

Study Guide - Edith Stein and Laudato Si'

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This guide is designed to help you go deeper into the themes of the accompanying blog post and connect them with your own spiritual, ecological, and contemplative practices.

1. Key Themes to Notice

a. Interiority and Empathy (Edith Stein)

- Creation is not silent or inert.
- We encounter its meaning through relational perception and empathy.
- This resonates with Indigenous lifeways, contemplative Christianity, and deep ecology.

b. Integral Ecology (Pope Francis)

- Ecology is social, spiritual, economic, and cultural.
- Healing the planet requires healing relationships.
- Ecological conversion begins with attention.

c. Deep Time and Promise (Haught)

- The universe is unfinished.
- Ecological commitment is hope-oriented, not nostalgia-driven.
- Creation is still unfolding toward fulfillment.

2. Reflective Questions

1. When have you felt the interior life of creation address you?
2. How does the idea of *ecological empathy* change the way you see your surroundings?
3. What connections do you notice between your personal life, your spiritual life, and the ecological crises around you?
4. How might ecological healing begin with a shift in attention rather than simply a shift in policy?
5. How does the idea of an unfinished universe affect the way you understand hope?

3. Practices for the Week

a. Slow Looking

Spend five minutes with a single natural being (tree, creek, stone, feather). Notice:

- its texture
- its age
- its vulnerability
- your interior response

b. Empathic Crossing

Inspired by Stein. Ask:

- What might this being experience?
- What is its world like?
- What does it need to flourish?

Not to project human emotion onto it, but to soften the boundaries of perception.

c. Laudato Si' Examen

Adapted from Pope Francis's ecological examen.

- Where have I ignored the cry of creation?
- How have my choices affected the vulnerable?
- What one thing can I change today?

4. Suggested Readings

For readers wanting to go deeper:

- Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*
- Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*
- John Haught, *The New Cosmic Story*
- Thomas Merton, *When the Trees Say Nothing*
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (for resonance with Stein's relational phenomenology)

5. A Closing Blessing for Ecological Attention

May your seeing become spacious.

May your attention soften toward the more than human world.

*May empathy teach you what theology alone cannot.
And may you discover, in every small creature,
the quiet radiance of the Creator who dwells there.*