Nº 105, 2011/1

Promotio Iustitiae

JESUIT MISSION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat

Back

Editor: **Fernando Franco SJ**

Consultant Editor: **Suguna Ramanathan**

Publishing Coordinator: **Tina Negri**

Promotio Iustitiae is published by the Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) in English, French, Italian and Spanish. *Promotio Iustitiae* is available electronically on the World Wide Web at the following address: **www.sjweb.info/sjs**

If you are struck by an idea in this issue, your brief comment is very welcome. To send a letter to *Promotio Iustitiae* for inclusion in a future issue, please write to the fax or email address shown on the back cover.

Back

Contents

Back

EDITORIAL

This issue of *Promotio Iustititae* is dedicated to the theme of Ecology. At least two reasons have prompted this choice. The first derives its importance from an apostolic motivation. The Task Force established to reflect on the 'Society's Mission and Ecology' has just submitted its report to Fr. General. After two meetings in Rome and 6 months of work, the six members representing all Conferences felt strongly that the objectives of the Task Force had been fulfilled. The terms of reference given had specified that an important objective was to propose concrete and practical ways to make the concern for ecology a "dimension" of all our ministries. A second objective emphasized the need to propose concrete project/s having an inter-sectoral or inter-disciplinary dimension, stressing the global and international aspect of the issues, and focussing on themes and methodologies where the Society could use its distinctive strengths.

The second reason for choosing Ecology relies on personal considerations. With the publication of this issue, PJ 105, I end my job as editor of this journal. I felt that selecting a theme reflecting an important preoccupation was a meaningful way of ending my term here; it was also an issue or a challenge that, in my mind, had remained pending. Such a challenge is closely related to the strong appeal of GC 35 to establish right relationships with creation. Decree 3 devotes one section to reconciliation with creation but the general principles developed in that section need a more practical framework to become operative in our lives and works. The change of the Secretariat's name from 'Social Justice' to 'Social Justice and Ecology' was an added incentive to select the theme of Ecology.

A few remarks to outline the contents of the present issue. Though we would have liked to include the document that the Task Force has prepared, procedural matters counselled a different path. Since that document has been submitted to Fr. General for consideration, it seems appropriate to wait for his suggestions and comments before it is made public.

The articles selected touch on various aspects of the environmental challenge. We start with an inter-cultural and theological understanding of ecology (Jacques Haers and Michael Amaladoss). Joseph Carver looks at environmental challenges from the point of view of Ignatian spirituality. The complex and controversial issue of climate change is taken up by Johannes Wallacher and Michael Reder, whose article presents a summary of a report prepared by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the Jesuit Institute for Social and Development Studies in Munich. Three contributors coming from different cultural perspectives examine the relationship between ecological degradation and its effects on the poor: Siji Varghese (India), Allen K. Ottaro (Kenya), and Gabriel Lamug-Nañawa (Philippines). Lluis Recolons examines the changing pattern of the population debate in the last 30 years.

The challenge of ecology questions fundamental attitudes and behavioural patterns. Under the broader theme of 'Challenges to our Jesuit way of life,' a few contributors suggest practical steps to respond to the challenge highlighting regional differences and priorities: from India Rappai Pothookaren; from Africa Ibe Oguh and Joseph Oduor Afulo; from North America Gregory Kennedy.

Back

Uta Sievers looks at the manner in which other religious congregations are responding to this challenge.

We have reproduced in this issue an article written by Elias Omondi in memory of Ignatius Ikunza, once involved in the social apostolate, who died a few months ago. Included in this issue are some reflections by a frequent contributor to *Promotio*, Rudi Heredia, who muses over his experiences after celebrating 50 years in the Society.

Let me end by noting without pride, with a touch of humility and with immense gratitude that almost 30 issues back, 29 to be more exact, I took over the responsibility seven and a half years ago of editing *Promotio* from the able hands of Michael Czerny. In my first editorial I wrote:

It is a privilege to be able to start the first draft of my first editorial in PJ on Christmas Eve. For a moment, passing and precarious as that moment may be, one feels that people all over the world agree on the importance of enduring peace in personal life and in the world at large.

I must reaffirm now that it has been indeed a privilege to be in touch all these years and issues with a fantastic band of Jesuits and lay persons who have collaborated unceasingly and in a number of complementary ways. Some responded to the repeated demands for an article, others translated the articles, four persons became in the course of time editors of the four language versions, and in the office, others helped in the selection of articles, in formatting the issues, getting them to the publisher and sending them by post. The list is long and rich in quality; this is what has made the work of the editor a privilege.

Though we continue to live in a world shaken by crisis and engulfed in turmoil, a lasting source of comfort is to know that *Promotio* will pass into the able and committed hands of Fr. Patxi Alvarez, the next Secretary who will publish the next issue. Welcome to him and arrivederci Roma!

Fernando Franco SJ

Theological Reminiscences
Creation and Eco-Feminist Theologies

Jacques Haers SJ

The intimate relationship with God cannot be considered as if disconnected from the rest of Creation; our relationships with God are mediated by creation as a whole. We cannot separate ourselves from Creation; nor can we set ourselves over against the world. What we need is a universal outlook to face planet wide challenges.

We are accustomed to the word "creation" as a mere synonym to "world," or alternatively, as an indication for the intimate relationship with God at the core of our individual being. In so doing, however, we risk forgetting the critical features of the idea. Years ago, the Jesuit supervisor of my master's thesis in philosophy shocked me out of my all- too- gentle understanding of the concept. I had been researching Thomas Aquinas' thought on creation and had focused on how it articulates God's intimate relation to individual human beings, a crucial insight into Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. "That's correct, of course," agreed my supervisor, "but you've forgotten an essential element". He teased that out of me in the course of 15 gruelling, but also satisfying minutes: this intimate relationship with a God on whom we totally depend cannot be considered merely in itself, as if disconnected from the rest of creation. Our relationships with God are mediated by creation as a whole, the universe, the cosmos. Although we seem to be a special kind of creature, capable of reflecting on our existence and our world, as well as discovering God's presence and naming God, we cannot set ourselves over against the world or disentangle ourselves from it. Rather, in us, creation itself as a whole discovers and names God through a fascinating evolutionary history, a vision intuited by the French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It is not an easy vision, as one has to leave behind a tempting but dangerous anthropocentrism that orders all non-human creatures in the light of human interests. In my research, I had referred to Ignatius, but I had not mentioned his crucial mystical experience near the river Cardoner: there he saw the vast and divine beauty of the universe as a connected creation, a vision that would find its way into the *Spiritual Exercises'* contemplation to obtain love. I had also forgotten the so-called fourth vow of obedience to the pope with regard to the missions. Ignatius knew that the pope occupied the place with the broadest outlook over the world, and it is as if he encouraged his companions to keep in mind this important point: however deeply involved and absorbed you may be in one very specific activity at a very specific place and time, you should not forget that universal perspective. Such a universal outlook serves us well today as we face planet-wide challenges.

On the occasion of a delightful vacation, four days of nature observation in Ireland, I became aware of another aspect of a short sighted understanding of creation. In responding to the environmental challenges of today we may well refer to Ignatius' meditation on the incarnation. There, Ignatius invites us to look with God at the suffering and self-destructive world. The scene is apocalyptic and we recognize the mood. Indeed, without being a dark pessimist, I would say: we're on the edge and we seem incapable of changing our lifestyles and acting decisively against worldwide injustices. We then meditate on the incarnation: God responds by entering into this world and sharing our lives. Those who follow Jesus will commit themselves in the same way. In this meditation, the world is a dangerous, evil ridden place. My vacation – during which I contemplated the beauty of creatures great and small – reminds me that I may have paid insufficient theological attention to that beauty, preoccupied as I am by all the evil and suffering

in the world. In the *Spiritual Exercises,* beauty comes before sin and incarnation. We are first of all called to enjoy the beauty of creation and to repeat God's "yes, this is good", before confronting evil. The idea of original sin refers to the fact that none of us can claim to be without sin; it also indicates the need to continue to repeat that we have been created as beautiful and beloved by God. Beauty and love constitute creation's deepest and dearest core. Now, the incarnation appears as God's most intimate kiss, the deepest communion of God's creative Word with the world. That sparkle of divine love ultimately heals creation.

Egied van Broeckhoven, a Flemish Jesuit worker priest, explores his mystical experience in a wonderful diary which embodies the view of creation I have just described. Egied moves into the world of factory workers in Brussels and shares their lives. In a process of 'incarnation', he moves into a marginal zone, in the footsteps of a God who wants to be with the beloved. In his encounters with people, Egied experiences God's triune presence in the world. This reminds theologians of Karl Rahner's understanding of the identity of immanent (who God is in Godself) and economic (how God acts in creation) Trinity. Here, the loving incarnation, as the effort to move into a marginalized world, coincides with the experience of the Trinity in its work of love: work and love are interwoven to the point that makes me suggest the use of a single theological word: "trincarnation". Committing oneself to the world in passionate love opens the door to the root experience of God's burning love at the core of reality. To face the darkest corners of today's environmental predicament – people suffering terrible disasters, fighting over scarce resources, migrating in hardship and looking for water or a decent place to live, a biosphere being depleted rapidly – we need to enter into the world lovingly, admiring its beauty and grace. We can then trust ourselves enough to encounter God's love and be empowered to serve creation.

These highly critical and mystical dimensions of the idea of creation remind me of the work of the prophetic German theologian Dorothee Sölle. Her book on creation carries the title *To Work and to Love*. Sölle is an early representative of eco-feminism. I remember how, at the end of a talk she gave in Leuven, men were not allowed to ask questions. Only women had the right to speak! The memory of such painful gender injustice keeps me alive to the way in which feminist theologians mercilessly unmask patriarchal attitudes. These are found in arrogant hierarchical structures erected to cover up claims to superiority and to defend vested interests. In fact, these attitudes introduce and maintain diverse ways of oppression and exclusion which cause suffering. The awareness of patriarchy arose first as a gender issue: women suffer in societies that maintain male superiority, to guard which they set up ideological structures that are internalized and thus mask injustice. Feminists today insist that matters are more complex and that various types of exclusions intersect: gender, race, poverty..… They object to patterns of dualism that structure our existence: body and soul, emotions and rationality …

Feminist theologians are a very diverse group but they all have this in common – they provoke thought and comment. They disrupt oppressive viewpoints and positions that offer a deceptive sense of security and stability and they question existing hierarchies and power structures. They point out that our ways of reading our sacred texts, of building theological systems, of developing spiritualities and even of using the word God, may be biased in favour of certain interests.

Eco-feminist theologians, for example Rosemary Radford Ruether or Yvonne Gebara, perceive similar patriarchal patterns in gender issues and in our attitudes towards the environment. Human beings treat nature in much the same way as their societies treat women and they tend to enshrine such treatment in theologies, which then provide them with a divine alibi to exploit nature. Most eco-feminist approaches denounce anthropocentric power-abuse of nature and control–driven behaviour that slots in creatures, turning them into objects at the service of their human masters. Exaggerated trust in politics, economics, science and technology, are symptoms

of a desire to control, which is ultimately based on the fear of confronting reality. Eco-feminists often plead in favour of so-called deep ecology and invite us to consider nature as a full conversation partner in its own right. They stress the connectedness of creation as a whole; they see the planet Earth as Gaia – the name for the Earth as one living reality – and pay attention to its material and evolutionary processes. They value diversity as a gift of God and advocate for those who suffer exclusion in patriarchal structures. They relate positively to body and sexuality, as well as to natural biological rhythms. They are keenly aware that the planet is also the planet of their children, who are, like the planet itself, included in the community that engages in a common discernment practice with regard to the future. They prefer shared leadership to hierarchy, allowing every creature to contribute its own bit to the whole of creation. Eco-feminist theologies may be considered too critical by some, but they invite us to face both our societal and intellectual prejudices, and nature as a conversation partner to be reckoned with.

The encounter with Celia Deane-Drummond, a British theologian who is a university professor and involved with CAFOD, taught me how strongly eco-feminist theologians invite environmentally sensitive theologians to be anchored in grassroots environmental movements while maintaining an international involvement. There is still a long way to go and many of us need to rediscover their rootedness in nature. Both the concept of creation and the various eco-feminist theologies provide a much needed critical impetus.

Ecology: An Indian Theological Perspective

Michael Amaladoss SJ[1]

Michael Amaladoss, SJ offers a theological understanding of ecology in the light of an Indian perspective. Whilst according to the Christian tradition, Creation is conceived as something autonomous where we stand outside the material creation, with the power to dominate and exploit it, in the advaitic or non-dual vision of the Indian tradition, God and creation are not seen as two separate realities; God is also immanent in creation. A dichotomous approach to Creation leads to greedy behavior and consequently to destruction of nature's resources.

The root of the ecological problem lies in the way that humans look at and treat creation. The Christian approach, strengthened by Greek philosophy, is dichotomous at various levels. Creation is projected outside the creator as a kind of autonomous, automatic machine functioning by itself. Humans, though they are creatures, stand outside the material creation, with the power to dominate and exploit it. Humans themselves are composites of a mind (or spirit) and a body in which the mind is the dominant principle. Among humans the male dominates the female, seen as passive and receptive. The males then become dominant in a world in which everything else, including the females, are subject to them and can be exploited for their benefit. Greedy behaviour based on such attitudes has led to the poisoning and destruction of nature's resources and the subjection of women and creation. Only now, with the quality of life rapidly going down and the future looking bleak, are humans waking up to the situation. But tinkering with natural resources and offering sops to placate women are not going to make the situation better if there is no change in the basic attitudes to creation and women.

As a reaction to prevailing attitudes to creation some go to the other extreme of divinizing it. Nature is seen as the mother goddess with the hope that some of its sheen will also reflect on women. Such an approach is not really helpful because it not true. It is in this context that I would like to suggest that Indian (and Asian) philosophical and religious traditions offer an alternate way of looking at creation and women that is more helpful to an ecological vision and practice. Given the limitations of space I shall not go into Chinese Confucian and Taoist perspectives but limit myself to the Indian tradition.

The Indian Vision

In the *advaitic* or non-dual vision of the Indian tradition, God and creation are not seen as two separate realities. God is not merely transcendent; God is also immanent in creation. The *Upanishads,* which are philosophical reflections on Reality from the 6th to the 3rd century before the Common Era, are full of this *advaitic* vision. I quote only one representative text. The *Katha Upanishad* says:

> *As fire, though one, takes new forms in all things that burn, the Spirit, though one, takes new forms in all things that live. He is within all, and is also outside.*

[1] The author is at the Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions, Chennai, India.

> *As the wind, though one, takes new forms in whatever it enters, the Spirit, though one, takes new forms in all things that live. He is within all, and is also outside.*
>
> *As the sun that beholds the world is untouched by earthly impurities, so the Spirit that is in all things is untouched by external sufferings.*
>
> *There is one Ruler, the Spirit that is in all things, who transforms his own form into many. Only the wise who see him in their souls attain joy eternal.*
>
> *He is the Eternal among things that pass away, pure Consciousness of conscious beings, the ONE who fulfils the prayers of many. Only the wise who see him in their souls attain peace eternal...*
>
> *There the sun shines not, nor the moon, nor the stars; lightning shines not there and much less earthly fire. From his light all these give light, and his radiance illumines all creation.*

The Absolute is in all things. All things depend on it. But it is not dependent on them. They are not two separate things. They are One – not-two – *advaita*. A South Indian Saivite poet, Devara Dasimayya, sings:

> *Whatever it was that made this earth the base, the world its life, the wind its pillar, arranged the lotus and the moon, and covered it all with folds of sky with Itself inside, to that Mystery indifferent to differences, to It I pray.*

Nammalvar, a *Vaishnavite* mystic, speaks of how the Lord unites himself with him.

> *Becoming himself, filling and becoming all worlds, all lives, becoming him who becomes even me, singing himself, becoming for my sake honey, milk, sugar cane, ambrosia, becoming the lord of gardens too, he stands there, consuming me.*

In the Bhagavad Gita, after seeing the hidden form of Krishna (the divine avatar), his disciple Arjuna prays:

> *Thou God from the beginning, God in man since man was, Thou Treasure supreme of this vast universe. Thou the One to be known and the Knower, the final resting place. Thou infinite, eternal refuge of the world. Thou infinite Presence in whom all things are...*
>
> *Adoration unto thee who art before me and behind me; adoration unto thee who art on all sides, God of all. All-powerful God of Immeasurable might. Thou art the consummation of all: thou art all. (ch. 11)*

The words may sound strange to Christians who are not accustomed to such language. What is clear is that God is in all things and all things are in God. God is not separate from creation. Such a vision is not absent in Christian tradition. I think of the Prologue of the gospel of John.

> *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things came into being through him... What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people... The true light, which enlightens every one, was coming into the world. (Jn 1:1,3-4,9).*

Mystics like Meister Eckhart speak about such non-dual union of the Absolute with the universe. Ignatius Loyola speaks of "finding God in all things" because God is present and active in everything.

The Hindu theologian Ramanuja sees the world as the body of God, who is the Indweller – *antaryamin*. The body is dependent on the spirit. It is not self-existent, but the self manifestation of the Spirit. It is the field of the Spirit's action. There is an intimate but unequal relationship. There is no dichotomy. They are not two independent realities. They are one, not-two, *advaita*. One of the *Saivite* poets sings that he has now begun to care for his body, having realized that his body is the dwelling of the divine Spirit.

The Christian tradition too strongly believes in this intimate relation between the spirit and the body. It cannot think of the human spirit without the body. This is the basis for its belief in the resurrection of the body.

The earth, nature and creation are the extensions of the body. They are not mere material objects or instruments. There is no body and no human self without them. The wellness of the body depends on the wellness of creation. Humans are part of creation through their bodies. To care for one's body and for creation is to care for oneself.

Ecofeminism

The relation between the male and the female is slightly different. The Biblical and Christian tendency is to see the man as the 'head' of the woman. The woman, after all, was created from the rib of the man. (Gen 2) But another creation story says that God created both man and woman in God's image. (Gen 1) God's image is fully revealed only in the male-female couple. This supposes complementarity and reciprocity between the sexes. This complementarity finds expression in their bodies and in their creativity.

The Hindu tradition highlights this complementarity by imaging the divine as a couple. The Saivite tradition has God's images that are half male and half female: *ardhanariswara*. An interesting twist has it that it is the female who is the source of life and power – *shakti*. There is a popular saying: "*Siva* (the male), without *Shakti* (the female) is *Sava* (corpse)."

The body mediates between the Creator and creation, the spirit and the earth, male and female. There is no body without the earth. To care for the body one must care for the earth. But to care for the body is to care for oneself. The Spirit, the body and the earth are not many, but one – *advaita*. To think of the body is also to think of male and female. The human – the spirit-in-body - as differentiated from the earth is not male, but male and female. The body therefore becomes a symbol of ecofeminism, in so far as it is the denial of male domination. It is the male and the female together that give life. If we have to imagine the Creator in human terms, the Creator too has to be male and female, Father and Mother. As a matter of fact, Ramanuja, who sees the world as the body of God, imagines God also having a divine body. Having a body is not an imperfection since Jesus, who is divine, has a body too.

Reality is one. God, humans and creation are inter-related. Everything is dependent on the One Absolute. This is what Raimon Panikkar, recently deceased, used to call Cosmotheandric communion. If we are aware of this we would not be exploitative and destructive, but live in harmony with the Real.

Ignatian Spirituality and Ecology: Entering into Conversation

Joseph Carver SJ

Joseph Carver SJ uses the framework of St Ignatius' examen prayer to help us reflect on our relationship with creation with the intent to lead to personal awareness, appreciation and commitment.

The tradition of Ignatius provides a foundational dimension to the spirituality of the contemporary Church. In examining aspects of this spirituality, we can allow our 'kinship' with the Earth and all of creation to inform our encounter with the Incarnate Christ. Ignatian spirituality demands a critical awareness of the environment in our daily lives, moving us from a sense of mere stewardship of the Earth to a deeper covenant of membership in the order of creation. This view is not merely instrumental but sacramental: the very relational quality of God as actualized in creation. This perspective recognizes that we are engaged in a relationship with the Incarnate God, and must therefore see ourselves as kin with all creation, both biologically and spiritually. This point of view demands an ecological conversion by which we address the current environmental crisis with a fresh recognition of our kinship with all creation. This newfound communion enables us to overcome abstraction and know the bonds of Heaven to Earth, of Spirit to Matter.

Any contemporary theology that claims to address the ecological crisis will need to be a theology that understands the human person as part of the natural world. My assertion is that Christians have a particular role in the environmental movement because of our understanding of both the Incarnation and communion. A communal theology, which takes seriously the incarnational grounding of our human identity, transforms humanity's relationship to the natural world and inspires an enriched approach to the ecological movement. Ignatian Spirituality offers a unique point of entry into ecological spirituality and thus the restoration of creation. When the great themes of Christian theology, such as covenant and incarnation, are brought to our contemporary understanding of ecology with an attitude that is critical yet respects the beauty and depth of both disciplines, they raise our ecological vision from one of mere materialism to one of reconciliation, re-creation, and ultimately resurrection. What follows is a very brief consideration of the topic. I do not pretend to offer a full realization of what will come from this meeting of Ignatian Spirituality and an ecological imagination, but I hope to offer a two initial steps.

The daily examen and Ignatian imaginative prayer are two clear ways to cultivate an ecological sensitivity in one's interior life. We are well aware that God continually draws each one of us to Himself in and through Christ. We experience God's action in our feelings, moods, actions and desires. We believe that God reveals Himself in our feelings as much as He does in our clear and distinct ideas. Allowing God to draw us more intimately, we must first let Him draw us at the core of our being, which means becoming more aware of our feelings. Here we recognize God's ceaseless invitation to come closer, to be more like God, to be one with God. Additionally, we become conscious of our resistance to God, which arises from sin in ourselves and in the world about us. Using the technique of the examen with an ecological lens allows us to reflect prayerfully on the events of the day. We are able to witness our relationship with creation, and to detect God's presence and discern God's direction for us. The goal of the examen is a discerning heart. The purpose of the Ecological Examen is discerning how God is inviting us individually to see how we are responding with greater sensitivity.

The five movements in the Ecological Examen parallel the traditional examen. We begin with thanksgiving and gratitude for the covenant God offers in the gift of God's self in all creation. Second, we specifically request to have our eyes opened by the Spirit as to how we might care for creation. Third, we review the challenges and joy experienced in this care. Asking God: "How was I drawn into God today through creation?" How were we being invited to respond to God's action in creation? Is there some part of our relationship with creation that is in need of change? Fourth, asking for a true and clear awareness of our sinfulness, whether it be a sense of superiority or a failure to respond to the needs of creation. Finally, hope. We ask for hope in the future, asking for greater sensitivity to trust in God's living presence in all creation.

Ecological Examen: Joseph Carver SJ

- All creation reflects the beauty and blessing of God's image. Where was I most aware of this today?
- Can I identify and pin-point how I made a conscious effort to care for God's creation during this day?
- What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?
- How can I repair breaks in my relationship with creation, in my unspoken sense of superiority?
- As I imagine tomorrow, I ask for the grace to see the Incarnate Christ in the dynamic interconnections of all Creation.

Conclude with the prayer of Jesus:

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Jn 17:22-23)

The examen, like the Spiritual Exercises, progresses to the point of exhorting us to a total commitment to the life of Christ. Inspired by the Spirit, looking at the events in our lives and on the earth from an ecological perspectives moves us to deepen our commitments, returning to daily life with enthusiasm, inspired to transform, heal and recover the natural environment. In my experience the practice of the Ecological Examen has led to profound experiences of gratitude, for the gifts of creation most especially. This examen teaches us our ultimate purpose "to praise, reverence and serve God" in such a way that a Christian environmental response is part and parcel of everything we do. The goal is therefore to make this response part of our service to each other, to our communities, and to all creation. Like the traditional examen, the Ecological Examen leads us to three steps: awareness, appreciation and commitment. Awareness involves taking off our societal blinders that keep us focused on our own pursuits. From awareness comes appreciation; we cannot appreciate what we are unaware of, or not in relationship with. Appreciation leads to respect and love; all creation has value because God made it thus. In this way we learn to appreciate those things we would only previously tolerate, and treat as objects; now we begin to see and learn of their critical importance to the rest of the community of creation. Suddenly we find we are imitating the dung beetle in our kitchen composting, and building turbines that mimic the flippers of humpback whales. Creation becomes an indispensible teacher rather than an intolerable scavenger. Finally, appreciation leads us to committed action. We move beyond reuse and recycling, beyond stewardship, to restoration and renewal.

Similar graces come from using our imagination in prayer to contemplate scenes from the gospel, and not simply from a human point of view. A short time ago, as I sat with a retreatant, it was clear to me that he was spinning. He was on day 6 of the Third Week of the Exercises,

preoccupied not with Christ but with the intensity of His suffering, speaking again and again of the gruesomeness of the contemplations. As we came to the end of our time, I invited him to place Christ in the tomb by the end the day. He agreed. Though I rarely give this directive, holding on to my piece of gneiss, I felt compelled by the Spirit. I invited him to consider imagining himself as the tomb itself in the contemplation. Again, he agreed. When we met late the next day, he tearfully said 4 words: "*Christ rose within me*." Deeply consoled and joyful, he went on to recount the powerful contemplation he had experienced at the tomb.

A resurrection-centered approach to the environment begins in God moving us toward the realization of this love in all created things. This paradox of love resides at the very centre of the gospel and core of the Exercises. The centre of Ignatius' spiritual experiences is the awareness of Christ's divine love present and at work in the world. Therefore, finding God at work in the creation for Ignatius does not begin with creation and ascend from there by some form of purification of the senses, but begins in God and moves into and through creation. Developments since the era of high scholasticism have not fundamentally changed this basic mystery of God's relationship to creation. Teilhard de Chardin, for example, thought it his life's work to reintegrate spirituality with the Earth. He accomplished much towards that end; however his thinking ends by subsuming all material creation within human transformation. As he writes: "In a convergent universe, every element finds its fulfillment, not directly in its own perfection, but in its incorporation into the unity of a superior pole of consciousness in which it can enter into communion with all others. Its worth culminates in a transmutation into the other, in a self-giving excentration."[1] Or again, "the end of the world; the overthrow of equilibrium, detaching the mind, fulfilled at last, from its material matrix, so that it will henceforth rest with all its weight in God's Omega."[2] These and other passages indicate that Teilhard saw the universe as being subsumed into human fulfillment in Christ. Thus we are invited to enter into the scene as if we were part of the natural world – a seed planted, the hewn rock tomb of Christ, the oil anointing Christ's feet. With literally hundreds of opportunities in the gospels and seemingly endless examples when we include the Hebrew scriptures and the Psalms, these contemplations cannot help but provoke feelings of gratitude and compel us towards action on behalf of creation. Contemplating such scenes evokes courage and a new kind of reverential humility for the gift of creation – the same virtues Jesus cultivated in following the will of God. Combining this new language of images with the wonder and grace of creation has the power to heal.

Two years ago, when directing an eight day retreat, I invited a woman to prayer with Mark 4:26-29, the parable of the growing seed. She was grieving deeply over her inability to conceive and for many years suffered from a profound sense of shame and guilt. Entering into this contemplation as the soil, she experienced a profound sense of healing. She returned the following day filled with joy to recount how she "had given birth to God's Word…a living Word!" She spoke of the profound sense of being both a disciple and mother. (I have often wondered if any physical healing came from this spiritual grace. Whether or not it did, her "healing" gave her a mission, and in living this mission she remains a healing presence in the world.)

God certainly enlightened Ignatius as to the Trinity in creation. "One day while reciting the hours of our Lady on the steps of some monastery…he saw the Holy Trinity under the figure of three [organ] keys,"[3] The fullness of the chord and the harmony drew forth tears. (This is the first time Ignatius speaks of tears.) He could not stop talking of the Trinity and spoke of his

[1] See Teilhard de Chardin, The Future of Man, trans. N. Denny (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1959), 76.
[2] See Teilhard de Chardin, Phenomenon of Man, 287f.
[3] Spiritual Journal, *Obras Completas de San Ignacio* (Madrid, 1952), 748.

visions of rays, the manner in which God created the earth, and the luminosity of creation. It is hard to ignore the experience of the Cardoner; there is little doubt that Ignatius related this experience and all these things as God's way of guiding souls more deeply into the principles of discernment.[4] Whether it was from the rooftop of the Curia in Rome or at the starry heavens of Loyola, he certainly beheld the stars with new eyes as well as "the other things on the face of the earth." [SpEx 23]. It is not surprising that right up to the end of his life Ignatius references these unifying visions in the Exercises, letters, the Constitutions, and in all sorts of decisions. I cannot help but believe that Ignatius would delight in the beautiful ironic truth that he himself is composed of stardust. The stars that taught him so much about reverence, awe, and wonder are composed of the very same elements of which he himself is composed -- God delighting in the very same elements in each.

When the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus sought to articulate the mission of the Society today, it spoke of our need to create right relationships, especially in three areas: first, reconciliation with God, second, reconciliation with one another, and third, reconciliation with creation. (I am reminded of Pope Paul III's charge to Ignatius to include the hearing of confessions when he sought approval of the founding documents of the Society.) While the first two have a long history in the Church, the last has often been forgotten, emerging only today in a time of grave ecological challenge and profound new insight into the richness of our incarnational heritage. The Congregation, realizing this new reality, challenges Jesuits and all those inspired by the spirituality of Ignatius to "move beyond doubts and indifference to take responsibility for our home, the Earth."[5] This investigation is my attempt to take the call of the Congregation seriously; but more, to show how this call to a Eucharistic ecology emerges from—and has often been overlooked within—the long sacramental tradition of the Church and the incarnational spirituality of Ignatius, especially as seen in the Spiritual Exercises.

In his letter promulgating the Decrees of General Congregation 35, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Adolfo Nicolás wrote: "The task now at hand lies with the whole Society. It is our responsibility to 'receive' the decrees and to give them life in our ministries, communities and personal lives. Our experience has taught us that the success or failure of a General Congregation does not lie in documents but in the quality of lives which are inspired by them. Because of this, I earnestly exhort all Jesuits to read, study, meditate on and appropriate these decrees. Likewise, I encourage you to enrich them with the depth of your own faith and insight."[6] In this brief article, I have attempted to respond to the call of Father General and engage in the mission offered by the Congregation.[7] Today, as the world can no longer sustain the dichotomies of spirit versus matter, or ecology versus spirituality, it is up to us—perhaps especially those of us graced by the gift of Ignatian spirituality—to reconcile these opposites for the life of the world, thus responding to the encouragement expressed in the letter of promulgation for the General Congregation. I have tried in this work to take the various inspirations found in our tradition, and "give them life" through my own "faith and insight".

[4] *Obras Completas*, 669.
[5] Documents of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, Decree 3: Challenges to our Mission Today "Reconcilation with Creation" accessed March 1, 2009.
[6] "Letter of Promulgation" accessed March 1, 2009
http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/GC35/prmlgtn
[7] This mission is succinctly presented in the opening quotation and initial paragraphs of Part II (page 24).

Global yet Equitable: Combating Climate Change, Enabling Development

Johannes Wallacher & Michael Reder*

Bringing together climate change mitigation and development policy is one of the main goals of the United Nations and of populations worldwide. Despite great effort, the international community still has no adequate response to this challenge. The dilemma is, on the one hand, preventing climate change, and, on the other, helping developing countries becoming economically self-reliant.

Climate and development policy at an impasse

Climate and development policy have reached an impasse. At the time of writing, the international community's political efforts are not even close to producing adequate responses to these momentous challenges. The United Nations' Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 failed to deliver the crucial breakthrough. Hopes of finalising a global agreement on the worldwide reduction of greenhouse gas emissions at the summit were dashed. Negotiations on how to support developing countries financially in their adaptation to unavoidable climate change were equally inconclusive.

Climate change mitigation is undoubtedly in the interests of people everywhere. But in order to find real solutions, substantial incentives are necessary for governments, communities, and for each of us as individuals. One particular challenge here is to bring together climate change mitigation and development policy. Developing and newly-industrialised countries are particularly reliant on broad-scale economic growth because it is a necessary – though not a sufficient – condition for overcoming poverty and underdevelopment. At first sight, this presents a dilemma. On the one hand, it is vital to avoid dangerous climate change because of what is at stake: the stability of the life-support base for present and future generations. On the other hand, developing countries will be understandably reluctant to participate in emissions avoidance if it places constraints on their options for economic development.

Finding ways out of this apparent dilemma calls for a macro-perspective which systematically maps the broad linkages between the different thematic areas without getting side-tracked by intricate details. For this kind of synergistic macro-perspective, new alliances spanning the scientific and social domains are essential.

This has prompted four ostensibly very dissimilar partners to join forces. From the scientific domain, these include the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the Institute for Social and Development Studies in Munich. Their input combines scientific facts about the causes and consequences of climate change with consideration of the economic, development-policy and ethical implications. The commissioning parties and project partners are Misereor – the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation, and the Munich Re Foundation. In this project, then, the scientific community, development cooperation practitioners and the insurance industry have worked collaboratively, on the basis of scientific

* Summary of a report by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the Institute for Social and Development Studies, Munich, commissioned by Misereor – the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation and the Munich Re Foundation. Under the direction of: Ottmar Edenhofer, Johannes Wallacher, Michael Reder and Hermann Lotze-Campen. Translation: Christopher Hay, Seeheim, Germany, in cooperation with Misereor Foreign Language Services.

facts, and reached a consensus on common positions and demands. At the same time, all four partners have embarked on a dialogue with those at the heart of this debate – the people directly affected, often the poor, in the countries of the global south.

The risk of dangerous climate change

Today it is undeniable that climate change is caused, for the most part, by humans and that the first impacts are already tangible. A further rise in the mean global temperature is already inevitable, because of the lengthy time-lag between the discharge of emissions and the climate system's response. Climate change will cause shifts in regional climatic conditions and a series of grievous impacts. Emerging trends are already observable. The consequences of a global rise in temperature exceeding 2°C (compared with the pre-industrial level) will in all probability have massive consequences for many people alive today as well as in the future. In poorer regions of the world especially, this could make it impossible to adapt to the changes successfully. Therefore, the target of limiting warming of the climate to no more than 2°C is a persuasive orientation point for future climate policy.

From an ethical perspective, it is important to be mindful that the worldwide distribution of harmful climate impacts is inequitable. Even now, and all the more in future, those who are worst equipped to adapt to the impacts will be hardest hit. This is partly because many of the most susceptible regions are increasingly densely populated. All kinds of factors heighten the vulnerability of poor population groups in developing countries:

- They are already at greater risk because their life situations (e.g. nutrition and health status) are so much worse than those of wealthier people.
- They are more likely than average to live in regions where the climate today is already extreme.
- Their livelihoods are often based on climate-sensitive natural resources and ecosystem services, particularly agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- They usually have more trouble accessing information (e.g. severe weather warnings).
- They have fewer monetary and material assets and no insurance coverage against the hardships of climate change adaptation and the impacts of extreme weather events.
- They are often insufficiently involved in political processes. This makes it harder for them to access state support before and in the aftermath of natural disasters.

The risk of dangerous emissions reduction

Considered in historical terms, growing affluence has always been very closely linked with high CO_2 emissions. Since the onset of industrialisation, the relationship between prosperity and the burning of fossil fuels has been embedded in our collective historical memory. Without fossil energy sources (and colossal emissions of greenhouse gases), forget prosperity! Quite rightly, especially newly-industrialised countries fear that a drastic climate policy would constrain their scope for economic growth. Therefore, it is unjustifiable to demand that developing countries lower their CO_2 emissions and forego economic growth, while this remains a precondition for the fight against poverty. All the more so since these countries have barely polluted the atmosphere in the past – unlike the industrialised countries – and the per-capita emissions of the industrialised countries are still considerably higher than in all developing and newly-industrialising countries, including China and India.

At the other extreme, catch-up development, where all the developing and newly-industrialised countries emulate the energy-hungry, emissions-intensive economic model of the global north, is no solution because it would unleash unrestrained climate change with unpredictable

consequences for humans and nature. Thus, all countries must step up their energy efficiency and switch to low-carbon energy generation as quickly as possible.

Ten political messages

1) Global cooperation is necessary and possible

In view of the manifold linkages between global poverty and the impacts of climate change, an integrated vision is indispensable. On this basis, a new era of global cooperation needs to begin. This will necessitate binding regulations and fair and transparent processes, in which all stakeholders must be appropriately involved. Countries and their governments are called upon to take a lead here because they bear the political responsibility for such processes. Civil society and the private sector can support these efforts. Linking climate and development policy raises the chances of global cooperation, because it addresses the newly-industrialising and developing countries' concern about economic development.

2) Reducing the vulnerability of developing countries

The Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations refer to key global challenges like poverty reduction, food security, health and education. But even now, there is a danger that the targeted goals will not be achieved. This heightens the vulnerability of people in developing countries to the impacts of climate change. Only detailed studies give enough of a basis to really understand this vulnerability and reduce it. Impacts of climate change will have influence on the vulnerability of poor people, particularly with regard to water supply, food security and the threat to coastal regions. What clearly emerges is that poor population groups in developing countries are subject to multiple disadvantages. For a synergistic climate and development policy, such studies are indispensable in order to facilitate the integrated vision that is called for and to carry out targeted adaptation measures.

3) Human rights and justice as an ethical orientation

Climate change is not just a technical problem. It can only be dealt with if key aspects of equitability are taken into consideration. Therefore, it is essential to have an equitable policy framework which permits developing and newly-industrialising countries to play an active part in climate change mitigation without relinquishing their rightful entitlements to broad-based development. The industrialised countries have a special responsibility in this regard; not so much because they have caused disproportionately more greenhouse gas emissions in the past, but because they have the financial, economic and technical capacities and the necessary political influence that are so vital in order to solve these problems.

Human rights provide a meaningful starting point for ethical considerations. In global politics, these are already a key ethical yardstick for the resolution of global challenges. Taking human rights as a starting point, three dimensions of justice can be identified: the satisfaction of basic needs and the aspiration towards equal opportunities and fair processes. These three interrelated demands provide orientation points for political action towards the necessary global cooperation and towards the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures at national level.

4) Climate change mitigation and development are feasible – a Global Deal with five pillars

The financial and technical challenges of climate change mitigation, adaptation and development can be overcome collectively. However, this requires the international community

to demonstrate the requisite political will and to coordinate its various measures. Any such Global Deal for climate and development must consist of five pillars:

1. Capping, allocation and trading of CO2 emissions allowances
2. Sustainable use of forests
3. Promotion and transfer of climate-smart technologies
4. International support for adaptation
5. Strengthening of development policy

The fundamental prerequisite for these measures is cooperation in a spirit of partnership between industrialised, newly-industrialising and developing countries. With this in mind, all parties should enter into joint obligations, regarding the recognition of human rights, for example, or the negotiation of and adherence to joint targets.

5) Pillar I: Capping, allocation and trading of CO2 emissions allowances

The discharge of emissions into the atmosphere must no longer be permitted free of charge, but must be priced on an international basis. First, a limit must be placed on the total volume of greenhouse gases that may still be emitted. Trading in these restricted emissions allowances then provides a possible means of reducing emissions, accurately and efficiently, to the necessary targets. In addition, it opens up the options for a global redistribution of income, which could also have positive effects on the situation of poor sections of the population in developing countries. The allocation scheme should be structured such that, within a relatively short time-frame, it achieves an equitable per-capita distribution of emissions allowances.

For this aspect in particular, there is a need for effectual global institutions with transparent and democratic decision-making structures. Also necessary are appropriate policy frameworks in both the industrialised and the developing countries. To ensure that the additional money can really promote climate-smart and broad-scale development processes, there must be full disclosure of the funding streams both on the income and expenditure side. Civil society involvement and inspection have an important role to play.

6) Pillar II: Sustainable use of forests

The deforestation of tropical forests contributes about a 20% share of total global emissions. Forests have an important climate protection function because they act as CO2 sinks. At the same time, they are a life-sustaining resource base, not only for people but for a great diversity of different plants and animals. Because forests are important in a number of respects, they must be used sustainably and conserved. The industrialised nations should support newly-industrialising and developing countries in this effort, technically and financially, so that further deforestation and overexploitation of forests can be prevented. Particular attention must be paid to the needs of the local population, especially indigenous groups.

7) Pillar III: Promotion and transfer of climate-smart technologies

The reduction of global emissions calls for new, climate-smart technologies. Only wide-ranging options in this field permit an ambitious level of climate change mitigation. Energy efficiency, renewable energies and the use of biomass have a key role to play. But new technologies such as underground carbon sequestration (carbon capture and storage, CCS) may also make an important contribution. The risks of such new technologies must, however, be evaluated, minimised and weighed up in an open public debate. The costs of emissions in the scope of the proposed emissions trading will not, by themselves, create sufficient incentives to effect the necessary technological step-change. Rather, it is necessary to promote appropriate technologies directly worldwide and drive forward the international transfer of such technologies.

8) Pillar IV: International support for adaptation

Even if emissions are reduced immediately, adverse impacts on the climate are no longer avoidable. Poorer people and countries, who are more exposed to the risks, must be supported in adapting to these negative consequences of climate change. To do so, a variety of measures are needed, from information on regional impacts of climate change, to vulnerability analyses and ultimately financial assistance.

An indispensable tool for this purpose is a sufficiently well-endowed, international adaptation fund – in addition to official development assistance. The scale of payments into such a fund should be determined predominantly by each country's economic capacity. Adaptation financing is necessary in areas of particular climate sensitivity or relevance to poverty reduction. Principal among these are water supply, agriculture, coastal protection and disaster mitigation.

9) Pillar V: Strengthening of development policy

Climate change mitigation and adaptation must not lead us to lose sight of the aims of development policy. Its primary aim remains to promote autonomous development and to strengthen capacity for action. This requires far-reaching reforms, both in the developing countries themselves and in international structures, which cannot be achieved without global cooperation. The prerequisite for this is a globally binding regulatory framework which promotes and supports the economic, political and social processes in the countries concerned. Furthermore, the international community is under an obligation to honour its financial commitments.

10) Broad mobilisation and networking of actors for transformation

The realisation of the Global Deal is reliant on political leadership. Only then can a new era of international cooperation be heralded. The Global Deal can serve as a route map for creating the necessary institutional preconditions and for sharing out the unavoidable burdens as fairly and equitably as possible. To ensure that this happens, a broad alliance of forces in society will be called upon to drive forward the necessary transformation, from churches and non-governmental organisations to the scientific community and innovative businesses. At local, national and global level, alliances should be forged which question habitual attitudes and which, through their personal behaviour and civil society engagement, signal a willingness to support the necessary reforms.

This integrated vision of a Global Deal may well be characterised as utopian, but at least it is a concrete utopia. Unlike an abstract utopia, this vision emphasises that such a utopia is literally within our reach, and hence realistic. Even though it cannot be realised overnight or down to the very last detail, given the monumental challenges ahead it is the only viable option. If every opportunity were taken to plot a consistent course in the right direction, that in itself would be an impressive start. Nothing less is called for than "slow, strong drilling through hard boards, with a combination of passion and a sense of judgment" as Max Weber put it, some 90 years ago. Reengaging on this task would be tantamount to conceding defeat.

Back

Degradation of the earth and the poor – the facts

Allen Kazimierz Ottaro*

Reducing the gap between the rich and the poor being one of the main priorities in the world today, the eradication of poverty and environmental sustainability are of critical importance to the realization of that goal. The effort and time expended by the United Nations on this issue notwithstanding, there is still a long way to go.

In the year 2000, leaders of more than 189 countries gathered at the United Nations headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration. In adopting the Declaration resolutions, the world leaders reiterated their commitment to enhancing poverty eradication efforts, environmental sustainability, human rights and democracy. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are thought to be both, the most broadly supported comprehensive goals and the most specific development goals the world has ever agreed upon, aimed at tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions, taking account of the complex ways in which it manifests itself[1]. The MDGs are essentially the culmination of development conferences held in the 1990s, most notably the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), popularly known as the '*Earth Summit,*' a process begun two decades earlier at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE),held in 1972 in Stockholm. The latter was the outcome of what was then viewed as rapid degradation of the environment caused by technological advancement, especially in the industrialized nations. Participants at the Stockholm Conference stressed that human welfare was greatly in danger given that the life-carrying capacity of the natural environment was declining. Principle 6 of the UNCHE declaration expressly states that, "The discharge of toxic substances or of other substances and the release of heat in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of the environment to render them harmless must be halted in order to ensure that serious or irreversible damage is not inflicted upon ecosystems. The just struggle of the peoples of all countries against pollution should be supported"[2]. In developing countries, the concerns revolved around the effects of severe soil erosion, declining productivity of agricultural land and aquatic systems, poor crop yields, increased water scarcity and long distances to be traversed to collect fuel wood. Principle 5 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development also sought to prioritize poverty eradication by stating: "All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world"[3].

Despite the time, effort and resources devoted to the twin subjects of poverty and environmental degradation and knowledge gained over decades, the outlook remains bleak. The persistence of

---

* Independent Environmental Consultant and intern at the African Jesuit Aids Network.

1 United Nations Development Programme. Millennium Development Goals. 2010. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>. Accessed: 17 October 2010

2 United Nations Environment Program. "Stockholm 1972-Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment-United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)." 16 June 1972. United Nations Environment Program. <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503>. Accessed: 27 October 2010

3 United Nations Environment Programme. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. 14 June 1992. <http://www.un-documents.net/rio-dec.htm>. Accessed: 17 October 2010

global poverty is both disturbing and humbling. Policy makers have long recognized the moral and practical need to address the huge numbers of people who lack such basic amenities as adequate nutrition, housing, education and opportunity. The World Bank Strategy for Rural Development, 2003, observes that, "More than a half century of persistent efforts by the World Bank and others have not altered the stubborn reality of rural poverty, and the gap between rich and poor is widening"[4].

Over this period of time the nexus between poverty and environmental degradation has continued to evolve.

According to the World Resources Institute Report, 2005, about 75 percent of the poor live in rural areas despite the global trend toward urbanization. Even twenty years from now, 60 percent of the poor are expected to live outside of cities. While urban ecosystems such as parks, waterways, and green spaces provide important services, it is rural ecosystems that provide the bulk of the goods and services on which humans depend for survival[5].

The United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. In May 2010, the third Global Biodiversity Outlook report, documenting the state of the world's biodiversity, was launched. It passed a damning verdict on the failure to stem biodiversity loss in the world. " The target agreed by the world's Governments in 2002, 'to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth', has not been met"[6].

The poor depend on biological resources for as much as 90 percent of their livelihood needs, and the loss of biodiversity compromises the income and livelihood of poor people in all regions, more especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The poorest regions of the world are also experiencing significant ecosystem degradation. Haiti, a country that was once fully forested, has lost 97 percent of its forest cover and is ranked as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 65 percent of Haitians living on less than a dollar a day. The country not only has the highest rates of infant, under-five and maternal mortality in the Western Hemisphere (with diarrhea as one of the leading causes of death), but 90 percent of its children are chronically infected with intestinal parasites acquired from the water they drink. This tragic situation is linked to the loss of a rich ecosystem, which meant adequate rainfall, prevention of soil erosion, and water purification, all provided by forests[7].

Natural disasters such as droughts, floods and other climate-related effects have of late increased in intensity and frequency across the world, significantly reducing development gains targeted at raising living standards of the most vulnerable. According to Dr. Balgis Osman-Elasha, "53 per cent of African disasters are climate-related, and one-third of African people live in drought-prone areas, and yields from water-fed agriculture in Africa could be down by 50 per cent by the year 2020.[8]" The effects of these disasters have clearly been shown to affect the poor most disproportionately. In rich countries, the average number of deaths per disaster is 23, while

[4] World Resources Institute. World Resources 2005: The Wealth of the Poor-Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty. (Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, 2005), 11.
[5] Ibid., p.12.
[6] Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Global Biodiversity Outlook 3. Montreal: (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010), 9.
[7] Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2009). Biodiversity, Development and Poverty Alleviation: Recognizing the Role of Biodiversity for Human Well-being. Montreal: (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2009), 15.
[8] Oxfam International. "Suffering the Science: Climate Change, People and Poverty." 6 July 2009. Oxfam International. <http://www.oxfam.org/files/bp130-suffering-the-science-summary.pdf>. Retrieved: 29 October 2010

in the poorest the average is 1052. When the Hanshin earthquake struck Japan in 1995, it claimed the lives of some 6000 people while in 2005, the Kashmir earthquake in Pakistan, measuring about the same on the Richter scale, claimed 75000 lives – 12 times as many – despite the fact that the earthquake affected areas had much lower levels of population density[9]. Behind these statistics are actual experiences of suffering and destruction, as summed-up by a father of six children and rice farmer, Sedye Desir, in the town of Anse-a-Veaux, who survived Haiti's 2008 hurricanes;

"During the hurricane there was flooding that covered the rice crop – 2 or 3 meters deep. I lost my crop, I lost a lot of money, we had a lot of mud and my house was destroyed. Now we are living in misery and we don't have enough food. This year has been the worst. There was a drought before which destroyed the sorghum. When we were young it was better, we used to have a lot to eat."[10]

Water, that simple yet perfect substance, is the source of life on Earth. Its countless uses allow for our flourishing biodiversity, while its sameness everywhere connects us with the rest of the living world around us. Water is in itself a living process-with the same molecules cycling through their different phases to sustain life[11]. Put simply, water is life; and a crisis of water resources is, therefore, a direct threat to life. However, issues of equity (accessibility, availability and affordability) in water supply are not simple or perfect. While for many of us, potable water can be obtained at any time of day or night just by turning on a faucet, more than one in six people worldwide do not have access to their daily requirement of safe, fresh water[12].

Estimates show that 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity by 2025, and two-thirds of the world's population could experience stress regarding water. The use of water has also grown rapidly, with about 70 percent in irrigation, 22 percent in industry and 8 percent for domestic use. Despite the clear importance of this resource, we continue to mistreat this reservoir of life. Up to about 2 million tons of human waste are dumped into watercourses each day, and 70 percent of industrial waste is dumped untreated into waters, polluting the usable water supply[13]. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) argues in its Human Development Report of 2006, that the global water crisis is not caused by absolute shortages of physical supply, but is due rather to inequality, poverty and flawed water management policies. It goes on to list delivery of clean water, removing waste water and providing sanitation as three of the most basic foundations for human progress. While scarcity as a result of environmental degradation is a widespread problem, it is not experienced by all. The crisis in water and sanitation is above all a crisis for the poor. In developing countries, the poorest people not only get access to less water, but they also pay some of the world's highest prices. For example, people living in the slums of Jakarta, Manila and Nairobi pay 5 to 10 times more for water per unit than those in high income areas of their own cities---and more than consumers pay in London or New York[14]. This is clearly a situation of injustice and neglect by those in charge of policy-making and implementation, a fact that is startlingly clear when you consider that closing the gap between current trends and target trends for achieving the Millennium Development Goal for water and sanitation would result in

[9] Ibid., p.33.

[10] Ibid., p.32.

[11] Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Water, Wetlands and Forests: A Review of Ecological, Economic and Policy Linkages. Montreal: (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 2010), 7.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Watkins, Kevin, et al. Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power. Poverty and the Global Water Crisis. New York: (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 16.

some 203,000 fewer child deaths in 2015 and more than 1 million children's lives saved over the next decade[15].

Pope Benedict XVI in his 2010 Message for the World Day of Peace, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," says that "a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person." [16]Environmental degradation and poverty reduction, need therefore to be taken together and tackled by deliberately integrating the relevant concerns and the voices of the poor. Poverty-blind conservation measures can be counter-productive as they may end up trapping the poor and condemn them to eke out a living from resources of low productivity.

[15] Ibid., p.17.

[16] XVI, Pope Benedict. Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 2010. 2009. <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html>. Retrieved: 14 October 2010

Back

The Earth's Poor - the Most Endangered Species

Siji Varghese SJ

Environmental degradation and poverty are strictly related to each other. The logic that exploits classes and subjects peoples to the interests of a few rich and powerful countries is the same logic that devastates the Earth and plunders its wealth, showing no solidarity with the rest of humankind and future generations.

One day, while browsing through the periodicals, I came across an issue of *Frontline* magazine. The cover had a picture of a woman wailing, while her young boy stood beside her, holding a photo of his father. Unable to repay the mounting debt caused by failed crops in a season of extreme drought, he had committed suicide. The cover story titled *Death Trap* portrayed the agonies of hundreds of many other debt-ridden farmers' families left desolate in Andhra Pradesh because their men folk could no longer bear the misery. The lead article also highlighted the tragic story of 26 debt-ridden farmers who had sold their kidneys to keep their families going. A recent issue of the same magazine *(September 8, 2006)* with a cover page *Withering Lives* on farmers' suicides in Maharashtra brought out the shocking fact that every eight hours a poor farmer kills himself with climatic change leading to crop failure and the debt trap closing in on him. According to official figures, the number of farmers who have committed suicide in India between 1997-2007 is 182,936; and as many as 8 million people quit farming between the two censuses of 1991 and 2001 *(P. Sainath, The Largest Wave of Suicide in History in Counter Punch, Feb 12, 2009)*.

Too Poor to Stay Alive

A third of the world's population lives in multidimensional poverty *(MPI, UNDP, July 14, 2010)*. With environmental degradation the number of hungry people in the world is rapidly increasing. About 923 million people across the world go hungry, a sign of the direst form of poverty. Each year more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive. Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related diseases - one child every five seconds! The tragedy is that about 90% of the world's hungry people live in South Asia and Africa. More than 50 percent of them are farmers engaged in producing food for the world.

Two–fifths of infant mortality is linked with unhealthy environment, and about 1.7 million premature deaths may be attributed to unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene. Five to six million people, mostly children, die every year due to air pollution and waterborne diseases. According to World Bank and WHO studies, every year an estimated 3 million people die prematurely from water-related diseases and 2 million die from exposure to stove smoke in homes. Preventing environmental risk could save the lives of four million children.

Climatic changes: a wrath on women and children

There are over 45 million refugees and displaced persons in the world today, 80% are women and children (GC 34, D. 3). According to Vandana Shiva, an Environmental Activist, in India alone, over 50-60 million people have been deprived of their livelihood by developmental projects since independence. At least 20% Dalits and another 20% are often landless poor like the

fishing communities. 40% are tribals who are a little over 8% of the country's population. The tribals are made environmental prisoners in their own land.

Water, known today as 'blue gold', has become the greatest problem of the 21st century. At present, about 20% of the world's population does not have access to safe drinking water and 40% does not have sufficient water for adequate living and hygiene. The UN rates 26 countries with a population of 232 million people as having water-scarcity. More than 2.2 million people die each year from drinking contaminated water and living in unhygienic living conditions, and most often the victims are the poor. Every three minute a poor child in India dies of diarrhea arising out of contaminated water *(CSE-Centre for Science and Environment, Delhi).* In this given situation women, though guardians of water and land resources, bear a disproportionate part of the burden of water scarcity, water pollution and natural resource depletion. According to a study done by UNICEF and WWF, poor rural women and girls in India spend up to eight hours a day fetching water, and collecting fuel and fodder. With such constraints it is usually the girls who are forced to remain uneducated.

Climatic Chaos

Climatic change is the biggest threat facing humankind today. With the onset of extreme weather events, many diseases have become widespread, and climate change is used as a weapon in the political battle between rich and poor countries. This increases the impact on the plight of the poor. With a rise of half a degree of the world's temperature, the average temperature will approach the highest level in the ten thousand years since the last ice age. With the melting of glaciers, the global sea level has risen by 10-25 centimeters. People in low-lying areas like Bangladesh live in fear of severe floods. Islands like the Maldives face the threat of being swallowed up by the sea. A one-meter rise at the sea level may displace about 7.1 million people in India along the 6000 km of its densely populated coastal line, most of the victims being the very poor.

Global warming has already started ringing alarm bells as many parts of India reel under conditions of drought and the Gangotri glacier in the Himalayas retreats at a speed of about 30 meters a year. Three months ago the Bihar Government in India declared all 38 districts drought-hit as the state recorded a deficit of nearly 25 percent of rain this year. Nearly 50% of the state's 83 million people live the Below Poverty Line and depend on agriculture for their survival (*NDTV News 3, Nov 2010)*. On the other hand, if global warming continues, there will be excess water flowing in the rivers, of which the 'Koshi floods' in India is a clear example. In the latest Bihar Floods, 20 million people were affected, most of them poor. The winter now arrives late in certain parts of the world and spring is two weeks early. In the course of the last 30 years, the North Indian winter has become substantially shorter, coming down from five months to just two months. Changes in temperature and rainfall directly affect agriculture and food security. Most developing economies are heavily dependent on climatically sensitive sectors like, agriculture, forestry and fishing. The poor and developing nations with over 65% of their population depending on agriculture are worst affected by climate change. Today farmers in India are realizing that they can no longer depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Facing the changing climate, farmers are not able to predict the weather as they used to do once; nor can they plan their crops accordingly. For example, the mango trees in Orissa in India generally begins to flower in November while Mahua trees flower in February. Now in most places, both mango and *Mahua* trees are bearing flowers in September. Last summer an average of seven farmers killed themselves each day due to crop failure caused by climatic changes.

Back

The Earth's Poor the most threatened species

Perhaps, the most threatened creatures today are not only whales and tigers, but also the poor, condemned to die before their time due to growing environmental degradation. Ironically, unlike other extinct species, the death toll among the poor is increasing, as nature is their life line. When the environment is degraded or their access to natural resources limited or denied, their very lives are under threat. This is reiterated by Warren Evans: "Poor people are the first to suffer from a polluted environment….Environmental health risks – such as polluted water, insufficient sanitation, indoor and outdoor air pollution, chemicals exposure, and the impacts of climate change – significantly influence the well-being of millions of poor people." *(Warren Evans, Director of the WB's Environment Department).*

We are witnessing water, forest and lands, the very bases of survival and the source of livelihood for the poor who comprise two-thirds of the world's population, being commodified, privatized and colonized, causing further destruction to the environment. Today, for many people around the world, the environmental crisis is already a matter of survival, for themselves and for their children. Dalits, whose lives have been subjected to social and cultural oppression for generations, now face new threats posed by the wanton destruction of the environment. Leonardo Boff said that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. According to him, "Liberation Theology and ecological discourse have something in common. They start from two bleeding wounds. The wound of poverty breaks the social fabric of millions of poor… the other wound, systematic assault of the earth. Both, their reflection and practice have as their starting point in a cry… the cry of the poor for life, freedom and beauty (Ex 3:7) and the cry of the Earth groaning under oppression (Rom 8:22-23) " *(Leonardo Boff in Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor).* Unfortunately, the human community is ignoring this most disturbing cry. The Bishops of the Philippines have one of the most significant documents on environmental issues titled, *What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land* in which they say*:* "Our farmers tell us that their fields are less productive and are becoming sterile. Our fishermen are finding it extremely difficult to catch fish. Our land, forests and rivers cry out that they are being eroded, denuded and polluted." Ignoring the cry of the earth is the ignoring the cry of the poor.

Eco-Justice: An Integral Element in our option for the poor

The mission of establishing an eco-just society may be viewed in the light of the Society of Jesus' mission of the service of faith where promotion of justice is an absolute requirement (GC 32, D.4, # 8). In this context the Society's option for the poor is expressed through concern for protecting the environment from degradation. The GCs state the mission for eco-justice thus: "Preserving the **integrity** of creation underlies growing concern for the environmen**t.** Ecological equilibrium and a sustainable, equitable use of the world's resources are important elements of justice" (GC 34, D.3,#58). It goes on to speak of a sustainable community as "a sustainable, respectful **interrelation** between diverse peoples, cultures, the environment and the living God in our midst" (GC 34, # 59). The cry from wounded Mother Earth, caused by unprecedented ruination of her environment through loss of bio-diversity, desertification, global warming, pollution and widespread displacement of people caused by ill-conceived developmental initiatives, echoes across the universe (GC35, D3/33).

Our commitment to help establish right relationships, invites us to see the world from the perspective of the poor and the marginalized, learning from them, acting with and for them.

Back

The Earth Counts on Us

We live in an age of uncertainty, an age that evokes both a sense of hope and one of deep concern. Perhaps at one time most of us were not convinced about the protection of the environment so integral to our life. But today the scientific findings and data invite us to pause and reflect, leading to the healing of our wounded planet, our home. The option for the poor cannot be complete without caring for the environment. If option for the poor is central to the Society's mission, one cannot remain indifferent and lukewarm to what happens to the environment.

Though the poor are the worst victims, all of us, poor and rich, share the same fate. Our anthropocentric development and consumerist life-style, the offshoots of human greed, are at the root of this crisis. We are in need of a spirituality that cares for Mother Earth, and we can learn it from the spirituality and life style of the poor and the indigenous people, perhaps the most eco-friendly people of all, a spirituality of 'contributing' and 'caring' rather than consuming. We need to rediscover our identity as members of the earth community, as earth citizens assuming our role as stewards of God's creation.

The whole of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius has cosmological and ecological dimensions and implications for the mission of establishing right relationships with Mother Earth. In the contemplation to attain love each of us is send out to the world to find God in all things and to spread the same message of the Spirit unfolding in the whole of creation. Mother Earth counts on each of us. Jesus' mission was to preach the good news to the poor and to liberate the oppressed as expressed in his 'manifesto' (Lk 4: 18). Being fervent carriers of this mission, let us shoulder the responsibility to act as ecological prophets of liberation and reconciliation. It is time to act together. "Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does it to himself". (Chief Seattle 1854).

Back

Reconnecting Our Web of Right Relations

Gabriel Lamug Nañawa SJ

In the past the relation between mankind and Creation was right and equitable, but today our insatiable consumerist habits and other stresses, like increasing population and overharvesting of natural resources, are having a devastating impact on Creation. The lives of all those who depend upon the earth itself are in peril, most especially the poor.

"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love... and then we return home." --Aboriginal Australian proverb

"The drive to access and exploit sources of energy and other natural resources is very rapidly widening the damage to earth, air, water and our whole environment... particularly to the poor." --#33, Dec 3, GC35

In the recent past, unexplained changes in the weather, in the movement of the seas, or the disappearance of species were thought to be natural phenomena caused by actions of the divine. We can, however, no longer ignore the fact that the continuously increasing human population, ever-expanding economies, our insatiable consumerist habits, and all this within the finite limits of the earth, have made us human beings a force of nature, a super-species whose actions have a deleterious impact on the rest of creation. The inertia of these forces has strained our relationships with each other, with the rest of creation, and with God. And it is the poor (the majority in the world) who are the most vulnerable to these impacts and least capable of avoiding them. Below are two stories of people whose web of relations is being torn apart, as is happening with so many of the poor today.

Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia

The first thing Tong does early in the morning is to go fishing with his father. Tan Tong, who migrated from Vietnam with his family when he was a young boy, has lived most of his twenty seven years in Chnuk Tru, one of the floating villages on the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia. Tong's life and the lives of the fish in the lake are intimately intertwined. He catches fish every day, eats fish every day, and smells of fish nearly every day. However, like many other families who depend on the lake for sustenance and survival, their confidence in, and relationship with the lake has been slowly changing.

Located at the heart of the Cambodian landscape, the Tonle Sap Lake is the largest freshwater lake in largest flood forest in South East Asia. It is connected to the Mekong River, a 4,200km-long river rising in the Tibetan plateau and flowing through China, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam. During the wet season, water from the Mekong River rushes into the Tonle Sap Lake, increasing its water surface area from about 2,500 km^2 during the dry season to about 15,000 km^2. The flood waters bring nutrients and sediments to bordering rice fields, and also open up breeding sites for fish in mangrove forests. A large body of shallow, warm and brightly illuminated water provides the conditions for rapid algal growth upon which the other organisms of the ecosystem can depend. Due to its rhythm of annual flooding that results in productivity, around 3 million people can depend on the Tonle Sap Lake for their daily food and livelihood.

One of the greatest threats, however, to the productivity of the lake and the people who depend on it comes from the installation of big hydroelectric dams along the mainstream of the Mekong River. Apparently without consulting the nations downstream, China has already built 3 dams on the mainstream, with one under construction, and 4 more being planned. At the same time, Thailand, Lao PDR, and even Cambodia itself have their own plans for hydroelectric dams along the Mekong River. Many people fear that the dams can significantly alter the rhythm, quantity and quality of the water flowing downstream, and consequently, the quantity and quality of the crops growing on the surrounding floodplains and the quantity and quality of fish harvested from the Tonle Sap Lake.

Additional stresses, like a rapidly rising population and the overharvesting of forest wood and aquatic animals, have compounded the problem of smaller less catches for everyone. The larger fish species are gone, the fish size is getting smaller, and fish catch is much less than before. Tong now only catches fish 2-3 cm long, to grow in a fish pen underneath his family's floating house. And they have started catching other animals for food, such as water snakes and field rats. Because their situation has become more and more difficult, he and his family are now considering returning to Vietnam, as many families have done in recent months.

In Thailand and Lao PDR, the Mekong River is called *Mae Nam Khong*, meaning 'mother – water – things'. The Mekong River has been regarded by generations as the mother who is the source of many things. Perhaps we are taking too much from our mother, so much so as to imperil her health and the lives of the poor who depend on her.

Aboriginal land, Australia

The Aboriginal peoples of Australia have been around for a long time. Archaeologists say that they have lived in Australia for at least 65,000 years. The population of Indigenous Australians was estimated to be between 318,000 and 750,000 in 1788 when the British first arrived. Today, Aboriginal Australians number about 465,480 or about 2.25% of the national population[17]. Around one-third (31%) live in major cities, while the majority (69%) live in regional or remote areas. Over the past decade, research on health, employment, and life expectancy has led to the conclusion that Indigenous Australians are still the most disadvantaged sector in the country[18].

Uncle Ralph is an Aboriginal Australian from the Girramay tribe and now lives on Palm Island, northeast Queensland. He is a respected elder of the community. Like many elders, Uncle Ralph likes telling stories, and on one occasion spoke of the Dreamtime, a mystical story of how the world began.

In the time before time, the surface of the earth was a dark, cold, bare plain with no sign of any form of life. The earth was featureless and desolate, with no life and no death. However, below the earth slept the sun, the moon and the stars, and all the eternal ancestors. Time began when the ancestors awoke and broke through the surface, the earth flooding with light as the sun too arose from the earth. The eternal ancestors began to wander across the earth, sometimes in animal forms such as kangaroos, emus, and lizards, changing the features of the land as they went along. Two such beings were the Ungambikula, who in their wanderings found half-made human beings, shapeless bundles made of plants or animals. Using great stone knives, the Ungambikula carved out human heads, arms, and legs, completing the form of human beings. Thus, every man and woman was transformed from nature and is indebted to the totem of the plant or animal from which they were carved. After doing all this work, the eternal ancestors went back into the earth to sleep, perhaps to awake and walk the earth once again.

[17] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population Distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006.
[18] "Power, culture, economy: Indigenous Australians and mining", Australian Policy Online, 2 March 2010.

This story makes comprehensible the respect and great regard and the intimate bond between Aboriginal Australians and their land. The earth is the source of life and identity, it is the womb from which they came and the tomb towards which they are headed.

This kind of spirituality does not go down very well in a country which is determined to maximize its mining industry. Australian mining is very big business. Seven of the top ten export products of Australia are from mining (coal, iron ore, gold, natural gas, crude petroleum, aluminum ore, and aluminum)[19]. In fact, Australia is the world's leading exporter of coal, belching out 259 million tons per year, and cornering a share of 31.5% of the top seven coal exporters in the world[20].

All too often, mining corporations are not bearers of good tidings for Aboriginal communities. Around 60% of all mining operations in the country are located on land owned or managed by Aboriginal communities[21]. Mining breaks the earth with big machines, clearing natural habitats and forests, sometimes burrowing into mountains, consuming them it until they disappear. The very nature of mining involves risks of erosion, sedimentation, chemical contamination, among several others, not to mention the huge contribution to global climate change through the emission of more greenhouse gases which the use of coal necessarily entails. Allan Carriage, an elder of the Wadi Wadi tribe and a traditional owner of the Woronora Plateau, laments:

The open cast coal mines of the Hunter Valley and elsewhere have created gaping sores on our landscapes for long periods of time which often affect our rivers. The mining industry boasts of the amount of rock which will be removed and the minerals which they can profit from, even the size of the holes they will dig... The government does not recognize the importance of the long term damage to the rain forests, creeks, estuaries and waterways of Australia's indigenous people[22].

Uncle Ralph too was forced out of his land, taken long ago to settlements allotted for Aboriginal Australians. His plight is not unlike that of thousands of other Indigenous Australians whose relationship with the earth has been severed. They are lost without this relationship, displaced and dispossessed. They are alienated from the land, from their divine ancestors, and consequently, from themselves.

Let us then reconstruct our web of right relations. This is a mission for all peoples, children all of God our Creator. Let us reconnect with God the true vine, and not fall victim to the inventions of our economics and market forces. And remember that we are just visitors in this time, this place, here to learn and to love, before returning home.

[19] Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Publication: Composition of Trade, 2009.
[20] World Coal Institute, Coal Market and Transportation Report, 2009.
[21] "Backlash At Aboriginal Mining Loss", The Age, 8 December 2008.
[22] Allan Carriage, Aboriginal Heritage, http://www.aboriginal-land-rights.com/

Back

Growth of World Population: At the Crest of a Hill

Lluis Recolons SJ

After pointing out the verifiable changes in the evolution of population growth between the second half of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st, this article has also given evidence of how, from one century to the next, there has been a change in the positions and policies related to questions of population and ecology.

As we come to the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the years when world population was growing explosively may still seem near, but they are now past history. This is true both in relative terms (2.02% annual increase in the half-decade 1965-70), and in absolute terms (88.8 million more inhabitants annually in the half-decade 1985-90). Since then the percentage of annual increase in world population has declined steadily and rapidly, while the absolute increase has also diminished, although until now more slowly. In the most recent half-decade, 2005-10, data indicate a rate of increase of world population of 1.18% and an absolute increase of 79.3 million more persons each year.[23]

This evolution is taking place within a long historical process of transition from one demographic cycle to another. In this **demographic transition** the slow increase that was characteristic of world populations for centuries[24] has given way to the accelerated growth of recent times. The process began with a decrease in the death rate and later continued with a decrease in the birth rate. Historically, the sustained decline in the death rate began in England during the 18th century, and the sustained decline in the birth rate began in France during the 19th century. The great increases in population take place in the intermediate phases: during the ascendant intermediate phase the number of births far exceeds the number of deaths, whereas in the descending intermediate phase the difference between birth rate and death rate decreases. Thus, after years of great population increases, the demographic transition comes to an end, and the situation returns to its initial state, where population increase is reduced or non-existent. The difference is that before the transition there were both high birth rates and high death rates, while at the end of the transition both rates are lowered. This is a very sketchy description of the processes of demographic transition. Naturally, the reality is more complex and nuanced, and there are exceptions. However, without entering into the many interesting theoretical debates, the above account may be taken as a general introduction to what has been happening.

Between 1950 and 2000 world population went from 2.529 billion to 6.115 billion people. At the global level, **the great population increases took place in the second half of the 20th century** because it was during those years that most of the nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa entered fully into the critical stages of their respective demographic transitions. Those nations of themselves included some 80% of the world population. For their part, the populations of Europe saw their demographic transition come to an end during this same period.

For the long-term future, still fairly distant, the probability is that **in the course of the 21st century the world population will achieve a situation of stability,** thus bringing to a close the

[23] The statistical data of this essay are taken directly or are deduced from a publication of the United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects. The 2008 Revision* (accessible on-line).

[24] Of course there can be momentary oscillations that turn out to be quite impressive. Think, for example, of the great mortality caused by wars, epidemics, and famines, which are often followed by years of exceptional increase in the number of births.

demographic transition on a global level. In fact, among the various scenarios presented in the United Nations report we are using (see note 1), the low estimate forecasts negative growth for world population starting in the half-decade 2040-45, while the medium and high estimates predict later dates for the start of negative growth. According to the UN data, world population reached **6.830 billion inhabitants in the year 2009.** Even if growth rates keep decreasing, the world population could still reach 9.150 billion in the year 2050, according to the medium estimate. Even now, a significant portion of the world population lives in conditions of extreme poverty, and the planet is suffering serious ecological deterioration. If serious measures are not taken to remedy this situation, then the addition of two billion more persons in the world will cause tremendous problems in terms of worsening living conditions and destruction of the environment.

Evolving positions

The magnitude and complexity of the topic involves many diverse aspects: ecological, economic, demographic, cultural, social, political, …. and ethical. Such a situation has in turn produced a variety of positions and policies. Just as the reality of present growth rates differs from the reality of earlier years, so also there has been a shift in the positions and political decisions affecting the tense relationship between the human population and ecology. There has been a change of emphasis with regard to one or another of the various aspects, but most public opinion is still influenced by the positions enunciated in earlier years.

Among the many instances that influenced public opinion during the second half of the 20th century and made people conscious of the gravity of the problem, we would especially mention *The Limits of Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind,* a book whose ideas were widely disseminated after the book's appearance in 1972.

Of the various countries that have implemented population policies, **the case of India** is especially significant, although other countries with authoritarian regimes, such as China, have surpassed India, a democratic country, in imposing strict birth control programmes with greater pressure and for longer periods of time. A critical assessment of the population control policies of India was offered by the then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, in his inaugural address to the 21st International Population Congress of the IUSSP[25] on September 20, 1989,[26] in Delhi. There follow, in italics, some interesting quotes from that discourse:

"In 1951 India became the first country in the world to have a programme of family planning officially sponsored by the government. A cruel paradox is that in the 10-year period 1971-81 the growth of population in India was the highest that until then had ever been recorded in the history of the country" (p. 19).

In 1976, during the government of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, a campaign of population control was launched; it involved aggressive measures and strict enforcement, a policy which produced a lasting negative image among the Indian people.

It is significant that it was precisely the eldest son and successor of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister of India who stated in 1989:

[25] International Union for the Scientific Study of Population**,** "Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Inaugural Address," in *International Population Conference*, *Vol. 4*, New Delhi, 1989, pp.19-24.

[26] This was only fifty days before November 9th, 1989, the historic date of the fall of the Berlin wall. In December of that same year, Rajiv Gandhi ceased to be Prime Minister of India as a result of the elections. In 1991, in the course of a new electoral campaign, Rajiv was assassinated, just as his mother, Indira Gandhi, had been in 1984.

"The most important lesson that we and the world have learned in the last four decades is that the response to population growth is not to be found in any simplistic or mechanical attempts to bring birth rates down level with the death rate. … It is more realistic to consider that it is the relation between development and its impact on the people that will determine the success or failure of family planning programmes.

Successful family planning is such an intensely personal and private matter that the most that government agencies can do is to contribute to increasing people's awareness, creating an 'ethos,' and making the necessary means accessible, but the success of the programme depends on the private personal decisions of a vast number of individual human beings." (p. 23)

In Europe the proposals offered for population policies aim basically at four objectives:

- Increasing births by means of policies that help birth rates to approximate the levels needed for generational replacement.[27]

- Making women's work compatible with maternity (and men's work compatible with paternity), in conditions in which those who decide to have children and devote time to their upbringing do not find themselves at a great social and professional disadvantage.

- Welcoming immigrants properly and facilitating their integration into society, so that, despite the depth of the present crisis, they will continue to come in future decades, since the demographic prospect for Europe indicates a steady demand for a denser population.

- Responding appropriately and creatively to the increase in life expectancy and to the extension of people's working lives beyond what was formerly the normal age of retirement.

Since we are already into the 21st century, we would do well to ponder the significance of the words of the president of the principal international academic institution for the scientific study of populations, when he proclaimed as common knowledge what professor Jacques Vallin had said on July 18, 2005, in his opening discourse at the 25th International Population Congress in Tours: *"It is well known that the world's demographic landscape has changed. The decrease in fecundity has everywhere approached the decrease in mortality, which as you known has led to unprecedented increases in population. In a word, the great fear of a population explosion has vanished."*[28] The fact that this expression, "demographic explosion," which for decades resounded with great impact in the media, has faded into obsolescence is something that has not yet seeped into major spheres of public opinion; nevertheless, in a world which is advancing toward demographic stability, it has already lost its grounds for being repeated.[29]

The Church on questions of population and ecology: From the 20th century to the 21st

The dynamic we have described for world population and the evolution of population policies is being worked out over the long term. The coercive population policies of the second half of the

[27] In Europe, during the half-decade 2005-10, the rate of fecundity has been 1.50 children per woman. The generational replacement rate is calculated to be 2.1 children per woman.

[28] *"La grande peur de l'explosion demographique s'est evanouie"*. From the original French text, available at: http://www.iusp.org/France2005/opening ceremonyfr.php. The English version can be found at: http://www.iussp.org/France2005/openingceremony.php.

[29] In fact, the very graphic expression, "population explosion," was not really adequate in past years for explaining the complexity of the process of demographic transition, but it is even less so now, when growth rates are declining, than it was when they were increasing.

20th century are not going to disappear all at once.[30] At the global level, however, it is foreseeable that there will be a lessening of the Church's focus on defending the couple's free decision against authoritarian dictates of governments, since there is likely to be a decrease in policies of this type and the change in population growth rates will be seen more clearly.

In the **second half of the 20th century,** there were frequent and important pronouncements of the Church's magisterium on social and political matters, making reference to a variety of aspects of social and political life.[31] With regard to population policies, what has most resonated in society have been the strong, constant positions taken in defence of human life, in reaction to the coercive measures involving persons and couples.

At the same time, there is a widely held idea that there is an indiscriminate equalizing of all that is condemned, whether it be abortion, artificial contraception, or sterilization. Moreover, no consideration seems to be given to differences in the phases of life or to the personal and social conditions in which they take place. Some of the more aggressive defenders of the Pro-Life movement, as well as others, argue that the anthropology underlying such a position forms a single whole, and that making distinctions would risk opening up a dangerous breach, and they have been presenting these positions, which lack adequate discernment, as the authentic expression of Church doctrine. This has been counterproductive.

The crest of the hill of population growth, as described above, offers the Church a significant role to play in the 21st century, since the Church is one of the major players in the struggle for a habitable planet. We are facing a task in which humankind's survival is at stake. The question is whether we are able to live in a way that respects the integral diversity of nature and guarantees a truly human quality of life for the whole of the earth's population. This is a gigantic task which demands decisive changes in our ways of producing, consuming, and enjoying the planet, and affects many different but interconnected aspects: social, economic, demographic, political, ecological, cultural, medical, etc.

Being faithful to its Christian mission and having a major role to play, the Church is capable of proposing with clarity the values which will motivate people to the resolute and constant promotion of these objectives, which often meet up with powerful resistance, whether openly or covertly.

The message of **Benedict XVI** for the World Day of Peace 2010, "If you want to promote peace, protect creation," gives evidence of the need for "a profound revision of our development model, with a view toward the future" (ibid., no. 5). Effective action in pursuit of these objectives is an enormous task which encounters now, and will continue to encounter, strong resistance to any effort to implement the necessary changes. Firm determination to advance decisively toward those objectives means counting on the support of those many actors – including the different religions – which are moving in the direction of solidarity with humankind and respect for the natural world.

[30] Some countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, have still not declined much from their maximum rates of demographic growth; others, like China, when reviewing their population policies, have difficulty in relaxing the coercive character of their whole system.

[31] Second Vatican Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, 1962; encyclicals and other documents of John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, as well as documents from episcopal offices around the world.

Back

A Jesuit is someone who…

Joseph Oduor Afulo SJ

The African point of view on issues related to environmental degradation is given here and suggestions made for changes in the daily behavioural patterns of the African communities. Jesuits are called upon to promote environmental conservation.

Promotio Iustitiae interviewed Father Joseph Oduor Afulo SJ, Formation Assistant for East Africa Province, on his views of ecology in an African context.

PJ: What is your main concern when you think about the environment these days?

JOA: When thinking about ecology, something that always leaves me wondering is the extent to which we are aware of the effect of our actions on the environment around us. This includes caring for our living areas, our food, our use of water, heating system and vehicles.

For example, in our African context, disposal of human and animal-waste can be *beneficial* or *harmful* to people. Human and animal wastes are used to generate biogas for cooking or lighting, and the by-products are applied in the farms as organic fertilizer, thus maximizing the benefits.

PJ: From an African perspective, what are the major justice concerns related to environmental degradation?

JOA: A Jesuit is expected to examine what he eats and the means of production of his food, for such awareness is connected to justice for the workers. The Jesuit needs to circumvent prevailing conditions to identify and challenge existing unjust structures and the perpetrators of these. He will examine the means of food processing with the objective of eliminating unhealthy additives, encourage responsible disposal of waste without compromising environmental health, and ensure that the profit-margin of the producers and vendors do not harm the consumer. While consuming the food products, the Jesuits ought to remember, "The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light" (Luke 16:8).

Most common diseases that affect humanity, especially the poor of our society, are attributed to poor environmental conditions. The majority of the world's population, especially in the rural areas of the developing countries, does not have access to clean water. Though organizations try to strike water by building dams and sinking boreholes, the poor find themselves trapped between slow death through consumption of contaminated water and dehydration due to lack of water.

Lakes and rivers are polluted with raw, untreated industrial effluents, which when discharged, go directly to the water source; this is hazardous to aquatic life and harmful to human beings and animals that use the waters. With weak regulations and limited capacity to control the discharge, the governments, especially in the developing countries, have failed to ensure purification of domestic water supply. Most poor families cannot afford domestic water purification facilities. Further, owing to the lack of regular electricity supply for powering most of the equipment, they end up consuming contaminated water.

Imbalance in the environment causes variations in rainfall patterns and climatic conditions become more erratic. The immediate victims of these variations are the poor and the vulnerable of our world. The poor are affected with the effects of *el niño* and *la niña,* which give rise to excessive rains causing floods, and drought that results in famine. Both conditions contribute to the spread of communicable diseases that seriously affect the weaker sections of our society.

Under these circumstances, the Jesuit is to be the voice of the voiceless, the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf.

PJ: Can you give a concrete example from Africa?

JOA: Recently in Kenya, there were reports about fish dying in Lake Naivasha situated in the Great Rift Valley. Investigations zeroed in on flower farms discharging their waste into the lake, which affects the fish.

How is it the National Environmental Monitoring Agency (NEMA) did not arrest this practice before it became a public phenomenon? Most developing countries do not have strong professional bodies to deal with industrial disposal of effluent and hazardous discharges into the atmosphere. At times the regulatory bodies cannot pursue the polluters because they do not have the necessary equipment to verify pollution and are poorly equipped for enforcement. Industries sometimes freely discharge hazardous material into the water or atmosphere simply because they cannot afford to process them at a loss and are more eager to maximize their profit than worry about the health of the citizenry. These allegations can be verified only if the indicators can be recognized and the claims upheld or discounted. This presumes that one has the skills to spearhead such a mission and the energy to persevere in the task. Stories of radioactive waste and contaminated foods from the first world countries being dumped in certain regions of the developing world are very common.

PJ: In an African context, what practices can help the environment?

JOA: Most people, rightly or wrongly, attribute new diseases to changing eating patterns, food production and storage. The skeptics of modern farming practices, including Genetically Modified (GM) food production, choose organic farming alternatives. A pollution-free environment is necessary for the production of organic foods. When the surrounding air or the water used in the farming process is polluted, sooner or later the body will be affected. This requires individuals to be aware of what affects environmental conservation in their surroundings.

PJ: How can the Spiritual Exercises help people to deal with the ecological crisis?

JOA: Most Jesuit retreat houses, and most retreat houses for that matter, have well-kept grounds for meditation and walking. The neat flower beds, trimmed trees and patterns to prevent soil erosion provide beauty and conserve the grounds. The plants that are generally found on the ground often suit the climatic condition of the retreat house location so that an evergreen environment with a feel of fresh air is preserved. Such environments provide a good atmosphere for communing with God through contemplation of the wonders of creation.

In the meditation on sin, St. Ignatius invites the retreatant, in the application of senses, to visualize "great fires" (SPEX 66) and "to smell the smoke, sulphur, dregs, and putrid things" (SPEX 68). The scene challenges us to reflect on how our activities affect the surroundings. These experiences are factors in environmental degradation and pollution, so very real in our times.

PJ: How much do we contribute to environmental degradation in our own Jesuit communities?

JOA: Food recycling is an important practice that ensures that all food remnants are prepared and served in another form but remain appetizing. The other option is to throw the leftover food away. If we opt for throwing away, we need to think on how it improves our environment or to makes it uninhabitable.

There are certain factors to consider when deliberating the purchase of a car. Our way of proceeding demands discretion and modesty in our way of living and in community matters. In this regard, buying a fuel-guzzling vehicle is both an expensive venture and an unnecessary contribution to pollution. Occasionally, our apostolic undertaking leaves us with no alternative except to acquire that kind of vehicle. Another factor is modesty and thrift in the use of vehicles. Car-pooling and good travel planning both save fuel and reduce traffic congestion in our cities. Servicing the vehicle regularly reduces emission of partially burnt fuel into the air.

The next factor to consider in limiting pollution is the use of fuel and electricity within the house. When we place limits on using heaters all day long, we save on electricity bills and ease demands on the national electric grid. Using water sparingly when bathing or washing contributes significantly to water conservation and reduces use of electricity in pumping the water up from whichever source. Mixing cold and warm water to an optimum temperature contributes both to the conservation of energy and water conservation.

PJ: In which way should these recommendations for communities be included in the formation of young Jesuits?

JOA: A Jesuit cannot afford to be indifferent to his surroundings but must seek to grasp what is happening around him. The acclamation in the *Gaudium et Spes* "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (no.1) becomes more real in light of the demand made of a Jesuit to stand by the vulnerable.

The Jesuit is expected to be thoroughly familiar with the basic environmental factors and to apply his knowledge in promoting environmental conservation. He needs to recognize what endangers the environment and, if the situation arises, have ways of addressing the danger proactively. The Jesuit is to be prophetic in viewing and examining variations in the ecosystem.

Taking the initiative in understanding the balance of the ecosystem and how this affects the world is a matter of justice. Having a clear understanding of ecology, recognizing interference with the ecosystem and redressing impending disaster is a way of bringing peace and harmony to the world. Our young men in formation need to be guided into this consciousness as a way of promoting justice and peace in our world. Whatever we do in the formation of our young Jesuits, ecological consciousness is an invariable component of the whole process.

PJ: What path would you suggest a Jesuit should follow if he wants to become more ecologically conscious?

JOA: As a person trained in the Exercises, the Jesuit cherishes created things with an understanding of the principal purpose, that is, fulfilling the end for which he was created. Caring for the gifts of God, knowing that they are entrusted to his stewardship becomes the Jesuit's primary responsibility. Thorough knowledge of the nature of what has been entrusted to him helps him to find better ways to share this privilege to the people with who he lives and works. Acquiring this knowledge and sharing it requires initiative, personal commitment, dedication and self-sacrifice. Conscious that this undertaking can be overwhelming, the Jesuit needs to balance reaching the limits of such knowledge and or taking the easy way out through laziness. This mission, therefore, starts with self-knowledge before attempting to understand how nature functions. The process of struggling with the quest for self-knowledge and self-understanding leads us to our Creator and Lord whom we seek to "praise, reverence and serve" (SPEX 23). Our quest for understanding the ecosystem therefore needs to lead us to deeper understanding of, and intimacy with, God.

Back

Eating the Earth

Gregory Kennedy SJ[32]

Any life that retains some purpose or meaning (the 'why' of existence) regardless of the state tends to continue, regardless of how it does so. In today's society we exhibit a very strong drive for life despite pollution, climate change, soil erosion, and weather extremes. The values that direct our everyday actions remain consumerist and materialist at the core, and although they are anti-life, we survive. Our personal redemption is the first step towards salvation of creation and making up for the old destructive how of living.

"He who has a *why* to live", aphorized Nietzsche, "can bear with almost any *how*." Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl got good mileage from this compact insight. Frankl, *pace* Freud, argued that the most primal of human urges are not sexual in nature, but rather existential. At our most basic level, what drives us is our need for, and will to, meaning. The libido kicks in later.

The most formidable challenge to the ecological sanity of North Americans, both Jesuit and otherwise, is appreciating the power of Nietzsche's aphoristic engine in Frankl's "logotherapy". A major reason that we, in open defiance of all counter-evidence, blithely carry on as if the world is going to heaven in a hot-air balloon comes from a deficiency in meaning. We are semantically malnourished. And, as sometimes happens in cases of starvation, we, in desperation, have taken to eating Earth.

Frankl had the hard opportunity to test empirically his novel psychological theory in the hellish laboratory of the Holocaust. As a prisoner of Auschwitz, he discovered the common denominator among those surviving its incessant brutality. Any life that retained some purpose and meaning, regardless of the state of physical health that it embodied, tended to continue. Husbands lived for wives, mothers for children, the faithful in hope of God. Should the battered believer lose her faith, the husband his beloved, the mother her last daughter, their lives would soon follow.

The fact that we North Americans not merely survive, but poshly thrive off the present ecological onslaught suggests we possess a very robust "why to live". Climate change, extreme weather, soil erosion, universal pollution, peak oil, mass extinctions, scarcity-induced conflicts—nothing, it seems, can keep us down. We go on buying and selling like there's no tomorrow. Given this disturbing connection between a truncated future and our consumer habits, how is it that our "how" of living has not touched our "why". Or conversely, why has our "why to live" created such a harmful "how"?

These questions sweep us under the carpet of contemporary values. For all our talk, both Jesuit and otherwise, of preferential options, right relations, social and ecological justice as constituent elements of our faith, most of our functional values—the values that drive our everyday decisions and actions—remain consumerist to the core. Convenience, speed, avoidance of physical effort, tacit fidelity to a materialist notion of progress: these mostly covert, mostly unquestioned "why's" invest us with the uncanny (in every sense of the word) power to endure the emotional, spiritual, social and moral hardships of a culture literally *anti-biotic* (against life.) Surely our souls and consciences suffer grievously, if unconsciously, at the inequalities,

[32] English Canada Province; author of *An Ontology of Trash*: *the disposable and its problematic nature.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007.

oppressions, and destructiveness that our style of being perpetuates. We manage to survive this trauma by clinging ever more zealously to our questionable, driving values.

Consequently, we face a "consumer challenge" immense in magnitude. It requires much more than switching from leaded to unleaded gasoline, from diesel to bio-fuel. We have to take the entire engine apart in order to examine and replace all the worn out gaskets and pistons that keep us burning oil, among other things combustible.

We have to rebuild what drives us in such a way that our functional values mesh with our faith values so that our material lives no longer strip the gears of our souls. Even our language must change. Our mechanistic vocabulary locks us into metaphors, such as the one idling through these paragraphs, that frame our self-understanding in terms of machines and computers. We are, after all, very accomplished actors. We play quite convincingly the roles we assign ourselves.

So far, we have approached our consumer challenge mostly from the avenue of "hows". Little wonder, then, that our motivations and hopes of success go up in smoke. Our consumptive industrial-military system, ever more globalized, ever further entrenched, feels too colossal to budge. Indeed it is, given our present "why's" to live. For if convenience, avoidance of physical effort and individualism stand as our guiding ends, we shall protect, come inner hell or outer high water, whatever presumed means will get us there. We bear with the perditions of consumerism, because, *qua* consumers, we have, *a priori*, already lost our way.

If our "why's", our deepest, driving "why's to live" were to change, we would of necessity find the vim, faith and intelligence to bear with all the unaccustomed "how's". Says Paul: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."[1Cor. 10:13] If carbon justice, for example, became an operative value, we would naturally, unconsciously go to lengths to avoid air travel and private automobiles. This strikes us now as impractical, if not impossible, and most probably unapostolic. True enough, our present "why's" hardly allow us to bear the thought of it. Our consciences have Atlantean shoulders to carry a global burden of acidifying oceans, mass human starvation, desertification, extinction of species and of coastal cultures, plus all the other perfidies of climate change; yet the notion of walking to work, or passing up an overseas conference, or staying home for the holidays simply seems too much for us. We feel ourselves without the wherewithal for accomplishing such sacrifices. But we perceive these as unbearable sacrifices only within the present paradigm of our anthropocentric, consumerist "why". Should we alter the latter, going to the airport, for example, might become as unthinkable to us as taking a train from Toronto to Vancouver is today.

Members of the Ignatian family may feel themselves, in light of the above, caught in an awkward cognitive position. After all, according to our First Principle and Foundation, everything is permitted us so long as it aids our praising, reverencing and serving God. We have the magis to drive us, and nothing is too good for the apostolate. Here we must tread cautiously, for often we can grow Jesuitical in our justifications of actions that may end up serving idols rather than God. In the twilight time of ecological integrity, God comes to us in unexpected ways. Our manner of duly praising, reverencing and serving the God of life in an antibiotic era may not at all resemble what was previously appropriate. Emphasis on personal redemption gives way to interest in creation salvation, where all that is, and not just the human contingent, is called into Christ's saving glory. Our *magis*, therefore, might well mean less jet-setting, less production, less celebratory consumption of the earth's wild and diverse beauty. Creative demonstration of how less is more may be our *magis* today Jesuits have always gone out to the frontiers, and there we must stay. This is our consumer challenge. To perpetuate old, destructive "how's" in the name of the apostolate is to turn a deaf ear to our vocation of creative thought,

contemplation, and action. We must live our faith that shows us God alive in all earthly things. Once our faith becomes our functional "why", we shall set all skill and strength towards creating praiseworthy, reverent, serviceable, and ecologically sane "how's."

For guidance here, we need only look to those nooks and crannies of our lives into which consumerist values have not yet seeped. Few of us Catholics, for example, would complain of the waste of time involved in hand-cleaning the chalice and paten during Mass. Disposable Styrofoam vessels would most probably be more convenient. Our inability to entertain the notion stems from a functional value other than convenience. Should a similar value permeate other areas of our daily living, our existence could become much more sacramental, not to mention sane.

Our Ignatian psyches, individual as well as collective, stand in perfect position to benefit abundantly from a home-grown version of logotherapy. As we order our lives around the Logos, God made flesh in Jesus Christ, whose love has power to drive us through all kinds of seeming adversity and presumed hardships, we discover meaningful sources of strength to sacrifice and serve. So ordered, our "why's to live" engender very mundane "how's" for the flourishing of all life on this gorgeous orb. In sum, our consumer challenge is to challenge our consumerism with higher order values driven by a Word that so loved the world it became human to care for it.

Back

The Jesuit Ecological Mission from a South Asian perspective

Rappai Poothokaren SJ

As Christians and human beings, we are called to be the custodians of the Universe and our main duty is to be sensitive towards Creation and to make a responsible use of nature's resources. We must consider ecological involvement as a mission entrusted by God who has created us in His image and likeness.

"A maximum speed of 25 kms per hour, a range of some 45 kms per full charge. That is what my electric scooter gives," said my Jesuit friend. "Bikes and cars whiz past me, even rickshaws and tractors coolly overtake me. I was more accustomed to zoom on a bike or four-wheeler before," he continued. "But then something happened. At the leisurely pace of 25 kms, I began to notice what I had never noticed before while speeding on the roads. Those who walk or cycle struggling against speeding vehicles: the Adivasi (aboriginal) women who trek with their babies at a relaxed pace to their endless digging work on the roads, those who push carts with vegetables, fruits and snacks, barely managing to stay on the road... Then there are the activities that go on by the roadside – a relaxed haircut and shave, rag pickers sorting out their pick of the waste of the town, children playing at the sides unconcerned about speedsters, dust, noise and dangers! Vehicles are many and occupy most of the road, but the cyclists and walkers far outnumber them and have to survive at the margins. A ride at 25 km/h maximum gives a very different view of India indeed! Besides, the running cost per km of the scooter is about 10 paise, and no pollution!"

Switching to more eco-friendly ways of living can be obviously an eye-opener.

A few years ago, Ecology, Environment, Global Warming, Climate Change, Bio Diversity, etc. were words and expressions that we had vague ideas about, at the periphery of our sphere of attention. They used to pop up occasionally in both print and electronic Media. There were a few 'prophets' who kept shouting that our Earth was heading for disaster unless we changed our way of thinking, acting and living. Little attention was paid to them till the grim reality of our precarious Earth began to catch up with us.

In the last three or four years, those words and expressions are moving from the periphery to the centre of attention for some people at least. Some are mildly aware, some pay more attention, others are concerned, a few see the urgency of the issue. Very few plunge into action to save the Earth.

The Church, the Pope and the Society of Jesus have called for our serious Ecological involvement as Christians and human beings. Conserving the Earth is now accepted as a Mission entrusted by God to us. Created in His image and likeness, He has made us the custodians of God's Universe.

Judging from my experience with Jesuits in South Asia, Ecological concerns are now spoken about in many fora. Does that result in action? Hardly. Clarity of goals is limited, and few 'beaten paths' exist. Very few Jesuits understand the issues and come up with concrete, localized Environmental actions.

The Environmental seed planted by Fr. Robert Athickal in 1988 bloomed into the Taru Mitra (Friends of Trees) Ashram in Patna. It reaches out to almost a thousand school and colleges

across India and beyond. With over 450 species of trees, the Ashram is a Bio-diversity haven, where birds, snakes, rabbits and jackals move in spontaneously on their own, and find themselves at home. It is perhaps the first and most prophetic Ecological Mission in the whole Society. The Alternate Energy Centre too, begun single-handedly by Fr. Mathew Muthuplackal ten years ago in Patna has done remarkable work in the use and spread of solar energy. Now he has been 'lent' to Gujarat Province to spread Alternate energy here. There is some Environmental action happening in different provinces.

Madurai, Calcutta, Ranchi and Kerala provinces in India have officially committed themselves to Environmental involvement, focussing on environmental education, Bio diversity reserves, alternate energy, Indigenous medicine and so on.

Two things, in my opinion, hamper a serious plunge into Environmental Action by Jesuits:

1. Consumption has become an end in itself. Supply and high pressure promotion create demand, and the Mass Media has become the torchbearer of Capitalism and consumerism. Radio and Television with high pressure commercials reach remote corners of even developing countries, distorting priorities in life and consumption patterns. Mobiles and TVs are often preferred to nutrition and education by the poor.

   Jesuits live and work in the thick of this capitalist development paradigm. It is a myth that we really act as 'leaven' to spread the values of the Kingdom of God when the world around us is permeated by values and aspirations totally opposed to them. We end up absorbing the values of that world. Concepts of competition, understanding of efficiency, attitudes towards consumption and perceptions about development tend to coincide with those of the elite. The elite in Asia, even in Gandhiji's India, consider simple living, local and earth-friendly technologies, organic farming, sustainable development and the 'mantra' of "reduce, reuse and recycle" outdated, inefficient and retrograde. "Plastics are more convenient, Solar cooking is cumbersome, electric scooters are too slow, Solar electricity and hot water systems are unreliable, organic farming practices are inefficient, Bio gas is messy, water harvesting is expensive, ..." such unscrutinized conclusions and excuses are the staple of a consumerist society.

2. Change is always hard, especially when we are trying to pursue less explored paths. Speed, size, glamour, exclusivity, instantaneous gratification, use-and-throw have become catchwords, indeed the very norm of modern technology and development. Their impact on the environment, the health of human and other forms of life, the sustainability, the welfare of future generations, the repercussions on the majority poor, the irreversible consequences to life on Earth,... who bothers about these?

On the other hand, the pressure of the Mass Media to consume more is incessant and all pervasive. One only has to glance at bill boards on roadsides, public transport, magazines, Radio and Television, mobile phones and internet, the www... Many sponsored cultural programmes, and even religious programmes, in our institutions, urge us to consume, and consume,....

Practical suggestions for a more Eco friendly life in the Society of Jesus.

At the individual level

1. Learn about the precarious Ecological situation of the Earth and its impact on our own surroundings and locality
2. Seek creative and practical environmental interventions. Share our discoveries

3. Distinguish between our real needs for living and working, and 'promoted' wants and desires. Restrict our consumption to the former
4. Enjoy Nature – the flow and rhythm of the Seasons, the flora and fauna; it gives peace to the body, mind and spirit
5. Develop a spirituality linked with the Lord, 'active' in and around us in Nature

At the Community level

1. Look for Eco friendly options to our needs like:

- water harvesting[33] for pure drinking water
- water recharging[34] for water shortage
- water recycling for kitchen gardens, flower gardens, lawns
- Kitchen gardens and fruit trees for home- grown organic food

2. Use of electricity

- Energy audit of the community
- Switch over to Compact fluorescent lamps and LED lights
- Geo thermal cooling, air coolers[35] instead of Air conditioners
- Solar hot water instead of water heaters
- Solar cooking

3. Promote Eco spirituality through retreats and liturgy, ..

At the Institutional level

1. Environmental education and exposure – study circles, discussion groups, environmental Media modules,
2. Energy audit of the institution,
3. Work towards plastic free campuses,
4. Reduce, reuse and recycle – paper, water, waste, electricity, means of travel, ..,
5. Grow trees, vegetables, fruit ...involving students, parishioners,..,
6. Network with religious or secular NGOs involved in environment action,
7. Start environment advocacy, and join individuals, groups and NGOs similarly engaged.

At the Province level

1. Send a certain number of scholastics for Environmental studies,
2. Integrate Environmental education at every level of Formation
3. Promote Eco spirituality through retreats, liturgical celebrations
4. Circulate Eco friendly solutions, experiments and experiences from the Province and outside through the Province newsletter
5. Set up Bio Diversity Reserves and Alternate Energy Centres
6. Appoint an Ecology Coordinator and committee linked with all ministries

At the Assistancy level

1. Set up a Secretariat to explore, gather information, circulate and coordinate the Jesuit Ecological Mission today

[33] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainwater_harvesting
[34] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groundwater_recharge
[35] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evaporative_cooler

2. Make Ecological formation an integral part of Jesuit Formation
3. Promote inter-provincial networking and cooperation in the Ecological Mission of the Society
4. Organize gatherings of Jesuits interested and involved in Ecological reflection and action
5. Promote Eco spirituality through seminars/retreats

Conclusion

A new attitude towards Nature, a new relationship with our Environment and the practice of a more sustainable life style are crucial to our Jesuit Ecological Mission. As Pastors, Educationists, Social activists, whatever be our Mission, sensitivity to Nature and responsible use of her resources are the responsibility of all. We need to swim against the current of unbridled consumption. Search for a more Eco friendly and sustainable life style needs through innovation, experimentation and 'thinking out of the box'. Greater harmony and peace could result from a life more attuned to the rhythms of Nature. Today Ecological involvement has to be an essential and integral part of sharing the Good News of Jesus.

Back

The World is Our House!

Ibe Oghu SJ

How Jesuit Communities and Institutions in Africa can care for the Environment in the light of GC 35

The ecological crisis also challenges our faith and reconciliation with Creation has been a central theme of the Jesuit mission since the 35th General Congregation, but how can we make this happen? Ignatian spirituality provides the foundation for response to ecological questions not only in a contemplative manner but also through practical actions in our lives and works.

Almost five hundred years ago, Fr Jerónimo Nadal etched the Jesuit spirit in one succinct line of poetry: "The world is our house"[36]. And recently GC 35 has warned us that that house is now in a broken state[37]. The question that arises is this: how did we allow our house to be broken? Was this the result of neglect on our part as Jesuits? As men whose mansion is the world, are we not called upon to take active care of our home[38]? An African proverb says that a man whose house is on fire does not leave the raging fire to go after rats. Ironically, St Ignatius charged us to go set the world on fire. Have we then unwittingly and overzealously set our own house on fire? Or perhaps we were not at home when the fire began. Did not the same wise Nadal also say that "The road is our home"[39]? We are men always on the move, one foot up, one foot down as we march along. There is hardly any place in the world where we can sit and take time out sit quietly, for we are ever en route to some new frontier. Being on the move, we have probably had no time to notice the cracks in the walls, the leaking roof, the rusty pipes, the battered faucets.

The psalmist tells us that the foundation of that house was laid, not by us, but by the hand of the Lord. (Psalm 24:2). So we can trace the cracks back to the period of Adam and down to the time of Jesus of Nazareth, who came into this world to set the house to rights. The good news is that the fractures didn't quite start today, but they have apparently worsened. Christ's mission attacked the crisis effectively from its root-cause: sin. But sadly, there are many who remain doubtful or indifferent to the spiritual roots of our global malaise. They are driven more by the economic principle of competitive appropriation than by Christ's invitation to store up lasting treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20). Hence: "The drive to access and exploit sources of energy and other natural resources is very rapidly widening the damage to earth, air, water and our whole environment to the point that the future of our planet is threatened. Poisoned water, polluted air, massive deforestation, and deposits of atomic and toxic waste are causing death and untold suffering, particularly to the poor."[40]

As men who bear a responsibility for the welfare of the entire world in a sustainable and life-giving way[41], Jesuit communities and institutions in Africa need to reawaken in ourselves, in our collaborators, and in all people of goodwill the link between our global situation and our spiritual condition through our preaching, researches and writing. We live in a moral universe. If we are not sound spiritually, our universe suffers as a consequence. St Ignatius speaks of this bond between the physical world and the spiritual realm in his Spiritual Exercises. In the 4th Week of his Spiritual Exercises, the saint exhorts the retreatant to "consider how God dwells in

[36] Jerónimo Nadal, '13a Exhortatio complutensis' (Alcalá, 1561), §256 (MHSI 90, 469-470).
[37] GC 35, D. 2, no. 27.
[38] GC 35, D. 3, no. 31.
[39] Jerónimo Nadal, qtd. in James Martin, SJ. The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life (New York: HarperCollins, 2010, p. 394).
[40] GC 35, D. 3, no. 33.
[41] GC 35, D. 2, no. 20.

creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence, and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself"[42]. Recognizing these wonders, the retreatant becomes aware of reality and God in an *incarnational* way[43]. Reawakening this ecological spirituality is urgently needed in our African continent, which has known untold forms of human and ecological degradation.

At a practical level, this Ignatian ecological spirituality should inspire Jesuits, especially those working in Africa, to approach all reality with respect and awe. In Africa, there is a belief that God in his transcendence resides in the heavens while his overflowing robes sweep the whole earth, thereby consecrating and conserving it. That is why in some communities, it is abominable to eliminate life (human, animal, and even some species of plants) without justification. On certain days of the week rivers and seas not fished in as a mark of respect. It is forbidden to hunt certain rare or 'sacred' animals and birds. At the end of every crop harvest, the farmer traditionally leaves some crops behind in the field for the poor and the bush-combers. Drawing from these values and from Ignatian spirituality, Jesuits are called to esteem not only our fellow human beings, but also animals, whether pets or prey, and even trees, as visible imprints of God.

Wasting water, food, household items, books, or personal effects, when there are so many people in need is therefore an offence against our neighbour and against God. Rather than throwing them away, we can collect these items and deliver them to orphanages, charities, or needy families. At Hekima Jesuit College of Theology in Nairobi, for example, scholastics visit each of the six communities there twice a week to pick up food items and used personal effects for distribution to a group of street kids. During Lent and at the end of each semester, a box is put out in each community by this group of scholastics for hand-me-downs. Amazingly these boxes always get filled up. This practice can be replicated with bigger benefits in many Jesuit communities and institutions in Africa.

We live in an age of unprecedented technological communication, and many Jesuits flow well with it. But sometimes we are too lavish in our use of technology. A few years ago, while I was at a certain Jesuit College in Africa, we had many cases where scholastics and other regular students used to down-load and print several pages of material from the internet without ever bothering to pick them up. To avoid such wastage of printing paper and ink cartridges some institutions have now installed the system of pay as you print through the use of pre-paid and password-encrypted printers. This system may work well in some communities and institutions, but the preferred rule, I believe, is to print only what is absolutely necessary. Other material can be read online and downloaded onto a flash-drive or saved in our computer hard-drives. In some communities and institutions, there is also the problem of old machines which are, technologically speaking, junk. Rather than letting them deteriorate, the junk can be sold to recycle shops where they can be repaired or converted to other uses.

Today's consumerist culture depletes the limited energy resources of our planet, thereby threatening the survival of future generations. Hence, consumerism demands both our resistance and a compassionate response[44]. Meeting these demands in our Jesuit communities and institutions entails putting in place practices that conserve rather than consume energy. Imbibing simple habits like turning off the lights and other appliances when not needed is a good beginning. It also means using energy-saving bulbs and gadgets, for example, using rechargeable batteries in place of disposable ones since the former are energy-saving and even cheaper in the long run. Our communities are also called upon to prefer energy-saving instant

[42] The Spiritual Exercises, Exx. 235.
[43] James Martin, SJ. Op. cit., p. 391.
[44] GC 35, D. 2, no. 21.

heaters for a shower to energy-consuming water heaters. In fact, cold baths are recommended as much as possible on account of their energy-saving and life-prolonging capacity. The use of washing machines, drying machines, and dishwashers should also be carefully monitored. Due to their high-energy consumption rates, these machines should be used sparingly and must be fully loaded.

Jesuits also need to be ready to replace the growing culture of driving for fun with the healthy practice of walking for life. CO2 emission from automobiles constitutes one of the most active causes of climate change. Of course we need cars, but there are times when it may be better to walk than to drive, especially over short distances. Recently, I heard a story about three Jesuits from one community who attended a particular function in three different cars when using one car would have been both more ecological and more economical. Car-pooling is actually practiced by many organizations today. Rather than staff member driving to work in separate cars, some companies provide buses pick up their staff and take them home at the end of the day.

Lastly, GC 35 invites all Jesuit communities and institutions in Africa to promote the culture of a clean and green environment. This ranges from planting perennial trees and flowers in our immediate residences and national parks to ensuring that our lawns are well trimmed. It also includes keeping separate dust-bins for biodegradables and for non-biodegradables. The latter can be recycled while the former can be used as farm-yard manure. A clean and green energy policy is opposed to bush-burning and arbitrary rubbish-burning in a corner of the premises. All rubbish and things to be burned need to be collected and burnt in one place, preferably in a local incinerator.

Back

Religious Orders and Care for Creation[45]

Uta Sievers

Keeping God's creation safe has been part of the Christian tradition since the beginning. According to a recent survey of Cistercians and Trappists, the Bible is seen as a long-standing guide to life, providing principles for the proper care and keeping of Creation. Many monasteries and religious congregations are engaged in projects to safeguard the environment at many levels. Despite the efforts, there is still a lack of cooperation among religious.

Bernardus colles, valles Benedictus amavit, oppida Franciscus, magnas Ignatius urbes.

Desert Fathers and Mothers

The earliest monastic tradition of the Church was a movement that started when the persecution of Christians ended and Christianity became the state religion of the Roman empire. The withdrawal of men and women into the desert was seen as a different form of martyrdom, one that renounced all bodily comfort. Moving out into nature, away from the cities, these monks and nuns – called the Desert Fathers and Mothers - found peace. Their aim was to leave behind the chaos of the cities and find harmony in nature. They lived in communion with their surroundings (the monk Florentius had a bear as his companion) and found God in nature[46]. Their view of nature, however, was ambiguous: they attributed demonic forces to many natural phenomena.

Benedictines

Based on the experiences of the Desert tradition, Saint Benedict in the early 6th century wrote a series of guidelines that shaped religious life in Europe for centuries. His "Rule" consists of 75 short chapters and gives instructions on how to live a Christ-centred life on the basis of seven daily prayer periods, manual labour and commitment to a specific monastery. Simplicity, frugality, humility, hospitality and obedience are the guiding principles of the Rule. The daily recitation of psalms, many of which glorify God and his work in creation, meant that images of nature were embedded in the monks' minds and hearts. The work in the gardens surrounding the monasteries and in the forests and wetlands, where Benedictines were instrumental in valorising land for agriculture, shaped their view of nature where they found themselved co-creating with the Creator.

In the 12th century, a need for reforming the monastaries was perceived by St Bernard of Clairvaux, who founded the Cistercian branch of the Benedictines. Most of Europe had become farmland, and St Bernard emphasized manual labour that can create beauty on the farmland surrounding the monasteries. According to him, creation takes on its real significance when human beings work the land and bring out its fruits – they are partners in a common effort.

A recent survey of Cistercians and Trappists (a stricter branch founded in 1892) revealed that out of 147 respondents, all but three felt that their sense of the sanctity of creation had grown during their time in the monastery. In the same survey, 90% of respondents said that the Bible

[45] This article is based on the entry "Roman Catholic Religious Orders and Ecology" in The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature (London: Continuum, 2004). With thanks to the author of the entry, Thomas Spleen SJ.
[46] "My book is the nature of created things, and as often as I have a mind to read the words of God, it is at my hand." (St Anthony the Great, 251 - 356)

clearly calls us to a reverence and respect for the earth. Today, many monasteries are practicing organic farming methods and are taking additional care of rivers, wetlands and forests in the area surrounding their monasteries. Trappist monasteries in Ireland, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Canada, the United States, Nigeria and Eritrea are all engaged in reforestation projects.

Franciscans

Saint Francis spent much of his life alone with nature. The order he founded, officially recognised in 1209, was one of wandering religious, not bound to a specific monastery (and therefore not "monks" but friars) and imbued with a sense of God's presence in creation. For Francis, God is communicating directly with humanity through nature. Since all of creation calls God "father", Francis addresses all created things as sister and brother in his Canticle, an attitude that expresses the intrinsic goodness of all creation and the interdependence of all life. In 1979, Pope John Paul II declared St Francis patron saint of ecology.[47]

Today, members of the Franciscan family around the world are following the call to be brothers and sisters of creation at many levels. Since the foundation of their order down to recent times, a Franciscan who wanted to fell a tree had to ask his provincial for permission. Reaching out to the wider community and sharing their charism, Franciscans are engaged in education (Franciscan Earth Literacy Programme[48]), advocacy (Franciscans International in Bangkok, Geneva and New York[49]; animal rights advocacy in Taiwan) and awareness-raising among religious (Sr Tiziana Longhitano, Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome[50]). Many Franciscans do hands-on work with poor communities: the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Sri Lanka run an organic farm; in Brazil, the sisters make soap from leftover fat and run an organic community garden[51]; the Franciscans in Indonesia run an eco-pastoral centre where they have trained over a thousand farmers.

Dominicans

The Dominican tradition's care for the natural world is rooted in the reason for which the order was founded : to combat the heresy of the Carthars who condemned all matter as evil and saw only the spirit as good, as opposed to the mainstream Christian view that all life is sacred because God became human in Jesus Christ. In Part I, Question 47 of his *Summa Theologica,* the Dominican Thomas Aquinas underlines this holiness of all creation :"For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided and hence the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever."[52]

Dominicans today are active in their local areas, calling on people to follow their example and grow their own food (Karachi, Pakistan), celebrating Earth Hour by switching off the lights in their communities and churches (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam), and by planting trees instead of giving roses on Valentine's day (Faisalabad, Pakistan).

[47] http://www.columban.com/smcd_francis_of_assisi.html
[48] http://felc.sfctiffin.org
[49] http://www.franciscansinternational.org/issues/environment/introduction
[50] http://www.longhitano.it/tiziana/ecologia.html
[51] http://ecoreligious.wikispaces.com/Franciscan+Missionaries+of+Mary
[52] T. I, Cerf, 2004, p. 490. NdT.

Back

Green sisters

Many Dominican sisters have been involved in a movement called "Green Sisters" by Sarah McFarland Taylor who has studied it extensively [53]. Genesis Farm[54] in the United States, which was founded by Dominican sisters in 1980, focusses on earth literacy by pondering the question "What is Earth Asking of Us?", and on implementing a transition culture to help people move away from fossil fuel dependency.[55] The "Green Sisters" are making care for creation a daily spiritual practice and are busy 'greening' their religious vows, their prayers and liturgies, as well as dedicating themselves to sacred agriculture, ecological food choice and contemplative cooking.

Ignatian Family[56]

Within the Ignatian Family, i.e. religious orders based on the Constitutions of St Ignatius, many are active in the environmental field. The sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) and the Companions of Jesus (CJ), both founded by Mary Ward, are active at the United Nations in New York. The Loreto Sisters, a branch of IBVM, have made General and Provincial Chapter Resolutions regarding the environment. The Missionaries of Africa in Uganda have started building a wetland from a green belt and are engaged in research with a university in environmental studies. The sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart in New Zealand are implementing lifestyle changes regarding their use of water, energy, treatment of waste and use of public transport while recognising the beauty of creation in their prayers and reflections, while the Sacred Heart sisters in the United States and Canada have adopted the Earth Charter for their province.

Challenges ahead

Collaboration among religious leaves much to be desired. At the Copenhagen conference in 2009, at least a hundred were present, but most did not meet other religious nor try to coordinate their efforts. This lack of coordination is especially grave because

- Regardless of what religious themselves may think, people do listen to their voice, if not out of their own belief, then out of interest for a diverse voice in this world of shrill politics;
- A sin of omission is being committed in terms of common advocacy around specific issues; working together could make a real difference at Climate Conferences and other international events;
- Shying away from being a visible presence in habit or collar is a missed opportunity; impressing by numbers and by a visible life-commitment to faith and justice (and ecology) does indeed generate a certain amount of admiration.

[53] McFarland Taylor, Sarah: Green Sisters. A spiritual ecology. Harvard University Press 2009.
[54] http://www.genesisfarm.org/
[55] http://www.csjboston.org/Earth-LCWR-Res_McGillis%20%282%29.pdf
[56] Information about great work of Jesuits around the world can be found in the Jesuit Seven Year Plan for the environment: http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/docs/Jesuit_7yearplan.pdf

Back

Identity, Community, Mission

Jubilee Reflections for my friends and Companions

Rudolf C. Heredia SJ

What is the mission of the Jesuits today and what are their main pursuits? Rudolf Heredia SJ presents some reflections in the light of the recent General Congregations of the Jesuit Community. He recalls Decree 4 of GC 32 which defines the Jesuit mission as the service of faith and promotion of justice, where faith must be intended more as loving trust than intellectual belief.

Any pilgrim's progress over 50 years has to be such a long journey. At times I've felt the loneliness of the long distance runner, but looking back from where I'm at, the sentiment in my heart and the memories in my head are best expressed in the song we sang at Jesuit gatherings: Ecce quam bonum, et quam jucundum, habitare fraters in unum!" (Oh, how good and joyful it is to live united as brothers.)

Fifty years ago, on the 20th of June my family reached me to the novitiate in Vinayalaya, Bombay. This year on that day, I concelebrated the Eucharist at the Indian Social Institute with my Jesuit friends and companions in Delhi. I wish some of you could have been there. For what they are worth, I present here some reflections in the light of our recent General Congregations (GCs) that I shared with them and now with you. A golden jubilee is an occasion for me to share with you my reflections on these themes in gratitude for the past, in fidelity to the present and in hope for the future.

GC 35 puts together a triptych: Identity, Mission, Community. We need to live this integration as Jesuits *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

Identity: Who am I?

GC 35 gives us an image of a Jesuit: "Our lives must provoke the question, who are you that you that you do these things … and that you do them in this way?" (Dec 2 No. 10) This means living a prophetic witness in our way of life.

A student of mine once questioned me: What do you do that is so different? I can could do just as much and perhaps better without being like you. So what makes you so different? I wondered, what could have been the witness coming across to him from me as a teacher and the college as an institution? Was I perceived as a sign, or contradiction, or just another Jesus-freak going with the flow? Was the institution perceived as more concerned with the collective 'profit' than prophetic engagement, more focused on institutional excellence than social relevance, on prestige not justice… Did the testimony that reached this young man, and others like him, seem far from prophetic?

GC 32 Dec 1 No. 11 defined a Jesuit thus: "What is it to be a Jesuit: It is to know one is a sinner, yet called to be a companion of Jesus as Ignatius was." Dec 4 of the Congregation gave us a moving image of our option for the poor: "If we have the humility and courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we must do to help them … which is to help the poor help themselves: to take charge of their own personal and collective destiny" (GC 32 Dec. 4 No. 50). GC 35 brought us back to our roots: "Jesuits know who they are by looking at him" (Dec 2, No. 2)

My more personal take on the spirituality of Ignatius goes back to what I recall from the old Summary Rules of the Constitutions we read in the novitiate. Even before admission as candidates we were asked if we had at least the desire for the desire "to don the livery of their cherished and respect Lord… to resemble Jesus Christ and be clad with his garb…" (Summary Rule 11, Examen 44, Const. 101). The Ignatian mysticism of action I find so evocatively in his own words: "to seek God in all things transcending the attraction of all creatures, as far as possible, to set their heart wholly on the Creator, loving him in all creatures and them all in him" (Rule 17, Const. 288), in others words: to seek God in all things and all things in God.

The old 11th Rule (Const. 101) goes back to the Spiritual Exercises (No. 167), the three degrees of humility, better understood as three ways of loving, with the third degree of humility-- identifying with Jesus even in his humiliations-- as a more excellent way of loving. The old 17th Rule (Const 288) is inspired by the Contemplation for Love that climaxes in the dedication so movingly familiar to us: Take and Receive (No. 234).

St Francis Xavier responded with his Prayer for Generosity: Teach me Lord to serve you generously as you deserve. To give and not to count the cost…save that of knowing that I do your most holy will. Fr. Arupe sums this up in his imitable way: "a personal love for the person of Jesus". Without such a personalised commitment a resolute Jesuit could so easily become a dangerous commissar, ruled only by his head even when it betrays his heart: what's love got to do with the party line? Off to the firing squad! Or a cool hit man who shoots his hapless victims: nothing personal, sir, just business as usual. Bang! We have seen such men, and there but for the grace of God go I.

Moreover, a Jesuit must be driven by the Ignatian 'magis', the restless pursuit of the greater good. A Jesuit settling into a comfort zone, on an ego trip, or pursuing a career has lost his vocation though he may still be in the Society. He becomes deadwood, rotten fruit that weighs down the tree.

Ignatius has said that if he wanted to live longer it was because he wanted to be stricter with admissions to the Society. He was concerned that in his lifetime it had expanded from the 7 friends it began with, to the limited number envisioned in the approved Formula of the Institute, to over a 1,000 at his death. His approach was: I would rather a horse that needed the control of the reins than one that needed the kick of the spurs. Over the last half-century, I know I have needed both.

Mission

Dec 4 of GC 32 defined our mission as the service of faith and the promotion of justice. Not 'the faith' or 'our faith' or even religious or ideological 'faith', but 'biblical faith' which is more a loving trust than an intellectual belief; in Ignatian terms an obsequium rationale, a meaningful, not necessarily rational, offering of oneself in trustful surrender to our God. GC 34 challenged us to build "*communities of solidarity*… where we can all work together towards total human development… sustainable, respectful, .. diverse,.." (Dec. 3 No.10). GC 34 brought this service of faith and promotion of justice together in an integrated mission with inculturation and inter-religious dialogue as Servants of Christ's Mission (No. 47).

The context of all this must be the Ignatian norm: the more universal a good, the more divine. Ignatius was a man with a heart as large as the whole world. He could be inspired by the flowers on the curia terrace and the stars in the sky; he worked in the confines of his room, yet planned for missions to the jungles and deserts in far away places.

Our mission is inspired by the vision of the Trinity at work in the meditation on the incarnation in the Exercises. There our salvation is grounded in the life of Jesus and his kingdom; it culminates in the challenge of the Paschal mystery, and climaxes in the contemplation for love.

Community

Our vocation is to be friends in the lord and companions on mission. This is what the first companions were and it is what led them to persevere as 'Companions of Jesus'. Today this would mean living a common life and working as a corporate team: life groups and team work. I belong to the Society through the friends I have there. If I don't have such friends in the Society my centre of affectivity will gradually migrate elsewhere, to my work, my co-workers and then even beyond both these. I live in the Society with the companions I have there, I work for my mission in the Society with the team we make together.

GC 32 challenged us to a community life of union of minds and hearts, unio animorum (GC 32 Dec 11). GC 35 affirms that community as an essential dimension of our identity and mission too, which together define our prophetic calling, a "fire that kindles other fires" (GC 35 Dec. 2). We are a communitas ad dispersionem (a community for dispersion), but our communities must give prophetic witness, or else they become bachelor chummeries, ruled by the simple norm: don't ask, don't tell. Our institutions must be counter-cultural challenges, or else they will be organised bureaucracies: no exception to the rule except for another rule. This is a negation of our identity and our mission; it betrays genuine Jesuit community living, and undermines any institutional witness to our mission.

Defining Image

To bring these reflections together in a personal image, I would rather be a small bit player in the main drama of salvation history than run in the wrong race and win. I do not want to settle in a comfort zone of mediocrity. I still want to "put out into the deep", to set my sail against the wind. I want to live my life with the Ignatian mysticism of action, never intimidated by the greatest and yet always concerned for the least. I want the romance of Francis of Assisi, whom G.K. Chesterton described as a poet, whose whole life was a poem. I would hope my prophetic witness, such it may be, will be a counter-cultural solidarity, defined by apostolic action and spiritual mysticism, humble courage and caring concern, moving poetry and enthusing romance. For Fr. Arrupe this would mean falling in love with God! And for Jesus this did not exclude humans, but the last and least most especially.

A prophetic witness in the image and likeness of Jesus must be a counter-cultural one as Jesus was in his day. And so the defining image of my life as a Jesuit is this: to walk this earth as Jesus did, with my companions on mission, as friends in the Lord.

Back

The Gift of Life - This is Our Story

Elias Omondi Opongo SJ

This has been a week of tears. I was lucky to have spoken to Ikunza on Sunday the day before he died. He could only whisper, but his last words were touching: "Tuko pamoja" (we are together). I still believe that we are together in spirit and that he now prays for us in the Society, for his family and his many friends.

I journeyed with Ikunza for many years. I first met him in 1986 when I moved to the Queen of Apostles minor Seminary for Nairobi Archdiocese to continue my secondary school education. I joined Form Three and we knew each from then on. Jacob Okumu joined us in Form Five in 1988, and on 20th October of that year, Ikunza proposed that, since we had a day off (Kenyatta Day) at school, we should visit a friend of his who was a Jesuit. His name was Fr Sean O'Connor, the then vocation director. Sean gave us a warm welcome and we spent three hours arranging his files and books. Just before we left he asked to see each one of us individually, and a casual visit turned out into a fishing moment for Sean (not surprising for those of you who knew Sean!!). That moment marked the start of my journey towards becoming a Jesuit. The three of us were close and worked well together in organizing the student body. I was the head prefect, Okumu my assistant and Ikunza the minister for labour. We always made fun of our tasks and visited each other's families during the holidays.

In 1990 Ignatius and I joined the Society with 6 others from the EAP. Only Ignatius and myself were left from our year. Thus Ikunza brought me into the Society of Jesus. We shared the same date of birth, 9th Sept (though he was two years younger), and we always remembered each other on our birthdays despite the distances. Little did I know that this year was the last one for us to wish each other happy birthday. His courage, audacity, confidence, sense of humour, innovativeness, exuberant laughter and provocative thoughts made him an admirable character. From my phone conversations with our men in Boston I was consoled to know that on Sunday a large group of nearly 50 friends from the Kenyan Catholic Community in Boston, which he had ministered to in the past, visited him, prayed with him and gave him holy communion. The photos of that afternoon showed him smiling. Just a few hours later he was meeting the Lord. At this moment let us remember his family, especially his mother. When I spoke to her on Sunday just before talking to Ikunza, she was very anxious. We pray for her peace of mind and heart.

Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat

C. P. 6139 – 00195 Roma Prati - Italia

+39 06689 77380 (fax)

sjes@sjcuria.org