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# THE GUBBIO DOCUMENT



SEAL OF THE GUBBIO CUSTODY - 15th century  
Gubbio, Convent of S. Francesco (Photo by Gavirati)

stampa azzurra gubbio

## INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR "TERRA MATER"



# THE GUBBIO DOCUMENT



On the occasion of the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Francis of Assisi, the participants at the "Terra Mater" International Seminar met September 23-26, 1982, in Gubbio, a city known for Franciscan reconciliation and peace.

At the end of their deliberations, the participants decided to remind everyone that the future of mankind and of the Planet Earth, our only dwelling place, is in peril and that, despite warnings issued ten years ago by the United Nations Conference in Stockholm, the world-wide environmental situation continues ever more to deteriorate.

Therefore, aware that humanity is suffering from the malaise caused by man's impaired relationship with the environment and by worsening social

bonds, the participants urgently call to the attention of everyone that it is necessary to overcome resignation and fatalism and to react by planning an alternative future which would be feasible and desirable.

They declare that it is urgent to change man's present orientation of domination and exploitation, especially as practised by humanity's industrialized minority. This orientation which has characterized up to now man's relationship with nature and that of men among themselves must be replaced by an attitude of sharing, protection, respect and brotherhood among all creatures.

With all of its incisive force, the fundamental example of Francis of Assisi is valid even today. Aware of environmental implications and of man's need to be in harmonious and conscious relationship with nature, he created, after having first experienced it in his own community, an alternative system of universal brotherhood in which human beings, animals, plants and minerals were considered brothers and sisters.

To accept this Franciscan message, which calls for a sparing use of earthly goods, it is necessary:

- to abandon the idea of progress as something measurable in quantitative terms of possession and in the accumulation of material things, as power politics and as an exclusive preoccupation with the present, and, instead, to assign to progress the goal of promoting the quality of life;

- to promote respect for nature and for the uniqueness of persons, communities and cultures;

- to acquire the firm conviction that an alternative model can be realized through the involvement of all people and especially of the young;

- to recognize the need to redimension, contain and counterbalance productive and industrial activities by abandoning technologies which are destructive of nature and harmful to human health and society in general;

- to create life-styles of low consumption of energy and resources (in development, distribution, political and social organizations) through an appropriate reconversion of technologies and a counterbalance of activities and settlements in a given territory;

- to call attention to the problem of world hunger, a clear sign of the environmental crisis and of the unequal distribution of resources which is compounded by the distorted reasoning of a market economy;

- to develop education, scientific research, and technology along these lines;

- to reassert that technology, one of the most distinctive expressions of man and of his creativity, is not harmful as such but that it can satisfy mankind's needs only if used in a way which respects human dignity and the natural processes of Planet Earth;

- to apply ethical principles even to the relationships between man and all other living creatures, and to recognize the urgent need to protect vegetal and animal forms of life against the extinction of species, excessive removals, irresponsibly wasteful use (for example, hunting, maltreatment, and pointless destruction), and the alteration of their respective habitats;

- to call attention to three problems which today affect the human population: growth, unequal territorial distribution, and aging;

- to reject every form of physical violence against nature and against man;

- to recognize that the conservation of the natural and human environment represents the essential condition for just development;

- to search in history for those thought patterns which would enable to plan an alternative future and build a system of an interdependent community;

- to reconsider, in the light of the above, the revival of interest in and appreciation for cultural heritages (architectural, artistic, historical and traditional) as primary sources of enriching the quality of life in every country;

- to reaffirm the rejection of all alienated and alienating aspects of human life, from politically unanimous behaviour to consumer uniformity, and to foster maximum esteem for the person of every human being through the various social and political organizations which have as their goal the greatest possible development, diversification and definition of activities, tasks and individual contributions to the life of society.

More specifically the members of the "Terra Mater" Seminar call for the following:

- 1) — that all possible means be used to develop human abilities in all institutions, in society in general, and in behavioral patterns through innovative learning which is based on *anticipation*, that is, responsible attentiveness to our future, and on the *participation* of all citizens in the choices to be made for that future;

- 2) — that those who are responsible for cultural interests and those who work in mass media communicate correctly and decisively all information concerning the environmental crisis and its causes;

- 3) — that those who are responsible for public education establish in all countries at every grade, level and orientation such school programs which will offer ample learning possibilities concerning the environment and the crisis in the relationship between man and resources so as to produce the clearest possible awareness of these matters;

- 4) — that leaders of every religion and Churches of every confession bring to the attention of their members the sacred character of nature and the moral right and duty to respect both the natural and human environment, and, with this in mind, that they encourage the education of their respective ministers in the religious value of such principles.

In particular, it is desirable that the World Council of Churches and the Holy See establish with that purpose in mind appropriate institutional bodies for ecology, and that bishops, pastors, and local Churches constantly make the faithful aware of their responsibility to be active participants in the development of a different quality of life and in the protection of nature and the environment;

- 5) — that parliaments and governments cooperate to heal the wounds already inflicted on the Planet by assigning every possible priority in the areas of public investments and work projects to programs of soil conservation, water regulation, reforestation, reclamation of desertified or damaged lands, recovery and depollution, and the restoration of natural environments and of their relative ecological equilibria;

- 6) — that non-governmental organizations make more precise and forceful their programs concerning problems of human survival in order to influence political and economic decisions which touch upon environmental relationships.

Finally, the members of the "Terra Mater" Seminar exhort the governments of the world to work for peace, disarmament, reciprocal solidarity in international relationships, renunciation of every form of isolationistic nationalism which is in contrast with such ends, and to search for a solution to the imbalances which exist between the "North and South" of the Planet. The realization of these ends must be pursued concretely through a reduction in military expenditures.

The quality of life, of society, and of the environment is therefore entrusted to human responsibility. This responsibility should be translated by every man, woman and community into immediate and practical action, motivated not by catastrophic visions but by hope in the future.

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