



BETHANY LAND INSTITUTE

Forming Leaders in Integral Ecology for Rural Transformation

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Bethany Land Institute: Enacting Laudato Si

Overview:

Inspired by pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, [Bethany Land Institute](http://www.bethanylandinstitute.com) (BLI) exists to train and equip leaders (Caretakers) who are committed to address poverty, care for creation and promote human dignity in the rural communities in Uganda. Working closely with the diocese of Kasana Luweero in Uganda, BLI seeks to realize this through a program of formation in sustainable agriculture, ecological education and economic opportunities for young people. In addition, BLI runs a program of pastoral formation of all the priests, seminarians, catechists and other pastoral agents in diocese in the spirituality, lifestyle and practice of integral ecology as proposed by Laudato Si.



Co-founded by Fr. Emmanuel Katongole and two priest friends, Bethany Land Institute, addresses the related challenges of poverty, food insecurity, ecological degradation and unemployment in the rural communities. Four key elements are at the heart of Bethany Land Institute program:

1. **Education:** In Laudato si, Pope Francis calls for an “education program” that nurtures and cultivates the mindset, lifestyle and spirituality of integral ecology (L.S. 111). Spiritual formation is at the heart of the BLI training program, whose goal is realize the ecological conversion, mindset change and lifestyle of integral ecology.
2. **Land:** BLI is a land based program; BLI trainees are called “caretakers” to reflect the biblical mandate to “till and care” for the land (Gen 2:15). Caretaker trainees spend two and half years in the training program at the end of which they return to their communities and serve as models for this mandate to “till and care” for the land.
3. **Institutionalization** is another distinctive aspect of BLI program, which involves among other things, setting up structures, building dormitories and halls, setting up systems of management and accountability, setting up and running a savings and credit scheme etc. “Social love,” Pope Francis notes, “is the



key to authentic development” (L.S. 231), which requires building sound and supportive institutions that reflect the love (caritas) that integral ecology denotes.

4. **The name “Bethany”** – and the stories of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, the siblings of Bethany - points to the church’s mission as a mission of presence, service and advocacy with an on behalf of the poor. Bethany is thus as a constant reminder of our presence and work among the rural community trying to recreate the same conditions of friendship, resurrection and servant leadership as at Bethany in the New Testament.

Through this program, BLI responds to the twin cries of the earth and of the poor in rural Uganda through an enactment of the vision and praxis of the kind of integral ecology that *Laudato Si* invites us into.

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