thus become increasingly alienated from nature; we behave like robbers of nature, shutting ourselves away in our man-made hideouts. But nature, too, can retaliate.

Some reconciliation between humanity and nature is urgently needed. It is time we understood that nature is something sacred. It does not lie outside the sphere of the Holy Spirit’s activity. In Christ, holiness became united with humanness; as a result, holiness no longer evokes fear, but inspires respect and love—indeed, it invites us to share in *koinonia*. The various elements in Orthodox worship that represent nature are not used as mere decoration but play an organic part in the service. Bread, wine, fire, and incense are integral components in a liturgy of loving communion. Rediscovering the dimensions of nature’s sacredness and its original harmony with humanity’s intrinsic nature constitutes an indispensable contribution toward achieving real global *koinonia*.

(Anastasios (Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Albania), *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press & WCC Publications, Crestwood and Geneva, 2003, p. 36).

2. Evil does not only concern human relationships, but affects all material creation. Therefore, sin is not only a failure in human relationships, but also the failure of man in his relationship with nature. This position broadens the perspective we have had so far on ethics.

Evil is not just an issue for man, but it affects the whole of creation. Certainly evil presupposes freedom, and as such can only be produced by free persons. But the moment it comes to reality, evil pervades and upsets the entire created order. This is what makes Paul write the well-known “ecological” words of the letter to the Romans, chapter 8: “all creation sighs and accompanies until now ...”. Decay and death, sorrow and pain, are common experiences of all creatures, along with humans. Overcoming these evils on the other hand is expected to affect all buildings, not just people. Every pain and misery imposed on non-human beings is no less evil than that which falls on human beings. Cosmological prophecy and cosmological eschatology presuppose an understanding of evil that includes nature. They lead to a new conception of morality that goes beyond what we usually think of as moral or immoral. This morality is still waiting to find its place in our Christian consciences. We have become accustomed to perceiving sin in anthropological and social terms. But there is also sin against nature, since evil upsets the whole created order. Cosmology must enter our ethics, which requires a revolution in our education, in our sermons and in our textbooks.»

(John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamos, “Revelation and the Environment”,
Synaxis 56 (1995), pp.17-21)

«The abuse of Creation must be considered a sin... To say that the abuse of material things is not just a technological omission but a moral offense may be obvious, but it is something that Christians in the past have overlooked too often. The tendency was to think that sin is related to the evil we do to our fellow human beings... As the abuse of land and air, water resources, plants and animals springs directly from greed and greed. Our egoism is indeed a sin, a deadly transgression, seeking repentance and correction.

(Kallistos Ware, Ecological Crisis and Hope,
Akritas, Athens 2008, pp.35-36)

3. The ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes.

It is clear that the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes. Its roots are connected with greed, avarice and egoism, which lead to the thoughtless use of natural resources, the filling of the atmosphere with damaging pollutants, and to climate change. The Christian response to the problem demands repentance for the abuses, an ascetic frame of mind as an antidote to overconsumption, and at the same time a cultivation of the consciousness that man is a “steward” and not a possessor of creation. The Church never ceases to emphasize that future generations also have a right to the natural resources that the Creator has given us. For this reason, the Orthodox Church takes an active part in the various international ecological initiatives and has ordained the 1st of September as a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment.

(Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to the Orthodox people and to all people of good will, Crete 2016)

4. The ecological problem is always linked to the social issue of poverty and of human dignity.

[...] Scholars and theologians, in recent decades, have been discerning and directing our attention to the mutuality between ecology and human dignity—between the abuse of the environment and the abuse of human beings. One shining example is His-All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. In his book, “Encountering the Mystery”, [...], His All-Holiness writes: “Orthodox theology [...] recognizes the natural creation as inseparable from the identity and destiny of humanity, because every human action leaves a lasting imprint on the body of the earth. Human attitudes and behavior toward creation directly impact on and reflect human attitudes and behavior toward other people [...] Scientists estimate that those most hurt by global warming in years to come will be those who can least afford it. Therefore, the ecological problem of pollution is invariably connected to the social problem of poverty; and so all ecological activity is ultimately measured and properly judged by its impact and effect upon the poor (see Matt. 25).” And similarly, last year, in his opening address at the Ecumenical forum on modern slavery, His All-Holiness stated the following: “We are convinced that responding to the problem of modern slavery is directly and inseparably linked to creation care [...] The entire world is the body of Christ; just as human beings are the very body of Christ. The whole planet bears the traces of God, just as every person is created in the image of God. The way we respect creation reflects the way we respond to our fellow human beings. The scars we inflict on our environment reveal our willingness to exploit our brother and sister.” The vision that His All-Holiness expresses in these passages, and throughout his ministry, bears witness to Orthodox Christianity’s integrated understanding of ecology, theology, and human dignity.

*(Rev. Deacon Perry Hamalis,
“Love God, Love thy Neighbor, Love the Trees:
Environmental Justice in Orthodox Christianity”
in Ecology, Theology and Human dignity in the Orthodox Christian Tradition,
International Symposium on the Environment Proceedings,
Seoul: Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, 2018, pp. 168-172)*

5. In the Orthodox Christian tradition the proposal that has been tested in practice for the solution of the ecological problem is ascetic exercise. Through ascetic self-transcendence, man learns to respect the sacrality of nature, as he limits his selfish desires, separating them from his real natural needs. Human desires have historically ranged between the deification of nature on the one hand and its devaluation on the other.

For the Christian, nature is not an impersonal and neutral object, even if created by a Supreme Being. Nature is the poem of the personal God-Word, and it reveals in every aspect the personal otherness of the creative energy of its poet. The term “natural theory” in the Christian vocabulary means the result of ascetic self-transcendence, the ascetic achievement of man overcoming his egocentric possessive and utilitarian priorities and experiencing his relationship with the world, as he experiences his relationship with a painting, sculpture, music composition or any other artwork.»

(Christos Yannaras, “Nature and History in the Book of Apocalypse”,
Synaxis, 56 (1995), p.46)

Exercise does not simply mean fasting, vigilance and repentance, but any form of voluntary restraint, more simplicity at every level and manifestation of our daily lives. The ecological crisis can be solved - if a solution is still possible - only through our desire for self-limitation in the consumption of not only food but also all natural resources. It can only be solved if we make the distinction between what we want and what we need, between our selfish desires and our natural needs. Only through self-denial, through the decision to abstain, through the decision to sometimes say “no” to ourselves, will we rediscover our true place in the universe.

(Kallistos Ware, *The beginning of the day: the Orthodox approach to creation*,
Akritas, Athens 2007, pp.26-27)

3.2 VIDEO PROJECTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR TEACHING

In this section, the students watch the video and then they answer an initial questionnaire, giving a first impression of their comprehension of the plot of the video and of its implications.



Figure 3.1
Video Clip

3.2.1 VIDEO PLOT SUMMARY

In the classroom of Yiorgos and Stratos, the youngsters known to us from previous videos, the teacher of religious education explains the teaching of Genesis regarding the creation of the biosphere and the responsibility of mankind as a caretaker of it. The next day, the whole class goes for an excursion to the nearby beach, by the river. While in a joyful mood, the kids suddenly realize that there are dead fish and an awful odor at the river mouth and, after a short investigation, they find out that these are the results of the pollution produced by a nearby olive mill. The kids and the teacher discuss how this practice conflicts with the Bible teachings. In a third scene, Yiorgos and Stratos speak with Yiorgos' family on the topic of pollution. Yiorgos' father insists that pollution is insignificant compared to the benefits of the olive mill and that there is no theological teaching concerning environmental issues; but all of a sudden, in the news bulletin on the television, there is a speech by the Ecumenical Patriarch, explaining that mistreatment of the environment is a sin, proving Yiorgos father to be totally wrong..

3.2.2 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: *Having watched the video, students are asked to answer the following multiple-choice questions individually. These questions aim to help the teacher assess the extent of the students' understanding of the content of the video and to evaluate their views on the relationship between environment and religion. The same questions are to be answered by the students again, individually, at the end of the lesson in order to create some measurable results about understanding and change of opinion. For this reason, the correct answers are given only in the final questionnaire.*

Based on the video you watched, try to answer the following questions.

1. *In the video we watched the theme of the creation of the world was connected:*
 - a. With the charitable work of the Church
 - b. With religious worship
 - c. With the protection of the environment
 - d. I do not know / No answer

2. *The pollution observed by the children during the excursion comes from:*
 - a. The waste of the nearby olive mill
 - b. The sewage from an oil tanker that sank on a nearby beach
 - c. Wind turbines
 - d. I do not know / No answer

3. *In the video, the youngsters support the view that in order to stop the pollution of the environment it is necessary:*
 - a. To shut down the factory
 - b. To press the factory to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection
 - c. To dispose of the waste in another area
 - d. I do not know / No answer

4. *What does the Ecumenical Patriarch in the video characterize as a sin?*
- a. The pollution of the environment
 - b. The biodiversity of creation
 - c. Child labor
 - d. I do not know / No answer
5. *Regarding the protection of the environment, what do you consider that the Christian Church do: The pollution of the environment*
- a. It does not care
 - b. It does not include it in its priorities
 - c. It is interested
 - d. I do not know / I did not understand

3.2.3 TOPICS FOR RESEARCH

The video we watched presents the topic: "Encounter with the environment". The main issues and questions we will need to address are:

- a. the mission of mankind for the transformation of creation with respect to its sacrality.
- b. the failure of mankind's relationship with the environment.
- c. the responsibility of mankind for the protection of the environment and the practices that we can draw from the Orthodox tradition for a way out of the ecological crisis.

Instruction: *With the following questions we aim to engage the students in the issue that emerges in the story of the video. They can express their positions and at the same time speak of their personal experiences from relevant examples.*

Exercise 1

Based on the screened video, imagine the decision made by Yiorgos and his classmates made regarding the problem of the pollution created by the olive mill.

Indicative answer:

The students may write a letter to the director of the mill, pointing out the problems that have been created in the environment. They can address this letter to the local authorities too.

Exercise 2

Have you heard or witnessed similar cases of environmental pollution? Mention some of them.

Indicative answer:

Problems of environmental pollution from meat processing waste or from fertilizer processing etc.

3.3 ISSUES WHICH WE WILL EXAMINE

The problem of environmental pollution is extensive nowadays and poses a serious, global threat to life on the planet. But how did we reach this point? What did we fail to notice along the way? Can we prevent greater catastrophes, even now? What is our responsibility towards the environment?

Let us look at the answers to the above questions which can be obtained by drawing first from the Bible, and then from the interpretive approach of the Orthodox Christian tradition.

Instruction: *Our work with the students around the topic of the environment will be founded on the description of the creation of the world and of mankind as given in Genesis. In this passage we find the basic teachings of the Christian faith regarding the relationship between mankind and creation:*

- *All nature is a creation of the God of love and as such is only good.*
- *Mankind, created in the image of God, receives the whole of creation from God, with dominion over it, and accepts the responsibility to care for it and protect it.*

The biblical text should be read by the teacher.

3.3.1 THE BOOK OF GENESIS (GEN: 1:27-31 & 2:8,15 NRSV)

The book of Genesis (Gen: 1:27-31 & 2:8,15 NRSV)

²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and 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." ²⁹God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. [...] ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.



Figure 3.2
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

3.3.2 WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO STUDY THE ABOVE BIBLICAL PASSAGE

The following information is necessary for the processing of the biblical narrative. They can be read in the class, or individually by the students, who are then required, in the following exercise, to fill in the blanks with the appropriate words. With this work we evaluate whether the biblical text and the interpretive information have been understood.

In the image: The phrase that “man was created in the image of God” does not refer to external features, but to the **spiritual gifts of mankind**, such as reason, will, conscience, freedom, etc., as well as dominion over nature. This is what distinguishes mankind from the rest of creation.

He created man and woman: From the first moment of his creation, **the human being is understood as a social being**, as something that exists only in communion, in a relationship.

Fill the earth and subdue it: The authority of mankind over nature is granted by God, implying accountability to God for the proper administration of nature. Only the creator, God, is an absolute sovereign over creation and consequently **mankind can become sovereign only by becoming a co-creator**.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good: With this phrase the Bible makes clear on the one hand the value of God’s creative work and on the other hand **the fact that God, being good himself, can only do good**. Therefore, the God of love is not responsible for the ugly and bad things in the world.

God planted a garden in Eden, in the east: This image contains all the elements that allow the reader to imagine the beauty of the place that God prepared for man's dwelling. The word "**Eden**" means **pleasure**. In the translation of the Septuagint the term "Eden" is given not as a place name, but as a noun: "Paradise". The word "paradise" is of Persian origin and means a large garden with many trees and various plants. The garden is placed in the east because the west was considered, according to the perceptions of the time, the place where death dominates, while on the contrary the east is a symbol of life. Of course, the image of the Garden of Eden is not found in any particular place on Earth. It is a boundless space covering the whole earth, it is **the kingdom of man throughout creation**. The biblical author draws the image of the Garden of Eden from various traditions and myths that existed at that time among the peoples of Mesopotamia. He uses an image familiar to his readers to proclaim an important truth: that man's happiness depends on his relationship with God and his harmonious relationship with the environment.

God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it: God plants the garden, he himself places man in it and he invites man to work to make the world his exclusive area through his own work. Man did not have the whole world as his own immediately, nor did he dominate all of creation, nor was his relationship with God a complete and perfect communion. **Man is therefore called to a dynamic course**, in order to become like God and **become co-creator with him**.

3.3.3 EXERCISE

Fill the blanks by choosing the appropriate word in parentheses based on what you read in the biblical text and the above information.

God, after creating the world, finally saw all of His creations and rejoiced because they were **very good** (very good / really many). Man was created in the image of God, which means that, among all creation, only man has spiritual qualities. According to the Bible, God created man and woman, to show us that man is a **social** (social / reproductive) being. Man was also instructed by God to rule over the whole earth. This does not mean that man dominates over creation, but that he is accountable to God for the proper **administration** (consumption / administration) of the creation. The Bible also says that God planted a garden in the east of Eden and God put man in this beautiful garden to live, giving him the command to **cultivate** (cultivate / dominate) it and to **take care of** (control / take care of) it. Of course, this garden was not in a specific place, but it includes the whole **Earth** (Earth / Mesopotamia).

The students are asked to read the verses of Psalm 65 individually and to answer the questions that follow. Our goal is to detect the relationship between God, the human beings and the creation. For the relation of the humanity with creation, students are invited to read the quoted text by Alexander Schmemmann.

From the Book of Psalms (Ps. 65:9-11)

⁹ You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.



Figure 3.3
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

Exercise

In the verses of the Psalm that you just read, highlight words or phrases that show the relationship of God with creation.

Indicative answer:

Words or phrases that the students should probably highlight: you visit, you provide, you enrich, you prepare, blessing, softening, you crown with your bounty, your tracks overflow with richness.

From the works of Alexander Schmemmann

All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It is divine love made food, made life for man. [...] God blessed the world, blessed man, blessed the seventh day (that is, time), and this means that He filled all that exists with His love and goodness, made all this "very good." So the only natural (and not "supernatural") reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world, is to bless God in return, to thank Him, to see the world as God sees it and—in this act of gratitude and adoration—to know, name and possess the world.

(Alexander Schmemmann, For the life of the world, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1998, pp. 14-15)

Exercise

Which truths about man's relationship with creation does the above text reveal to us?

Indicative answer:

Man is called "to see the world the way God sees it; and in the act of gratitude and worship, to know, to name and to possess the world."

3.4 MAN AS THE RULER OF CREATION

Instructions: *Based on the answers that we receive from the students about the relationship between man and creation, we will elaborate more on what it means that man names and possesses the world. This notion of possession of the world in combination with the dominance that we read in the biblical text can create questions and misunderstandings in the students' perception of the relationship between man and the environment. It is also necessary to understand what it means that man "gives names" to the world. We will find material for the elaboration of the above in a) the text of Kallistos Ware and b) the fresco by Theophanes of Crete.*

a. Text by Kallistos Ware: *We suggest that, after the students read the text, there can be a discussion in the class that will highlight the meaning of human sovereignty in creation. They will also do the work 4.3.2*

b. Fresco by Theophanes of Crete: *We suggest that the students, after observing carefully the picture, read the commentary on the picture and discuss the meaning of naming.*

In the book of Genesis we read that God, after creating humans as man and woman, blessed them and said to them, "fill the earth and subdue it." With the help of the following text, try to find what it means to make man sovereign over the whole creation.

For in Genesis account, our dominion over the creation is a consequence precisely of the fact that we are created in the divine image. Our exercise of dominion, then, so far from being selfish and oppressive, is to reflect the attributes of God, our archetype. We are to display towards creations nothing less than the gentle and tender-hearted compassion that is characteristic of God himself. [...] Let us treat nature as a "thou", not an "it". [...] It is our human vocation to be priest of the creation. The essence of priesthood [...] is to offer, to give thanks and to bless. The priest [...] is the one who takes the world into his or her hands and then offers it back to God, thereby bringing down God's blessing upon that which he or she offers. Through this act of priestly offering, creation is brought into communion with God himself. Such is the essence of priesthood; such is our God-given vocation as human beings; and it is a vocation that only human beings can perform. By acting in this manner as priests of creation, we, human beings, transform the world into a "eucharistic" offering.

(Kallistos Ware, The beginning of the day: the Orthodox approach to creation, Akritas, Athens 2007, pp. 23-25)

Exercise

Based on what you have discovered in the above text, can you formulate in a sentence what does it mean for you that man becomes sovereign in creation?

Indicative answer

Sovereignty does not mean the predominance of man over creation with selfishness and oppression, but man, as an image of God, should be express himself with kindness and mercy, just as God does. Nature is to be perceived by man as a person, that is, a “you” and not as an impersonal and neutral “it”. That’s why man is asked by God to become a priest of the creation, i.e. to take the world into his own hands, to transform it and to give it back as a gift to God, bringing it in relation to Him.



Figure 3.4
Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayl:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_\(Meteora\).jpg](https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayl:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_(Meteora).jpg)

(Theophanes of Crete, “Adam gave names to all the animals, to the birds of the sky and to the wild beasts”. (Gen. 9: 19-20), fresco, 16th century, St Nikolaos Anapafsas, Meteora, Greece)

Comment on the image

Man is a creator in the image of God the Creator. He gives name to things and in this way he gives them meaning, he creates things by renewing the Creation of God and in this way he reveals the divine glory in ever new forms

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*, Akritas, Athens 2008, p.93)

3.5 SO FAR WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD...

At this point of our teaching process we need to summarize what the students have discovered and understood so far on the relationship between man and creation.

... that the world was created with love and care by God, and man was asked to take care of it. **Man** is sovereign on the creation, but this does not mean that he becomes its dominator, thus destroying it. It means that he functions as a priest **who receives the whole world as a gift and a blessing from God** and his responsibility **is to act creatively inside it and to offer it back to its Donor** with perfect respect to each one of his creations.

3.6 TEXTS FROM THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Our next teaching step is the engagement with texts from the Orthodox Christian tradition that confront the ecological crisis, namely the causes of the crisis, the ways out of it and the great responsibility of all of us for the present and future of the environment.

The questions that still remain are:

- What are the causes of the ecological crisis we experience today?
- Is there a way out of the crisis and what is it?
- What is our duty regarding the environment?

We can draw answers from the Orthodox Christian tradition

In fact, the present crisis is not outside of us, a crisis in our natural environment, but a crisis within us, in the way we humans think and feel. The real problem is not in the ecosystem, but in the human heart. It is so true what has been said, that we suffer from ecological heart failure. This means that the real problem is not technological or economic, but deeply spiritual. If the atmosphere is increasingly polluted, if lakes and rivers are poisoned, if forests die and the green meadows of the earth become deserted, it is because we humans are alienated from God and from our true selves... The most urgent need is not for more complex scientific skills, but for a collective repentance movement, with the literal meaning of the Greek term, which is "change of law". We need to change the way we think about God, the world, and ourselves.

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*, Akritas, Athens 2008, 34-35)

It is clear that the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes. Its roots are connected with greed, avarice and egoism, which lead to the thoughtless use of natural resources, the filling of the atmosphere with damaging pollutants, and to climate change. The Christian response to the problem demands repentance for the abuses, an ascetic frame of mind as an antidote to overconsumption, and at the same time a cultivation of the consciousness that man is a "steward" and not a possessor of creation.

(*Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to the Orthodox people and to all people of good will*, Crete 2016)

The tendency was to consider sin to be related to the evil we do to our fellow human beings [...] As the abuse of land and air, water resources, plants and animals springs directly from greed and greed our selfishness is indeed a sin, a deadly transgression, seeking repentance and correction

(Kallistos Ware, Ecological Crisis and Hope, Akritas, Athens 2008, 35-36)

3.6.1 THEREFORE **Exercise 1**

The causes of the ecological crisis according to the Orthodox Christian point of view are:

Indicative answer:

The causes are not in the ecosystem, but in the human heart. In other words, the deeper causes are spiritual and moral. Greed, and selfishness lead to environmental disaster.

Exercise 2

The way out of the ecological crisis according to the Orthodox Christian point of view is:

Indicative answer:

There can be a way out if we understand that the abuse of creation is a sin. That is why we need to repent, that is, to change the way we think about God, the world, and ourselves. This is the literal meaning of the Greek word "repentance", which is composed of after + mind; that is, I change my way of thinking and my way of life. So this change means in practice reducing overindulgence and overconsumption through restraint and asceticism.



Figure 3.5
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

3.7 THE SAINTS OF THE CHURCH AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Instruction: *Our final step in the first teaching hour is to reference incidents from the life of saints of the Christian church which illustrate a relationship of love and care for the environment. We suggest that the students be divided into small groups and that each group choose a saint and identify the loving relationship that this saint had with the environment. Each group is then asked to convey the ecological message of the narrative, creating their own poster. A variety of painting techniques and media can be used or collage posters or digital posters can be created using the appropriate tools. At the end, the posters will be posted in the classroom and the students will comment on them. The aim of this exercise is for the students to creatively and imaginatively express what they have understood from their involvement with the topic “the encounter with the environment”.*

Saint Silouan the Athonite

loved not only people but also all of God’s creation. Looking at the blue sky and the white clouds, he said: “How great is our Lord and how beautifully He made everything! His glory is evident in all things around



us. All we have to do is take care of all them, with love and to glorify Him joyfully for His rich gifts. The heart that has learned to love, mourns for all creation, even for a green leaf if it is cut without need.”

Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia

narrates: “Once a woman came and brought me her goats and asked me: Can you pray for my goats, for they are not doing well? The woman was sad and I felt sorry for her. I got up. The goats came to me by themselves. I stretched out my arms and read a prayer. They were all near me, raising their heads and looking at me. A male one came closer. He bent down and kissed my hand. He wanted me to stroke him. I stroked him and he was pleased.

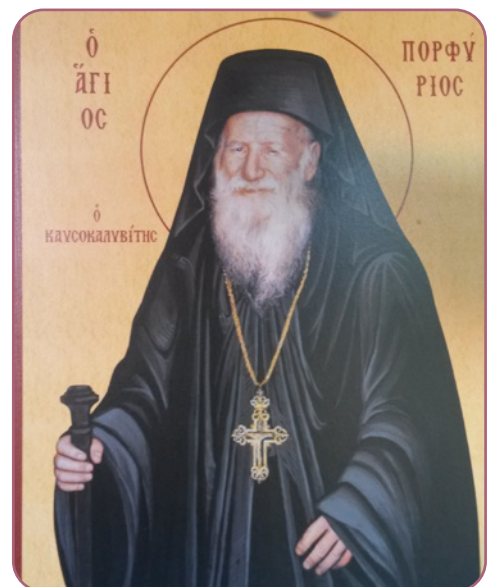


Figure 3.6
Saint Silouan the
Antonite, aquarelle by
Vaso Gogou

Figure 3.7
St Porphyrios of
Kafsokalivia, Icon of
Saint Porphyrios in the
monastery of Panagia
Eleoussa, Achaea, Greece
by Peloponnisios via
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They gathered around me and looked up. They were looking me in the face. I blessed them. I was talking and praying. All that concerns nature is of great assistance to us in our spiritual life, by the grace of God. I myself am moved to tears of joy whenever I feel the harmony of nature.”

Saint Gerasimus of Jordan lived as a monk in the desert around the River Jordan. One day, while he was on the banks of the river, he heard the dreadful roar of a lion in pain. Guided by the cries of the beast and without any fear, he found himself in front of a huge lion. The king of the animals appeared to be in great pain. The saint took pity on the creature of God, and, as if it could talk to him, asked it where it hurts. The proud beast approached trustfully and showed the saint its front paw. A sharp reed was the cause of the problem. The saint carefully pulled the reed from the animal’s paw and treated the wound with great care. After that, the lion became the faithful and inseparable companion of Saint Gerasimus. It followed him wherever he went, and served him, wanting to express his great gratitude.



Figure 3.8
St Gerasimus of Jordan
Source: Wikimedia
Commons: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73126343>

Saint Amfilochios lived in Patmos, in the monastery of St John the Theologian. The elder often used to say: “Do you know that God gave us another commandment, which is not mentioned in the Bible? It is the commandment to love trees. “Whoever plants a tree, plants hope, plants peace, plants love and has the blessing of God.” In the sacrament of confession, the elder Amfilochios would listen to the mistakes and the sins of the people; their sufferings and their trials, their questions. He comforted them and advised them, encouraging them to make good and honorable decisions and to repent, that is, to change their way of thinking and living. And he advised them to plant and take care of a tree, to show their repentance.



Figure 3.9
St Amfilochios of Patmos,
<https://www.saint.gr/4444/saint.aspx>

(Selections from the book: Drips of God’s love, the Saints and the Environment, Holy Monastery of Chrysopigi, Chania, 2015)

3.7.1 EXERCISE Choose one of the above stories. Write down which attitude towards the environment is pointed out in this story, in one sentence.

3.8 FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: *The students are asked to respond to the initial questionnaire again, as a way of evaluating the impact of the lesson. By comparing the initial answers with the final ones, the extent to which the students have altered their opinions may be assessed.*

After our discussions in class, attempt to answer the following questions. Compare your final answers with your original ones.

1. *In the video we watched the theme of the creation of the world was connected:*
 - a. With the charitable work of the Church
 - b. With religious worship
 - c. With the protection of the environment
 - d. I do not know / No answer

Answer 1: C

In the video we watched, the theme of the creation of the world was linked to the protection of the environment because God gave man the creation (the garden of Eden) to look after and take care of it.

2. *The pollutions observed by the children during the excursion comes from:*
 - a. The waste of the nearby olive mill
 - b. The sewage from an oil tanker that sank on a nearby beach
 - c. Wind turbines
 - d. I do not know / No answer

Answer 2: A

The local oil mill was responsible for the sewage that polluted the environment.

3. *In the video, the youngsters support the view that in order to stop the pollution of the environment it is necessary:*
- a. To shut down the factory
 - b. To press the factory to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection
 - c. To dispose the waste in another area
 - d. I do not know / No answer

Answer 3: B

The kids' goal is not to close the factory or relocate the problem, but to abide by the laws governing the protection of the environment.

4. *The Ecumenical Patriarch in the video characterizes as a sin:*
- a. The pollution of the environment
 - b. The biodiversity of creation
 - c. Child labor
 - d. I do not know / No answer

Answer 4: A

The Ecumenical Patriarch in the video refers to the pollution of the environment, which he characterizes as a sin. Child labor is also a sin, but it is not the subject of the video. Biodiversity is part of creation and of course it is not a sin.

5. *What do you consider to be the attitude of the Christian Church regarding the protection of the environment?*
- a. It does not care
 - b. It does not include it in its priorities
 - c. It is interested
 - d. I do not know / I did not understand

Answer 5: C

Pollution of the environment destroys God's creation, and therefore it is harmful for man too. That is why the Church cares about the protection of the environment.

3.9 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

In the second teaching hour, it is proposed to enrich the discussion by the use of texts and works of art, which will give impetus to the creative and critical thinking of the students. The focus of the discussion can be:

- a. Ways in which the ecological crisis is linked to issues of human dignity and to the social issues of oppression and exploitation of people.
- b. The great responsibility of the Church, but also of every human being, for the protection of the environment.
- c. The protection of the environment is an immediate priority because time margins have narrowed dramatically.

The teacher has the option to choose, depending on the ability and the interests of the class, one or more of the above axes with the corresponding material and the activities that accompany it.

3.9.1 ECOLOGY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

The ecological issue also has serious social implications, and it is very important for our students to recognize them.

The teacher reads the following text to the class, and discusses with the students how environmental hazards threaten the most disadvantaged groups in society. The examples of Chicago and Korea show us that degraded social groups are forced to live oppressed in a polluted environment. This text gives the opportunity to connect the ecological crisis with human dignity.

At the end of the discussion the teacher invites the students to answer the question:

Explain why the responsibility of man for the protection of the environment is at the same time the responsibility for the achievement of social justice.

Indicative answer

As Christians we have a great responsibility not only to protect the environment, but also to fight for the protection of poor and oppressed social groups, most affected by environmental pollution. All people are children of God and the whole planet is also the creation of God. The respect we need to show for creation includes and reflects the way we interact with our fellow human beings. We need, therefore, to replace the domination and exploitation of the environment and of fellow human beings with the love and creativity given to us as a gift from God, of whom we are “images” of Him.

This is an example of what scholars call “environmental racism,” which is one form of environmental injustice. It provides us with a picture of the interconnection between polluting the environment and oppressing human beings; between abuse of the natural world and abuse of persons; between ecological harm and loss of human dignity. Citizens of Chicago who live in “red zones” carry a disproportionate amount of the environmental risk because they are less wealthy, less educated, and less connected to the politicians who determine where high-polluting businesses can be located. In short, the poor are trapped, and any effort to move elsewhere presents different obstacles and injustices. [...] Ecology and human dignity are inseparably connected, for good and for ill.[...] Recent studies on Environmental Inequity here in the Republic of Korea, for example, consider the “Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)” and show that distribution of environmental risks and benefits are not evenly balanced across different sociopolitical groups on the peninsula.⁶⁶ In addition, the study suggests, as more foreigners migrate to Korea and settle in low-income urban neighborhoods, these immigrant-concentrated neighborhoods tend to be targeted as locations for new factories and waste management facilities, which further concentrates environmental harms among the most vulnerable and powerless members of society.

(Rev. Deacon Perry Hamalis, “Love God, Love thy Neighbor, Love the Trees: Environmental Justice in Orthodox Christianity”
in Ecology, Theology and Human dignity in the Orthodox Christian Tradition, International Symposium on the Environment Proceedings, Seoul: Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, 2018, p. 176-180)

3.9.2 WORK OF ART

In order to delve into the third axis, i.e. how dramatically the time frame for environmental protection has narrowed, we will use Isaac Cordal's sculpture "Politicians discussing global warning". In this work, Cordal shows a group of senators talking, while the waters of the world are rising, gradually swallowing them. The art work can be found here: <http://cementeclipses.com/Works/follow-the-leaders/>.

The elaboration of the work that will open the discussion in the classroom will be done with the routine "Interpretation - Justification" of Artful Thinking, which is a method of teaching through the art proposed and applied by David Perkins, and developed by Harvard Project Zero in partnership with Traverse City for Michigan Public Schools. The application utilizes visual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture), musical and literary works. The tools of artful thinking are called routines. The main aim of the method is the development of critical and creative thinking of students through the potential of art.

Based on the routine "Interpretation - Justification" students answer the following questions:

- What do you see happening in this work?
- Why do you say that?

With these questions we ask the students to observe the work carefully and to interpret the work, explaining their observations and interpretation.

In the discussion that will follow, we aim to raise their awareness of how narrow the time limits have been for saving the environment and how great is the responsibility of the world's leaders, and not only, for immediate action.

3.9.3 STORY FOR THREE LITTLE DEVILS

The following text by Kallistos Ware also contributes in an original way, with an anecdote, to the discussion about the narrow time we have to act to save the environment, as it draws our attention to the procrastination that characterizes us.

The teacher reads the text to the class and asks the students to answer the question: What is the ecological extension of the following anecdote?

Indicative answer:

The answer given by the third devil "I will tell them that there is no reason for any haste" highlights our procrastination in taking responsibility, especially in the face of strong environmental issues. This procrastination becomes another cause for evil to triumph.

It is a story about three little devils who finished their education in hell. Just before they were sent to earth, they appeared before the devil for his final examination. Turning to the first, the leader asked: "What will you tell them when you ascend to earth?" "I will tell them that there is no God," replied the first devil. "It does not say much," said the examiner, "they have heard it many times. The problem is that many of them know Him personally." He turned to the second devil "what will you tell them?" asked. "I will say that there is no hell," replied the second. "Ah, I find that smarter, but unfortunately it will not catch on. Many of them are already living in hell." Finally he asked the third: "And what will you tell them?". And the third replied: "I will tell them that there is no reason for any haste." "Wonderful!" exclaimed the arch-devil. "Go and start working!" This is definitely a joke with ecological implications.

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*,
Akritas, Athens 2008, pp.84-85)

3.10 GLOSSARY

Amfilochios of Patmos, Saint: Born in 1889 in Patmos, a Greek island where, according to Christian tradition, St John the Theologian wrote the book of Revelation. St Amphilochios became a monk in 1905 in the Monastery of St John the Theologian and in 1935 he was elected as abbot. He died in 1970. In 2018 the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared him a saint. His memory is celebrated on April 16.

Ascetic Ethic: The struggle of the Christian to overcome the failures which strengthen and develop the ego, through prayer, fasting, vigil and charity, and thus restore the relationship with God, fellow humans and the whole of creation.

Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch: The 270th “Archbishop of Constantinople - New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church”, according to his exact title. Born on the island of Imbros in 1940. He has been recognized as “The Green Patriarch” for his initiatives for the protection of the environment and his efforts to raise the awareness of Christians on ecological issues.

Biodiversity (or biological diversity): This term refers to the sum of the genes, biological species and ecosystems of an area. The large number and diversity of contemporary life forms on earth is the result of hundreds of millions of years of evolutionary history of creation. Today there is a decline in biodiversity on the planet, due to a number of causes such as environmental pollution, deforestation, desertification, water pollution and increased predation.

Eucharist: The offering of thanks by man to God, fellow human beings and the natural environment. The core of this offering is the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is the basic sacrament in the Orthodox Church, in which the faithful, communing with the Body (bread) and Blood (wine) of Christ, are united with God and with each other.

Gerasimus of Jordan, Saint: Born in Lycaea in 5th century AD. In 451 AD he became a monk in the Jordan desert and later founded a monastery near the city of Beth Hoghlah. He died in 475 AD and his memory is celebrated on March 4.

Mesopotamia: The name given by the ancient Greeks to the area bounded by the Rivers Tigris (to the east) and Euphrates (to the west). The name defines a large area, which includes the valleys of the two rivers and their tributaries, most of which lies in contemporary Iraq.

Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia, Saint: Born in 1906 in the village of Agios Ioannis in Evia. At the age of 13 he went to Mount Athos and stayed there for 6 years. In 1926 he was ordained a priest and went to the Monastery of St Nikolaos in Evia. In 1940 he was appointed as priest of the church of St Gerasimos in the Athens Polyclinic where he served until 1973. He died in 1991. In 2013 the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared him a saint. His memory is celebrated on December 2.

Psalms: One of the books of the Old Testament which is essentially a collection of 150 psalms. The name comes from the stringed instrument “psalter”, which accompanied the chanting of the psalms. The Psalms are a typical work of lyrical religious poetry.

Repentance: The ecclesiastical term “repentance” can be understood as a “change of mind”. In Greek the corresponding word is “metanoia”, which is a compound word (meta + nous) and means a change of mindset. In the Orthodox Church, repentance is understood as an act of healing from the disease of sin.

Silouan the Athonite, Saint: Born in 1866 in the village of Shovskoe near Lipetsk, Russia. In 1892 he went to Mount Athos and became a monk in the Holy Monastery of Saint Panteleimon. He died in 1938. In 1987 he was proclaimed a saint of the Orthodox Church. His memory is celebrated on September 24.

Sin: In the Christian tradition the word sin means “mistake”, “failure”. That is, the failure of a person to achieve their goal, leading, through thoughts or actions, to separation from God, from their own self, their fellow human beings and the natural environment.

Theophanes of Crete: One of the prominent painters of the Cretan School in the first half of the 16th century, whose work influenced religious post-Byzantine painting. His work, condensed over a period of twenty years (1527-1546) is found in the two main monastic centers of the Greek-speaking Orthodox Church, Meteora and Mount Athos.

3.11 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

CHARACTERS:

YIORGOS: *youngster*

STRATOS: *friend of Yiorgos*

TEACHER: *of Religious Education*

MARIA: *Yiorgos' mother*

APOSTOLOS: *Yiorgos' Father*

The ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH Bartholomew

SCENE 1

TEACHER: Well, kids, today we will talk about God and the creation of the world. If we look around us we can see that the world is really beautiful and functional. We have been given everything we need to enjoy this life, in harmony with nature, just as the Bible says. I read to you from the book of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, where God created human beings and placed them in a beautiful garden. God said to them, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Gen. 1:29-31) Please note and remember the sentence: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good". Whatever God made was very good. There is nothing wrong with Creation, nor are there any evil creatures.

STRATOS: But Miss, isn't man often evil?

TEACHER: Well, Stratos, that's true. We humans often do wrong, but that is because we are the only creature that is free.

STRATOS: And what does that mean? Is it wrong to be free?

TEACHER: Not at all, but it is also a burden, and rather difficult, because as a free person you can choose whether or not to be not a good person

(The lesson continues. Background music)

TEACHER: Well, that's all for today. Remember that tomorrow we are going for a walk to the beach by the river. Bring some food and water with you. See you tomorrow. Take care!

SCENE 2

The next day the whole class is walking on the beach. The kids play, run, laugh, throw stones into the sea, in a happy and playful mood. Suddenly the children stop one by one as they see dead fish at the mouth of the river as well as large black patches that give off a nasty and irritating odor.

YIORGOS: Look, dead fish!

STRATOS: Yes, and it stinks here!

TEACHER: Something bad is happening here. There is something in the river that is killing the fish.

YIORGOS: Yes. Let's go find it.

STRATOS: Somewhere around here, there is an olive mill. Let's take a look. Maybe that's where this awful smell comes from.

After a while they stop in front of a pipeline that empties into the river. It seems to be well hidden as it is hardly visible through the reeds of the river bank. A thick liquid, almost black in color, and foul smelling, pours out.

TEACHER: You were right, Stratos! (Continues sadly). I read somewhere a few days ago that one cubic meter of liquid waste from an olive mill is equal to 100 cubic meters of municipal wastewater, and the wastewater from the olive mills can "travel" up to 10 kilometers and pollute shores, underground and surface water. Can you imagine it? Let's get out of here, we've seen enough...

On the way back

YIORGOS: I guess, Miss, that God did not imagine that mankind would destroy His beautiful creation...

TEACHER: And to think, Yiorgos, that God "took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (Gen 2:15)

YIORGOS (bitterly): Yes, exactly the kind of human care that we saw today!

SCENE 3

Yiorgos and his friend Stratos meet Yiorgos' parents at the family home.

STRATOS: We are telling you the truth, Mr. Apostolos, we saw with our own eyes the pipeline pouring black wastewater into the river.

YIORGOS: Yes, Dad, why don't you believe us?

FATHER: I believe you, but I think that you are exaggerating a bit.

YIORGOS: We are not exaggerating at all. We saw it with our own eyes. If you don't believe us, ask our teacher, who was with us.

FATHER: No need to ask anyone. It just seems unbelievable to me that such a big olive oil plant does not meet the required environmental protection measures and causes such pollution that you claim to have seen.

MOTHER: Why not believe the kids, Apostolos? After all, they are not too young to understand.

FATHER: Okay, let's assume that things are as you say. What are you going to do now? Will you go to accuse the factory? Will you be satisfied if it is shut down? Don't you know that dozens of people are employed there and make a living from it?

YIORGOS: No, we don't think it should be shut down, we wouldn't want that! What we want is for the mill to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection, like other factories all over the country. This is what we learn in school and discussed with our teacher, yesterday in class and today on the excursion.

FATHER: This is just a new fashion, like so many others.

MOTHER: What do you mean?

FATHER: Everyone suddenly started caring for the environment.

YIORGOS: Why dad? Don't you yourself get angry when we go to the beach and we see cigarette butts and rubbish everywhere? Doesn't all this bother you?

FATHER: This is a different matter. Here we are talking about things that can't be changed easily, because it would create more problems than it would solve. Many jobs would be lost and trade would be affected.

STRATOS: But God gave us the world to keep and watch over.

FATHER: And where is that written, Stratos?

STRATOS: The Old Testament says so. We read it at school. The Church says so.

FATHER: The Church? Is the Church concerned about environmental issues? I never heard any sermon about the environment.

The television shows a news bulletin and at that moment it refers to Patriarch Bartholomew. The journalist calls him "Green Patriarch".

FATHER: Eh, here is the Patriarch! Have you ever heard him speaking about such issues?

MOTHER: Hush, let's make a break, Apostolos. Why does the journalist call him "Green Patriarch"?

(The Patriarch is heard saying): "Crimes against the natural environment are a sin. The destruction of the biodiversity of God's creation, the pollution of water, earth, air and life by man, are all sins...»

Father is left speechless and Yiorgos, his mother and Stratos burst out laughing.

Father is left speechless and Yiorgos, his mother and Stratos burst out laughing.

3.12 REFERENCES

The list of books used by the writers in the preparation of the book at hand, plus the works of art and music used as stimuli for the students, along with the sources where they have been found.

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Artful Thinking: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/artfulThinking>

3.12.2 Works of art

Theophanes of Crete, "Adam Gave names to all the animals, to the birds of the sky and to the wild beasts" (Gen. 9: 19-20), fresco, 16th century, St Nikolaos Anapafsas, Meteora, Greece [https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9E%C9%99kil:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_\(Meteora\).jpg](https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9E%C9%99kil:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_(Meteora).jpg)

St Gerasimus of Jordan

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73126343>

St Amfilochios of Patmos

<https://www.saint.gr/4444/saint.aspx>

Icon of Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia in the monastery of Panagia Eleousa, Achaea, Greece

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d0/Saint_Porphyrios.jpg/800px-Saint_Porphyrios.jpg

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Aquarelles created by Vaso Gogou



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