

EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY. THE ROLE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses the role of the Orthodox Church in raising public awareness and promoting community involvement in environmental issues in a global context marked by the ecological crisis. Methodology includes analyses of official Orthodox Church documents, interviews with religious leaders and case studies of local environmental projects. It examines the theological foundations of creation care and how these are concretised in educational, liturgical and social action. Initiatives such as reforestation, recycling campaigns and partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations are presented, demonstrating the positive impact of Orthodox Church involvement in protecting the environment. The actions contribute to the formation of an ecological awareness integrated into the spiritual life and the promotion of a sustainable lifestyle. The study emphasises the challenges faced: resistance to change, limited resources, insufficient integration of environmental issues into pastoral discourse. It suggests solutions such as ongoing training for clergy, inter-institutional collaboration and the development of green guides for parishes. For a broader vision, comparisons with similar initiatives of other religious institutions are included, emphasising the importance of inter-faith cooperation. The involvement of the Orthodox Church in environmental issues is not just an opportunity but an urgent moral and spiritual duty. Through an inclusive vision that unites faith, education and social responsibility, the Orthodox Church can become a key actor in promoting an integral ecology and a sustainable future.

Keywords: Orthodox Church, ecology, education, creation care, spirituality, sustainability, environmental awareness, social responsibility, integral ecology.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of an intensifying ecological crisis, the role of religious institutions in shaping ethical consciousness and promoting responsible behaviour towards the environment has become increasingly significant. Beyond policy and science, there is a pressing need for a moral and spiritual awakening that can sustain long-term ecological transformation. The Orthodox Church, with its rich theological, liturgical, and pastoral tradition, is uniquely positioned to foster a deep and spiritually rooted ecological awareness that speaks to the heart as well as to the mind. This paper explores how the Orthodox tradition approaches environmental responsibility and examines concrete initiatives undertaken by Orthodox communities to promote ecological sustainability. It investigates how Orthodox theology, rooted in the patristic vision of the world as a divine creation, offers a distinctive framework for understanding the human vocation as one of stewardship, not domination. The Church's emphasis on communion, humility, and ascetic restraint provides a valuable counter-narrative to the consumerist and exploitative