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Promotio Iustitiae

Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES), General Curia of the Society of Jesus, Rome, Italy

Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology:
Amazon, Great Lakes and Asian Forests

SÍNODO PARA LA AMAZONÍA

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Amazon, Great Lakes and Asian Forests

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If you are struck by an idea in this issue, your brief comment will be greatly appreciated. To send a letter to the Editor for inclusion in a future issue, kindly send an email to sjes-sec@sjcuria.org.

(Photo on the front cover – Fernando Lopez, SJ)

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Editorial

Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ

The Encyclical *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Pope Francis on the care for our common home is a compelling critique of not just an environmental crisis but also a moral and ecological crisis. He clearly points out that there is an "intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet" (LS 16).

Continuing his concern over the interconnectedness of the ecological crisis and the poor, focusing particularly on the indigenous, Pope Francis suggested a Pan-Amazon Synod during the *ad limina* visit of the Peruvian bishops and later announced it officially during the Angelus on 15 October 2017. He said, "The main purpose of this convocation is to identify new paths for the evangelization of this segment of the People of God, especially the indigenous peoples, often forgotten and without the prospect of a peaceful future, also due to the crisis of the Amazon rainforest, the lungs of paramount importance for our planet."

This special Synod on the Amazon to be held in Rome between 6th and 27th October 2019 will go beyond the Amazonian geographical region. The preparatory document of Vatican says, "This is only a beginning of building bridges with other important biomes of our world like Great Lakes, Asian forest regions and Guarani Aquifer among others." It is an invitation to listen to the cry of our 'common home' as well as the cry of indigenous peoples in these regions. In fact, the oft repeated 'Rich land – poor people' fits perfectly well for the indigenous people who live in 70 different countries across the world.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNFPII) says, "Indigenous peoples around the world have sought recognition of their identities, their ways of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources; yet throughout history, their rights have been violated. Indigenous peoples are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world today." Despite significant progress in recognizing the rights and dignity of the indigenous, the global rush for land and exploitation of natural resources by rapacious corporations in collusion with corrupt politicians is rapidly destroying these regions and dispossessing them of their primary means of survival. In fact, the indigenous rights defenders, both individuals and organizations are in turn facing a vendetta of increasing criminalization and violations of their rights.

In the Society of Jesus, the first authoritative expression to ecological concerns was expressed in Decree 1 of General Congregation (GC) 33 in 1983 that elected Peter Hans Kolvenbach as

the General. It said, "Lack of respect for a loving Creator leads to a denial of the dignity of the human person and the wanton destruction of the environment (n.35)."

In 1995, Decree 20 of General Congregation 34 once again echoed the concerns of an integral ecology and recommended to Father General to make a study and take concrete action. Based on that call of GC34, the Social Justice Secretariat did a study and published a *Promotio Iustitiae*, (PI, 70, April 1999) titled ***We live in a broken world***. The study highlighted the three areas to be stressed in relation to ecology as proposed by GC34, namely Ignatian spirituality, apostolic work and co-operation, and lifestyle and institutional decisions.

Acknowledging the need for urgent action, the Society of Jesus in 2008 invited every Jesuit to "move beyond doubt and indifference to take responsibility for our home, the earth" (GC35, D.3, #31). It said, "Care of the environment affects the quality of our relationship with God, with other human beings, and with creation itself (#32)… Poisoned water, polluted air, massive deforestation, deposits of atomic and toxic waste are causing death and untold suffering, particularly to the poor. Many poor communities have been displaced, and indigenous peoples have been the most affected (#34)."

The call of GC35 to act responsibly resulted in an Ignatian discernment process and the preparation of a special report on ecology called ***Healing a Broken World*** (PI 106, 2011/2). The report applying the see-judge-act method of Catholic Social Teaching presents concrete recommendations for action at various levels.

The Society of Jesus for the first time in 1995 recognized the appalling conditions of the ***Indigenous peoples*** and said, "Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, isolated and relegated to marginal social roles, see their identity, cultural legacy and natural world threatened…" and invited the "whole Society to renew its long-standing commitment to such peoples" (GC34, D3, #14).

In keeping with this call, the provinces and conferences took concrete initiatives to be with and to accompany the indigenous in their struggles in new and creative ways. A few Jesuits from the conferences reflected and shared their views on the theme of Indigenous in *Promotio Iustitiae* (PI 104, 2010/1). In many of these places, very good work is going on amidst difficulties, tensions, persecution and conflict, which could help us to build a larger vision and pathway for the Church and for the Society of Jesus as regards to the plight of indigenous people and their relation to ecology and environment.

In the present issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* on **Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology**, keeping the Synod on Amazon at the background, Jesuits from 5 Conferences, accompanying the indigenous people over many years have reflected on the Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology from the perspectives of justice and reconciliation. The Synod is a wonderful opportunity for the Church to collectively discern, plan and find new paths towards an integral ecology from the standpoint of the symbiotic relationship that exists between the indigenous people and ecology and the growing moral and ecological crisis.

For the Society of Jesus, reflecting on the perspective of the indigenous rights and integral ecology is a good way to prepare, so as to be able to contribute during the Synod on the

Amazon. The authors from Latin America, Canada, USA, Africa, Asia Pacific region including Australia, and India not only share their testimonies, thoughts and ideas based on their personal experience of being with and working with the indigenous, but they also critically analyze, reflect and raise concerns about the struggles and aspirations of the indigenous people today. They challenge and question our individual and collective attitudes towards them. Often caught up with our own involvement in the material and power-oriented world around us; their simple life, values of community, hospitality, care for one another and their symbiotic relationship with nature do not seem to be important to us and more so to those in the seat of power.

One of my tribal friends in India told me, "If you truly want to save the earth, respect, protect and defend the indigenous and their rights."

Original in English

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Take Back the Source of Life and Justice

José Miguel Jaramillo, SJ
Former member of Indigenous Mission in Guamote, Ecuador

The traditional relationships of indigenous peoples with the land, the community, other cultures and the economic market keep changing. In some cases, they do so in response to pressure from diverse development projects promoted by States and NGOs. In others cases, as a reaction to their own desire for well-being in a world whose gaze changes in contact with others, where modernity and its technology inexorably penetrates the most intimate spaces until it mutates the very imagination and identity of the people. In any case, the development and economic growth based on the exploitation of natural resources does not cease. Even though in the so-called "First World" the economy migrates towards the provision of services and technological innovation, what changes is only the type of natural resources to be exploited in less explored areas, which are usually inhabited by indigenous peoples as their last areas of refuge. Neither can the countries of the "Third World", euphemistically called "developing", give the impossible magical leap to the First World without leaving aside the exploitation-exportation of natural resources with something of an added value. In any case, the pressure over the access to natural resources increasingly clashes with the presence and rights of indigenous peoples, whose territories are being invaded by mining, agro-industry and livestock, and whose leaders are criminalized for opposing "development".

But it is not simply about a conflict over ownership rights or ownership of the goods of nature, which voraciously loom over oceans, freshwater sources, Andean highlands, Central American jungles and the Amazon in Latin America. The greatest clash is at the level of the imposition of imagery that force people to consider as "resources" that which has traditionally been seen as "gifts". This is one of the maximum levels of violence because it forces indigenous peoples to fight for even the defense of their rights and traditions in the terms or imagery used by the colonizers: of the transaction and protection of "resources". In that way, the Earth, that in the different originating concepts of the indigenous peoples of America is a mother, a source, a cradle and shelter, space for life inseparable of the existence of all those in it inhabit, it becomes treated as an externality, useful and necessary for business. With that colonization of the fundamental imagery, we (indigenous and non–indigenous peoples) are dragged to the scission of life itself because of the forced separation with the biome in which we live.

For that reason, when indigenous fighters are aware that they have been dragged into the fight for life in terms of fighting for "resources", resistance and indignation are not enough to repair the anguish of knowing that they are losing the battle from the beginning: that the

struggle is no longer for *living well*, but for *not living badly*. Moreover, the uneasiness grows when the generational gaps come to the surface and the division of the community that struggles to maintain the imagery that sustain its traditions and rites becomes evident. Thus, in the same community there are young and old who struggle to maintain the oxymoron of the integration of cultures trying to live the better of "two worlds", as when they distinguish organic crops for their own consumption and use agrochemicals to maximize the always elusive possibilities of profitability from the harvest that goes to the market. Others refuse to accept the contradiction in which they are and defend the purity of a legacy threatened rummaging through their collective memory to recover fragments of what once was; and they become torn between isolationism and the nostalgia of that glorious mythical past, even rejecting the Christian clothes that were imposed on them during the processes of colonization. There also are those who give up and seek to join the logic of the use of biomass resources to *live better than other families;* to that end, they use the possibilities of integration into the mainstream culture through temporary migration, the western education and the business of their own culture. These last people usually become "successful and developed" groups, with money and even political influence, although they are often loaded with nepotism. However, to further complicate things, in the middle of all these "groups" and their "strategies", there are external religious presences, especially forms of Christianity, that support all of these tendencies in the name of "God". Either from the "benevolent" presence of missionaries who seek to "educate" indigenous people to be modern and pious natives. Passing through the experiences of "inculturation" that value the indigenous as a source of revelation and that propose forms of accompaniment based on respect, solidarity and the discovery of the mutual richness of their differences through awareness processes. Up to the quasi negation of the culture and it's "pagan" traditions in pursuit of religious fundamentalisms and a theology of individual prosperity that has good sources of funding for its models of success (an increasingly common reality, where indigenous people with better businesses tend to be of different evangelical denominations).

However, it is the indigenous peoples with their way of life, of resisting and changing that make us aware of this process. Their relationships with the land and the community, make it evident through their culture and traditions that instead of biome that we are part as a gift and grace, we have entered a logic that imposes a life of struggle and competition where everything is "bio-resource ". Including the splintered territories and their inhabitants (minerals, flora, fauna and humans) that must be used (exploited) for the superior purpose of "development" in the form of economic growth. Where the component "resource" ends up strangling the components of the "bios". Well, for the indigenous peoples of America, it is not only about biomass (available organic energy) or biomes (life zones) independent of human beings over which we have authority. And this phenomenon reaches its revelation epitome in the cities, where indigenous people who have migrated for various reasons including the need for survival, feel lost and uprooted. Because the more urbanized the territory is, the greater the split with the biome, the competition for resources and the distancing from ancestral cultures. Therefore, this same phenomenon, on its reverse, allows us to illuminate the emptiness of the citizens, who live to work and work to consume, because they inhabit an artificial territory where nothing is free, a gift; but scarce resource that should be worked for to fill in this way, with effort and goods, the growing fragility and lack of existential

meanings in the midst of community and socio-environmental relationships competing for the limited resources of a biome made up of cement, steel and integrated circuits.

Even in the Catholic faith every Ash Wednesday remembers that "we come from dust and we will return to dust." Commemorating creation, which in the Judeo-Christian version affirms that we are children of *Adama* (earth), land (Adam), and that we will return to it. But for indigenous peoples to be part of the land does not refer simply to the source material and material end, but to the constitution itself, the characteristics of human existence, which are never separated from the *Adama,* the *Pachamama.* That is why the indigenous people cannot conceive themselves nor can live fully in exiled from their territory, from which they keep being historically displaced. Because the mountains, plants, stones and rivers... are their sources of life, they are common-unit that shelters us, never forgetting in the past the presence of the spirits that have lived because they keep being road companions. Therefore, by affecting the flows of rivers and forests, we also affects both the ancestors who inhabited them and ourselves who use them. The ancestral peoples show us that we are not the center and the ultimate goal of creation; we came from *Adama* but *Pachamama* is not for our service. The earth is the mother who "gave birth" to us, who welcomes us and from whom we live, because we are all *Adam*, born of water, mud, wood, or corn, as myths tell us.

Hence, for the various indigenous cultures there cannot be "government or power over" the earth (Genesis 1:28), but a respectful interaction with creation. Indigenous peoples know and thus live it, that life (global biome) is not a "thing" that is "used" without paying the consequences of altering its harmonies. That is why their rites and traditions always seek justice as a common experience of restoring balance. Justice that has cosmic dimensions and where there it seems to be no room for forgiveness and forgetfulness. The search for balance that is expressed in the rites of payment and offering to the land, in the non-appropriation of what is common and in the solidarity with the needy, in the community cooperative work, in the redistribution of the resources of those who have more making them responsible for the celebrations; and also in the reciprocity of violent acts and bloody acts between members of different tribes because they threaten the balance of their coexistence. In the end, our indigenous brothers and sisters look to live in harmony with nature (biome which includes everyone) that is a guide when it is listened to and respected, but that punishes violently when it is threatened and tried to be governed. For this reason, the diverse myths of the peoples tell us that we cannot destroy the Great or Common House without the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) annihilating the generation that preys on her, and preserve a remnant of peoples so that they continue to live in harmony with her, because life does not harm itself, but rather enacts justice restituting and renewing itself.

Today we need to recognize with humility and courage the deep ties that unite us with indigenous peoples in their ancestral cultures and practices, but that we have set aside to promote various paradigms of development and cultural and religious supremacy. Inside our community, we might even say that the experience of the Cardoner, San Ignatius acquired a renewed synthetic and organic view of life that should not be far from the primal experience of the imagery of our indigenous peoples: all is one, but not same. For the indigenous peoples teach us a way of life that is not simply animistic or pantheistic (concepts alien to their

experience), but that remind us of what Ignatius recorder in the Spiritual Exercises: that we are created, that we must order our affections , that we should only "use" the created as long as it helps us to live the fullness for which we were created by a God who does not cease to live and work in *all* creatures so that we can do our will and actively collaborate so that His will is fulfilled wherever we are. All of it tinted by the Christian experience of mercy and loving manifestation of the creator Father that, liberated from cynicism and incoherence, fulfills justice.

In Latin America there is a long tradition of Jesuits that we have lived and worked with indigenous peoples and that we continue to contribute to the reflection and dissemination of cultures, traditions and ancestral imagery even from new places of mission. Currently there are Jesuits 66 who are working directly with or for indigenous peoples: 24 in Mexico, 13 in Peru, 10 in Brazil, 7 in Bolivia, 5 in Central America, 3 in Chile, 2 in Ecuador, and 2 in Paraguay. The services vary from parishes with more or less inculturated pastorals, intercultural and scientific institutions, community radio stations, schools and vocational training centers, organizations of organic producers and "fair trade," to the simple supportive presence in foreign territory of communities that open up and welcome us without fear of religious, humanists and even ecological neo-colonialism. However, the challenges and opportunities for the Society of Jesus to serve the indigenous peoples of today are enormous. We must continue walking in their struggles for the biomes, the life of which we are part of, with a solidary and/or missionary presence, advocacy, legal and financial support. Above all, we have to promote a new understanding of justice and law that recognizes the intrinsic value of creation and help to protect it (to protect us) in our present and to preserve the viability of a decent future for everyone in the Common House. Politically, we have to promote changes in the regulatory frameworks to include the Rights of Nature, as it has already been done in Ecuador and Bolivia, although they are threatened with regression because it has not become a State policy but rather a policy by and administration, despite it being consecrated in their Constitutions. And at the individual level, it will help greatly to review the reflections and practical recommendations made in *Healing a broken world* (PI 106, 2011/2) and delved into "Laudato Si".

But also, we must accompany those, indigenous or not, in the countryside or cities, who "Lose their life" in exchange of satisfying the competition for well-being through the use of natural and human resources. This can be done by everyone, no matter how far we may be from indigenous peoples; in all our ministries of the Society of Jesus. We can and must make ours, but this time in terms of global ecology, the challenge of working all for the poor, some with the poor, and a few like the poor when they open their doors, as Father Kolvenbach invited us to do. But we cannot preach that which we do not believe in, we cannot share that which we do not live. It takes a deep awareness of our own fundamental imagery through which we interpret interpersonal and socio-environmental relationships, understand the biomes, and read the Gospels. Will we continue to preach that we have been placed in Eden to "master the created," as if we were not part of the same creation, as if that dominion did not begin with ourselves, with our disordered affections? Well, perhaps it is not about the dominion or the care of that which is foreign to us, but about respect for the reality that surrounds us, as the indigenous peoples show us despite the threats that loom over them.

In all our works and ministries we can work as not to continue ignoring that incarnate ecological mystique of the indigenous peoples that connects us directly with the heart of the mystical sources of the Church from the *Semina Vervi* of the priests, going through the spiritual legacy of Francisco de Asís and Ignatius, the blood of the indigenous fighters for justice and integral ecology, even the *desires* that they promote the call to the Synod of the Amazon.

Original in Spanish
Translation Eduardo Yespica

Learning from the Native Quechua and Awajún Peoples of Peru to 'Live Well'

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The original peoples are societies within modern states that conserve their ancestral traditions, considering themselves a group distinct of the national society. According to UNESCO there are more than five thousand groups, made up of more than 350 million people, present in all regions of the world. In Peru alone, according to the Ministry of Culture, there are 51 indigenous tribes in the Amazon and four in the Andes. They are many and different! Although they present common realities and problems, the generalities prevent us from deepening in the riches that each one of them has. Perhaps these reflections are valid for other cultures, but my pretension is more modest and I will express what I perceive of the Quechua and Awajún peoples. To do so, I will outline some very general features of their worldview, their problems and challenges, all with the intention of provoking the reflection of what these indigenous peoples can contribute to modern states, and vice versa, in the construction of a better world through an intercultural dialogue.

I. Quechua and Awajun Worldview: **Importance of Space and Time**

In general terms, the worldview of the Quechua or Awajún peoples is expressed by the Allin Kawsay or Tajima Pujut respectively. Very different worldviews from the *Bon Vivant* - one who enjoys life only from his individualist perspective that offers or believes that it offers him well-being, or the Good Living, related to consumerism. The Good Living or Allin Kausay prioritizes a simple life that respects the balance between what the earth produces and what man needs.

In the Allin Kawsay harmony prevails in nature, of which human beings are a part of. Harmony in the community and with the cosmos, because everything is alive (people, the soil, the forest, water), everything has spirit; and in this sense the Good Living is not only a worldview but also a spirituality. The happiness of some depends on the happiness of everyone and everything. This requires: a) knowing how to listen to the other out of respect and in order to seek consensus; b) know how to understand each other, look for paths that generate well-being for all, loving and respecting the Pachamama[1]; c) know how to eat in a balanced way, taking into account the cycles of the earth; d) know how to celebrate life with

[1] La Pachamama: concept of temporal space that includes the Hanaq Pacha (place of heaven), Kay Pacha (where I live) and Uku Pacha (sub ground and underworld): the Common House.

collective dances linked to the rhythms of sowing and harvesting, where each one has a role for joy; e) know how to work, seeking a balance between what benefits the individual, the community and nature; f) live in reciprocity, not as a benefit-obligation, but so the "we" becomes a fundamental key where giving and receiving are two sides of the same coin; g) look for complementarity, since nothing goes alone, the child-the old man, the man-woman, the human-cosmos live in relationship; h) know how to listen to the elders who have made a path and mark for us the path where to go. It is important to note that while these characteristics are ideal for Quechua, in practice they do not live perfectly.

While all human beings, all societies from their particularities seek welfare, the roads are diverse and some can be deceptive. Therefore, intercultural dialogue is a mean that allows us to expand horizons and be alert for traps. I believe that modern states also want these harmonies of the Good Living; however, the relationships are distorted, mainly by the way people interact with the Common Home from the categories of space and time.

a) The Proximity or Physical Distance

An important factor for the relationship with others and the Common Home is physical closeness. The indigenous peoples are usually made up of a set of relatively small communities where everyone knows each other. They are in permanent contact with nature, live on what they sow, what they raise or hunt, a contrast with contemporary societies, where individuals often have distanced themselves from others and from nature.

We start with the basic fact of food. In modern societies it is packaged in a supermarket. A child from the countryside when he wants milk thinks about the cow, pastures, rivers, etc. The one in the city thinks of a jar and a brand. It does not connect its food with nature, but with an industry. But it is not only the pragmatic, but the empathic. The human being is enriched by admiring animals, plants, waterfalls. We awaken new sensibilities, enrich our affections, expand our understanding of care, retribution, processes, vulnerability, fidelity, and gratuity, etc. In modern states, approximations to nature are very mediated and limited.

We also have the plants, the water, the mountains, the air (the forest for the Awajún or the Pachamama for the Quechua) that are not only objects that make the photos in Instagram more beautiful. In Ocongate, Cusco, where I live, we always talk about the weather: it rained a lot or a little, there was frost (sub-zero temperatures that affect crops and animals). But we do not do it to start the conversation with something futile, but it is the central issue, since the survival of the harvest and the animals depend on it. In big cities there is heating, air conditioning, etc. and we believe that these means protect us, but in the distance, there are the fields where our food comes from. Then, the weather really is not a trivial issue to see what clothes or technology we used, on it depends if tomorrow we get food in supermarkets, or potable water to consume. Thus, the relationship with nature, which the native peoples have so intimately, is important not only to be happy, but to subsist; something that big cities think they have so far away and therefore do not care about. Climate change is perceived by the Quechua and Awajún in a palpable and vital way, while modern states seek technological and scientific alternatives to counter the effects of the Climate Change through equipment that protect us from extreme cold or heat, chemically processed products for food. These are

only artificial means that try to replace for a time the natural thing, but when the rivers and seas are contaminated by the extractive industries, when the deforestation has exterminated the forests, when the industry has completely broken the ozone layer, can we subsist?

At the interpersonal level, physical closeness with the other is fundamental. It is not the same to talk to a person on Skype than in the living room of the house. The problem exists when we are physically close to each other but perhaps absent. For example, if someone is sick, I send a whatsapp and I express my wishes to get better, but at the same time I evade what would happen in a visit avoiding feeling their suffering. In Ocongate, when someone is sick, you visit and see the person's face, hear his groans, and are exposed to his smells. The relationship is not only made through the information. In megacities, houses are better equipped, but the patient's suffering is not.

b) You have the clock and we have the time, say the original peoples

The Greeks, the cradle of modern civilization, had two words to refer to time: *chronos* (chronological time) and *kairós* (vital time). Today it seems that in the big cities we only live in *chronos* mode, the one that marks the agenda, the life. We schedule labor, family, social, and cultural relation from the *chronos*. For Quechua and Awajún the *chronos* is referential, but the fundamental is the *kairos*. If you want to talk about some issue of the community, of course you need to set the date and time and outline the "agenda" items. Once summoned, each resident will have his space-time, the one required, to make an intervention. Everyone speaks and listens. That dynamic sets the pace, marks life. In this sense, they have much to teach us because the slavery to the clock often prevents to give the space for listening, which is not a waste of time. You gain what you have learned in the dynamics of the processes. The modern world asks for successful results, native peoples learn from the processes that make them great as people, because they understand that even failure, if understood within a process, can give lessons for a successful life.

The closeness to people and nature, which implies physical contact and time to share, is something that is being lost in modern states. The contribution from the Good Living can contribute to improve the interpersonal relationships to make us more human and more respectful of the Common Home.

II. Problems that the Quechua and Awajún face

a) Abandonment of the State

In several countries, States have made significant progress. Peru is a country classified as having an above average income. Which means that it is achieving "development". However, it is a country of great inequalities. The native peoples have a higher poverty index; of course, not only economic, but they also face abandonment of the State in education and health. Although initiatives are emerging, they are still insufficient, there are still people who die from an untreated flu, young people who cannot write a number with more than four digits, who do not understand what they read and cannot express what they want.

b) Land and mega investments

The ancestral settlers ask for recognition of their territory. The percentage of lands recognized by the State as indigenous, in the last ten years, is less than 1%[2]. The reason is that there is no political will to recognize their rights instead of protecting the rights of other interests that generate pressure by the economic power they possess, and even use corruption mechanisms to achieve their benefits. The problem increases when we talk about something vital like water. A significant percentage of the country's water sources, excluding rivers, are not legally determined and many are concessioned to private interests. In addition, the mega agriculture consumes a large part of this resource, taking away the possibilities of subsistence for the peasant communities. Formal and informal mining pollute the waters, causing serious problems in the Peruvian Amazon: a) food: fish with high levels of mercury, b) culinary: food culture based on fish is disrupted, c) cultural: the river was the place of meeting, of cleanliness, today it is impossible. On the other hand, there are social conflicts in the country, of which more than half are caused by mining and linked to economic, labor and socio-environmental issues. To this is added that, in recent years, in Peru there are more than 70 indigenous leaders who have been killed defending their rights, our rights.

c) Climate Change

Peru is one of the five countries most affected by the climate change, causing disruptions in water cycles, on the health of people, in agriculture and livestock. In the Andes, climate change is producing the melting of snowcaps, affecting temperatures and thus, how hospitanle it is to live, farm and raise livestock. The Amazon suffers from floods due to an increase in the flow of rivers. Statistics reveal that Indigenous peoples use a quarter of the earth's surface. They have ancestral knowledge on how to adapt and reduce the risks generated by climate change, in order to protect 80% of the biodiversity of the planet they occupy. However, they are increasingly relegated and their knowledge is not taken into account to incorporate them into national policies.

d) Migrations and Trafficking in Persons

The low levels of attention to health and education, coupled with the difficulties to farm and raise animals, and poverty place the original inhabitants in a situation of extreme vulnerability. This leads people to migrate to other spaces, wanting to achieve better living standards. A significant number fall victim of human trafficking.

Ocongate is four hours from Puerto Maldonado, Madre de Dios (where Pope Francis started the Synod of Amazonía). There is an abundance of informal mining, which generates great ecological deterioration and, at the same time, promotes human trafficking. Many young people go there to work in subhuman conditions to have some money that allows them to then make some investment. But their lives are in danger: they work from sunrise to sunset in contact with polluting substances and without protection. Many get sick, die and disappear. That means that they have been victims of slave labor that led to their death and

[2] http://www.ibcperu.org/uncategorized/en-el-peru-faltan-titular-4023-indigenous communities/

their bodies are anchored in the river, or left in the jungle to rot so that there is no possibility to make any judicial process. There is also sexual exploitation: most girls and young women go to Puerto Maldonado to prostitute themselves. Some duped, others because parents cannot provide for them.

III. Challenges

The Quechua and Awajun original peoples do not live in isolation. Globalization came for everyone. The point is that, in the West, this was a process that took time, but for them it was suddenly. A young Quechua has access to the internet. He has absorbed knowledge from his local culture and is bombarded by what he receives through technology. They do not feel either from here (their people) or from there (modern society). We have not established the conditions for the possibility to have intercultural dialogue channels. This is creating a perverse dynamic in all Quechua and Awajún communities that breaks all the schemes of ancestral worldviews. It is not about cutting the internet signal, but about nurturing it with reflections that feeds the panorama of these young people. The challenge is also for modern states, because technology, with all the benefits it has brought, has broken the physical-temporal contact with the cosmos and, in many cases, interpersonal relationships. An intercultural dialogue is essential to incorporate the good and discard the bad.

The panorama, despite being critical, is hopeful. More and more groups of civil society are putting these issues on the table of the national agenda. In Peru, we have the presence of Jesuit communities that share and learn from the Awajún and Quechua peoples with the purpose of learning and contributing to the strengthening of their identities. There are also several social, productive and educational institutions attempting to establish an intercultural dialogue to promote the defense of the rights of indigenous peoples and improve their living conditions. There are also various NGOs that join this task. The steps taken are several, but there is still more to be done, especially in the line of *advocacy*.

Original in Spanish
Translation Eduardo Yespica

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Navigate and Walk with Indigenous Peoples

Valerio Paulo Sartor, SJ
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The Uitoto of the Amazon Colombian tell us at the end of the story about the flood and the origin of the dances[1] that Buinaima said to his people: "*Those who have heard my advice must do the same: teach to live well and thus increase throughout the earth (...) The dances will be done so that they live happy. No grudges with anyone. You must remember that there is a father and a mother who watch over you: you must have confidence in them. (...) All words must be put into practice. Let them become works. (...) They should shake hands with each other ... Saying like that, he disappeared from the middle of the crowd.*" This fragment represents much more than the world view and tradition of a people, it preserves a deeper meaning of spirituality and indigenous knowledge, and its wealth manifested not only in the narrative, but in the rituals that teaches us other ways of living reconciled with nature, since through it the Divinity, or for us Christians, the Spirit of God manifests itself.

That's why, this writing tries to you interpellate the way in which we navigate as a Church through the great Amazon River with the indigenous peoples, and with him I seek to provoke a dialogue that allows us to forge "New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology", welcoming the invitation of the Amazonian Synod convened by Pope Francis for October 2019. Following the meaning of the word Synod, with an invitation to "walk together", I will do the tour developing four aspects: 1) The Service that the Jesuits lend to the Panamazonia, 2) Rethinking the Evangelization with the Amazonian peoples, 3) Learning from the indigenous peoples, and 4) Caring for the common home. All of this coming from my lived experience in the work developed in the Jesuit Panamazonic Service (SJPAM) in the last five years.

1. The Jesuit's Service that Lend themselves to Panamazonia

The Jesuit Panamazonic Service (SJPAM) of the Conference of Latin American Provincials (CPAL) was born in 2013 as a way of materializing the commitment to prioritize work in the Amazon, and assumed in the regional Apostolic Plan, along with Haiti and Cuba. Our work seeks to encourage and energize the presence of the Society of Jesus in the Panamazonia, to provide a more articulated and efficient service to the territory and its inhabitants. We are

[1] "THE DILUVIO AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DANCES. How a world is remade. "Rapporteur: Grandfather Jitoma Zafiama in: Urbina, Fernando (Comp). 2010. *The words of origin: brief compendium of the mythology of uitotos*. Culture Ministry.

currently a team of two Jesuits and a laywoman, based in Leticia (Colombia) on the triple border of Colombia, Brazil and Peru, with the mission "to *defend and promote the life of Indigenous Peoples and care for the sustainable environment in the Panamazonia, together with other actors present in it*."

To achieve our purpose, we wanted, as our name indicates, to provide a service, proposing a different way of proceeding in a work. We knit and build bridges to articulate ourselves with others, especially with the Church, to address the challenges and threats to life in the Amazon territory. In summary, our task consists, on the one hand, of fostering a more articulated work among the presences, works and Jesuit networks in Panamazonia; and secondly, to serve the Church, especially the Panamazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) born in 2014 as a new way of being Church in this region, and of course, invite the Company to join it.

Before continuing, it is important to say that one of our work focuses are the indigenous peoples, and when we talk about them, we must recognize without ingenuity and romanticism the cultural changes that have been taking place within the communities for more than five centuries product of the imposition of the dominant culture, even by the action of the Church herself. The indigenous peoples to whom I am referring in this text are those who try to go and rescue the most authentic parts of their culture and traditions.

2. **What does EVANGELIZE mean today?**

Returning to the relationship of the Church with indigenous peoples, I believe that the fundamental question that we should ask ourselves as a Church - both the institution as well as the People of God - and, of course, as the Company of Jesus is "What does EVANGELIZE mean today, especially in the Panamazonia?" This reflection has to do with a look of gaze: it is about EVANGELIZE WITH, and not FOR indigenous peoples. I mean, for several centuries a way of being a church has been perpetuated - traditional and conservative - that continues believing in the idea of "Evangelize" the indigenous peoples so that they become Christians, being reduced only to the sacraments and Catholic doctrine. This has nullified the possibility of living WITH the indigenous peoples and their own spirituality / worldview, which is nothing else than the Spirit of God that moves us, and that for them, it can have several names[2], and for that reason I will use the term of DIVINITY to refer to both. However, the strength of the Holy Spirit has given rise to signs that envision new ecclesial paths such as the REPAM and the Synod of the Amazon. Both sign of hope for the People of God.

Pope Francis during his visit in Puerto Maldonado (Peru), in January 2018, pronounced himself in favor of "a Church with an Amazonian and Indigenous face". For this reason, the progress of this journey towards a Church with a native and indigenous face, willing to change the structures, and to be an intercultural Church that promotes an Integral Ecology, is positive. However, there is a temptation to keep doing the same thing the Church has done: that Indians abandon their spirituality / worldview and turn to the sacramental doctrine of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church. Therefore, a recommendation from this experience is

[2] In part, due to the diversity of indigenous peoples. In Panamazonia there are about 385 indigenous peoples that represent approximately 10% of the region's population.

that the Church has to be reborn to a new way of being Church - local and universal - and especially in the Panamazonic territory walking with the native people, listening, respecting and learning from them how they live and interact with the Divine and Mother Nature, and in the same way, walk WITH them in the pursuit of the same goal which is: the defense of life and territory, dignity, culture, rights, and the care of the common home.

I want to make an analogy of what was said. In the great Amazon River, many boats head in the same direction: the "immense sea" that is the Good News of Jesus, the defense of life and Nature. In the river we are finding the boats of the indigenous peoples, even of other religious denominations, and also of the Catholic Church, that with its own way of being and identity, navigates inviting people to climb aboard it with freedom to paddling together. All of them are following the same purpose. Facing this reality some indigenous people ask us: "Why do you want that all of us climb on to the same boat?" It seems because it that has been that way historically and it remains the intention of some members of the Church, who consider this the only possible way to reach Salvation. In a major way we have failed to recognize that the boat of indigenous peoples has been navigating historically, even long before the arrival of Christianity, and in it the presence of the Divine, and although the boat has another way of rowing leads to the same destination.

If we Catholics believe in the Most Holy Trinity, and in the Incarnation of the Son of God who came to teach us the defense of life and told us: "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, I have come so that you may have life, and so that you have it abundantly" (Jn 10, 10). For indigenous people, life in abundance is tied to the territory, and therefore if they divest themselves of it, their life is taken away from them. We have to learn to walk or "navigate together" not necessarily in the same boat, but with the same goal: to face together the great storms that threaten to destroy life in the territory Panamazonic. Only then we will be living the real sense of the Gospel.

3. **Learning with Indigenous Peoples**

Personally and in the contact with indigenous peoples has made me strip away myself of the prejudices I had due to a lack of awareness and, thank God, I am learning with them, especially their spiritualities, especially from the Ticuna, Ocaina and Uitoto peoples, among others that live in the triple border of Brazil-Colombia-Peru. On the other hand, the dialogue promoted by the REPAM between the peoples and the Church has been very important to understand that we must worry more about living and announcing the divine Spirit that is interconnected with the other spirits that manifest in everyone and everywhere, as I learned from the testimony of an indigenous leader Ocaina -uitoto: "*I know a lot about the Catholic Church, and I got along well with some priests, I even became very close to Father Daniel Restrepo SJ, but I did not feel part of the church. I realized that while I was involved in the Church, I only learned what they taught me, based on doctrine: catechesis and sacraments. Then I grew up and I met again with my people who taught me that we are children of coca, tobacco and sweet cassava, and that the Christian God, which for us is called MO BUINAIMA, that is, the Divinity, manifests itself through the Spirits of Mother Nature, which are in everything created. Then I realized that the Church is and always was concerned with indoctrinating the indigenous peoples and has missed the most important and fundamental thing, which is to live the Spirit of God, the Gospel*".

Another learning I had with a Ticuna spiritual leader during a missionary formation meeting. When he spoke about the sacrament of baptism he shared with me the meaning it has for them: "among us [Ticunas] when a baby is born, the midwife who accompanies the mother from pregnancy, takes her in his arms and puts him the name on the tongue, identifying the baby as how the baby will be in your future: hunter, fisherman, housewife, etc., and according with the baby's clan. Then the baby is purified with a huito bath[3], not only to purify the baby but also to defend it from evil spirits. Then the midwife gives the baby to the parents to take care of him with love and affection. When the child grows, he receives the name in Spanish". When I heard about this, a question came to my mind: Why must we baptize indigenous people with a Christian baptism, if they follow a similar ritual with the symbols of the name, water and oils? However, for a long time the Catholic Church has rejected these rituals because it considers them satanic.

Another experience that made me question our ability to dialogue with the indigenous people, even today, I had this realization with a diocesan priest who during the construction of a chapel asked a Ticuna artist to paint Jesus Christ next to a couple of indigenous people on the presbytery wall. In the image, the couple was kneeling at the feet of Jesus and half-naked. The priest, realizing the beautiful work of art, asked the artist out of modesty to cover the woman's breasts, because it is "sin to have that kind of cultural expression in a sacred temple." The question that remains is: Why can it not be respected the way to express what is natural and proper in the Ticuna culture? Surely, for the artist the work was an authentic expression of their culture, their spirituality/worldview. A light conclusion is that still many missionaries have not understood the indigenous people's cultures, but neither they are not open to enter in a dialogue and learn with them.

We must consider the Amazonian peoples as the subject, and not the object of evangelization, because they are the true sense of the announcement of the Good News, of the defense of life. Recognizing that all cultures are equally legitimate and respectable, not inferior or superior, and their own ways to communicate with DIVINITY. Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudado Si* has said, "it *is essential* to *pay particular attention to Aboriginal communities with their cultural traditions. They are not a simple minority among others, but they must become the main interlocutors "(LS 146),* they are an inspiration for the "care with the common home".

4. **Collaborate in the Care of the Common Home**

The care of the common home is one of the four apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus announced recently by the Father General for the next ten years. This preference calls us to "act urgently to stop the deterioration of the common home and leave it in the best condition possible for future generations. We can still change the course of history. "Pope Francis already had alerted us about intergenerational solidarity saying: "When we think about the situation in which the planet is left to future generations, we enter into another logic, that of the gratuitous gift. If the earth is donated to us, we can no longer think of it alone for

[3] The huito is extracted from the fruit of a tree of the same name l liquid. It is also used as a cosmetic paint for rituals and as a medicinal treatment for the skin.

individual benefit. We are not talking about an optional attitude, but about a question of justice, since the land we receive also belongs to those who will come" (LS, 159). It is understood that we must promote and defend an integral ecology, which articulates all the dimensions of life: social, economic, (inter)cultural, political to - in the perspective of the common good, taking care of the goods of creation, ethics in reference to the model of full life, of the spiritualities/Divinity, of the encounter with the Creator and the continuity of his work (Cf. *Laborem Excercens*). Pope Francis insists on the care of the environment as an act of recognition of the Creator (LS, 69); Therefore, we are talking about a true revolution in the field of culture: another way of relating with nature, with others and with ourselves. One could say, we are invited to be "born again" as Jesus to Nicodemus (Jn 3, 4) he suggested. For this, we must learn a lot from the Indigenous peoples, who know how to love Mother Nature, because you can only take care of what you love deeply.

In conclusion, independent of changes that can occur because of the Synod, a new way of being a Church is already is underway in Panamazonia, and for that reason I dare to point out some recommendations that arise in this context. As a Society we must remain faithful to our mission and "navigate together" in the dynamics of REPAM, committed with the Amazonian indigenous peoples. As Christians, we are invited to do a conversion process towards the respectful experience of the interculture, where dialogue is privileged horizontally without imposition of one culture over another, and in which we learn that the God of the Christians is the same one who reveals himself through mother nature to them. This also requires us to (re)think about new ministries – services - to celebrate the life and manifestation of God among us. Finally, we must not forget that all of us join the defense of the common home and that the life of the planet depends on it.

Original in Spanish
Translation Eduardo Yespica

Something New is Being Born! *Synod on Amazon: New ways for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*

Itinerant Team[1]
Amazonia, Brazil

Synod means "walking together" which, in the Amazon - the largest river network in the world - we could translate as "rowing together" to "fish together".

Pope Francis begins the first session of the Synod by listening to the indigenous peoples of the Amazon in Puerto Maldonado, Madre de Dios (19-01-2018). "*I wanted this meeting very much, I wanted to start here the visit to Peru*", he says to them. With a prophetic presence and an attitude of profound listening, the Pope welcomes the pain and clamor of the indigenous people. They ask him vigorously to defend them. This is how Yesica Patiachi, of the Harambut people expresses it: "*We ask you to defend us! Foreigners see us as weak and insist on taking away our territories in different ways. We want our children to study, but we don't want school to erase our traditions, our languages. We don't want to forget our ancestral wisdom! "*

Francisco responds to this cry by prophetically denouncing the situation of violence currently suffered by the Amazon and its indigenous peoples, due to the predatory and "ecocidal" capitalist economic system imposed in the region: "*Probably the original Amazonian peoples have never been so threatened in their territories as they are now. The Amazon is a land disputed on several fronts: starting with neo-extractivism and strong pressure by large economic interests that direct their greed towards oil, gas, wood, gold, agro-industrial monocultures."*

[1] The Itinerant Team (IT) was founded by Fr. Claudio Perani SJ in 1998. He formulated the intuition: "Go through the Amazon and listen attentively to what the people say. Visit communities and villages, organizations and churches. Participate in the daily life of the people. Write down and record everything carefully with the people's own words. Don't worry about the results, the Spirit will show the way, courage, start where you can!"
The VISION of the IT is Amazonian, territorial and connected (rivers and jungles connect us, not divide us); a vision "from within" ("not from without") and from the cosmovisions of the indigenous and traditional peoples of the region (not from the external logics historically imposed on the region). Its MISSION is "geoecopolitics", as defined by the Encyclical "Laudato Si'": To take care of our Common House (geo) and of the common good (good living-good living together) of all the beings that inhabit it (ecopolitics). It is organized in the NETWORK. The IT is, in itself, a network in which institutions and groups come together; adding human, material and financial resources. Adding so as to arrive together where alone we cannot and should not, where the wounds are most open and life is most threatened. IT is a NETWORK that weaves NETWORKS. At present the IT feels itself both mother and midwife, with other groups and institutions, of REPAM (2014) and its ITINERANT NETWORK that little by little is being woven as a complementary service to the more institutional and inserted services of the mission of the Church in the Amazon.

On this occasion, the Pope particularly denounces the dramatic situation of the most vulnerable, the Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or "Free Indigenous Peoples" (as they are called by the Indigenist Missionary Council - CIMI, an Organ of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil): *"I am thinking of the peoples referred to as 'Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation' (PIAV). We know that they are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. Their primitive lifestyle made them isolated even from their own ethnic groups; they went into seclusion in the most inaccessible reaches of the forest in order to live in freedom. Continue to defend these most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates. Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are."*

In the midst of this critical and unprecedented situation in which the indigenous peoples of the Amazon are today, the Spirit of the God of Life in the Amazon and its traditional peoples blows with force. We live in a time of Kairos Amazonia in the midst of a very difficult ecclesial and social situation. It is Kairos time in spite of the shameful and painful ecclesial situation with all the cases of abuse and pedophilia that demand an urgent and profound cleansing and purification, a radical conversion. This time of the Spirit also takes place in the midst of that difficult regional and global political-economic situation, where the "dictatorship of capital" and extremism are imposed (of every side, of the "right" or of the "left", to use classical language), bending and bringing to its knees Politics and its horizon of the incessant search for justice, equity and the common good, "good living - good living together" for the indigenous peoples.

Various signs of the Spirit, as always, are bursting forth from the geographical, existential and symbolic "peripheries" of the world (not from the "center"). The Novelty, once again, is born from the "margins", from the "Galilees", from the "manger", from the Amazon and its indigenous peoples historically relegated, excluded and exploited. Just to mention some elements of this Amazonian Kairos that we can identify in recent years:

The election of Pope Francis himself (2013) is a sign that marks a new ecclesial time. A Church that tries to become poor and simple again, prophetic and audacious, that walks with the "wounded" and "disposable", a "field hospital" Church, with missionaries with the "smell of sheep" and who risk their lives to defend them from the "wolves". A Church that focuses once again on the Gospel of Jesus, on his Kingdom of Love and Justice, on God's forgiveness and mercy, on the radical commitment to the poor and marginalized, the Father's beloved.

The Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), which recovers the missionary dimension of a "*Church which goes forth*", uninstalled, leaving its comfort zone, making "community on the road" (Itinerant Team), in "*itinerant intimacy*" and "*missionary communion*" (EG 23).

The foundation of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM, September 2014) with its motto "*Amazonia: Source of life in the heart of the Church*". REPAM proposes a more networked ecclesiology. "*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind*" (Mt 13:47-50); REPAM is like a net thrown into the Amazon River to fish... An ecclesiology based on collegiality and catholicity based on the local and diverse realities that exist in the world; an ecclesiology that integrates diversity as a Trinitarian theological

principle, source of life (not as a threat: "*the more diverse, the more divine, if it is articulated in a complementary unity*"). "Theology of Diversity" as a divine principle, Theology of the Body (1 Cor 12) with its diversity of members or Theology of Charisms (1 Cor: 13) diverse and complementary, with the same Spirit and at the service of Life.

The Encyclical "*Laudato Si' - On Care for Our Common Home*" (2015) provides a solid, comprehensive and prophetic theological-pastoral framework for the Church's geopolitical mission in the world. In this mission of caring, all men and women of good will who ask themselves, "*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?"* (LS 160). It is a "geo" mission because it takes care of the Common House of the Planet; and it is an ecopolitical mission because it takes care of the common good, "*good living-good live together*", of all the beings that inhabit this Common House.

The meeting of Pope Francis with the indigenous peoples of the Amazon in Puerto Maldonado (19-01-2018). The Pope listens to the Indians, he does not celebrate Mass. The indigenous tell him of their situation, they pray, singing and dancing, they adorn Francis with their costumes and ask him to defend them... The Pope recognizes them as the main interlocutors to teach the West again the way of taking care of the common house and of "*good living - good living together*" as expressed by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon themselves: "*I live well if you live well; you and I live well if he and she live well; we live well if the tree, the plants and the forest live well; if the river and the fish live well; if the air and the birds live well; if the sun and the moon live well; if the rain and the wind live well; if heaven and earth live well; if the spirits live well; if all the beings with whom we make community live well*". It is urgent that humanity recovers this ancestral wisdom before it pillages and breaks the systemic equilibrium of the planet.

The Pope asks the indigenous people to help the bishops and missionaries, men and women, to find this way of life, of balance, reciprocity and care, of "integral ecology" (LS). But will the bishops and missionaries allow themselves to be helped by the indigenous people?

The Pope opens the first session of the Synod of the Amazon, there, with the indigenous peoples themselves... A prophetic and evangelical sign for the world!

The Synod of the Amazon (2019) that will take place in Rome to "amazonize" the Roman heart of the Church. It will be held in Rome to be a powerful loudspeaker that denounces to the world the violence that the Amazon and its peoples suffer due to the current imposed capitalist economic system. But also a loudspeaker that announces to the whole Earth the gift of the diversity of the Amazon and its peoples for the systemic equilibrium of the planet and the care of the life of all the beings that inhabit it.

A Synod that tries to show that "*one jungle without the other has no solution*", that if the Amazon is pillaged the planet can break its equilibrium and its own life be compromised. That is why all humanity, in all the "jungles" - in those of trees and rivers, and in those of asphalt and concrete - must join forces to confront the perverse predatory, consumerist and ecological logics, to propose a paradigm of life based on care and reciprocity, on austerity, simplicity and simplicity of life, on "good living - good living together" as the indigenous cosmovisionists propose, with their "ecopolitics".

A Synod that proposes a more plural and diverse Church, Jewish with the Jews, European with the Europeans, African with the Africans, Indigenous with the Indigenous. A more ministerial Church that recognizes existing indigenous ministries in their cultures, ministers, men and women, ordained married ministers, etc. A Church in intercultural and interreligious dialogue with other Amazonian spiritual and religious traditions in which God is already present before the arrival of the Church (barely) 500 years ago. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges: to dialogue, from equals to equals, to walk and to learn together, simply and humbly, with the other religious, mystical and spiritual experiences of the indigenous and traditional peoples of the Amazon on the Mystery of God with different names, Tupá, Omama, etc.

A Synod that helps the Church and the world to find new ways of "development": "*You speak of deforesting our rainforest land to give us money. You say that we are lacking, but that is not the development we know. For us, development is having our land healthy, allowing our children to live healthily in a place full of life*" (Davi Kopenawa Yanomami).

A Synod that animates us and encourages us to learn with the original peoples their experience of Integral Ecology, to take care of the common home of the planet and of all the beings that inhabit it, as the indigenous peoples of the Amazon have lived in community for thousands of years: "*In the jungle, we humans are only part of the ecology. But so are also the spirits, the animals, the trees, the rivers, the fish, the sky, the rain, the wind and the sun. Everything that comes from the existence of the jungle, far from the whites; everything that is not yet near. The words of ecology are our ancient words (...) we are born in the center of the ecology and there we grow. When there is no more shaman to sustain the heavens, they will collapse*" (Davi Kopenawa Yanomami).

A Synod which, while being held in Rome, seeks to place all these realities at the center of the Church, in her heart. To place the centrality of the Church, its place of decision, on the periphery, on the margin. Are we aware of what this means? Why?

Because we have much to learn: about caring, about being a network, about dialoguing with those who live the integral ecology as a legacy of their parents, as inter-linked members of the same Common Body-House. Because we need to un-center the Church from the central European axis and direct Peter's boat to the margin where the Risen One has prepared the coals to grill and eat the fish that they themselves have caught (John 21). Because this ecclesiological change is necessary: to sit down to eat together with the indigenous peoples, traditional peoples of the different cultures, to eat what they themselves have fished, what they dragged in their nets and fed them, for years. Sit with them, like them, to touch with them the Risen One.

It's time for Kairos! **"Put out into the deep and let down your nets to fish"** (Lk 5:4).

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Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri
Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

COPY

March 26, 2019

Your Eminence,

Kindly accept these observations from the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States for your consideration in preparing for the upcoming Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region.

Jesuits have been walking with Indigenous people since first coming to North America as missionaries in the early 17th century. Today, we serve Indigenous peoples in regions across Canada and the U.S., including South Dakota, the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and northern Ontario. The people in these regions represent a rich diversity of cultures and languages, and have always existed as separate nations, making it difficult to give an overall picture of Indigenous people socially or religiously. Nonetheless, these varied groups do share some similar elements in their worldviews, in their spiritualities, and in the challenges they face today. I have appended more detailed reports from Jesuits working in four regions in our Conference, the better to represent their diversity. In this letter I draw out some of the key themes that are common across all four.

Spirituality, Respect for Creation, Cultural and Political Resurgence

One important area of commonality is that "native cultures have a strong sense of the presence of God's spirit in all creation. They have deep connections to the land, to nature, and to all creatures—'the two-legged, the four legged, the winged and the finned.' Group solidarity and

inter-relatedness are emphasized in their ethos, rather than individualism" (South Dakota Report, p. 44[1]). This deep spirituality continues to serve as a source of life.

Over the last several decades, Indigenous people throughout North America have been revitalizing their traditional cultures, in a resurgence that has taken on different forms across Canada and the U.S. This revival has included Indigenous languages being taught at school and widespread cultural expressions of music, drumming, dance, and art. "Indigenous voices are heard in politics, academics, and the media; Indigenous activists are speaking out for justice, fairness, human rights, and land and water rights" (Canada Report, p. 39).

Cultural resurgence has included as a key aspect tribal leadership that is "intent on strengthening tribal infrastructures and saving what is left of the surrounding natural environment" (Rocky Mountain Report, p. 48). In fact, native tribes are often "the last potent line of defense against international oil, gas, and coal companies that threaten to destroy the beauty inherent in the Pacific Northwest" (Rocky Mountain Report, p. 48).

History of Oppression and Contemporary Social Challenges

The resurgence of native culture, however, does not negate the oppression that Indigenous people have experienced and endured historically, or the challenges they continue to face today. These challenges arise from a long history of subjugation and attempts at assimilation. "Early U.S. government policy focused on separating natives from 'civilized' immigrants, with forced marches away from the natives' traditional lands upon which white settlers were increasingly encroaching. After the Civil War, U.S. policy became forced assimilation into the dominant Euro-American culture" (South Dakota Report, p. 44). Indigenous Canadians were subjected to "nearly three centuries of authoritative policies ... directed toward excluding them and their concerns in the making of the Canadian nation, by way of isolation or assimilation" (Canada Report, p. 39). Sadly, through schools which shared these national goals, we Jesuits ourselves "became an active part of a system aimed at the assimilation of... traditional [Indigenous] culture. It was not until it was much too late that we realized the harm that we had done" (Canada Statement of Reconciliation).

Today, Indigenous people in both Canada and the U.S. face high rates of poverty and unemployment, high rates of incarceration, and lower than average life expectancy. "Generations of impoverishment and oppression from the outside have led to widespread alcoholism and addiction" (South Dakota Report, p. 45). Racism and prejudice are still widespread. The high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women is a national shame for both countries.

The realities and challenges of Indigenous people vary greatly in different locations. In some tribes, for instance, revenue from casinos has enabled Indigenous people "to create their own school systems, medical and recreational centers, elder retirement complexes, housing for tribal members, police departments, and tribal court systems that better reflect tribal values" (Rocky Mountain Report, p. 48). Many do not have these benefits. In Alaska, for instance,

[1] All page numbers in this letter have been modified to suit the publication of this PI.

Indigenous people are "traditionally hunters and gatherers and [many] still in large measure live off the land and the water in subsistence fashion" although there is an ongoing shift towards a cash-based society (Alaska Report, p. 51). Further, even when resources are scarce, many tribes are increasing entrepreneurial efforts to create businesses on reservations, which in turn can provide much needed local employment (South Dakota Report, p. 45).

Reconciliation

Working towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is a high priority for Jesuits in Canada and the U.S. "We are deeply grateful to the [Indigenous] communities that have continued to welcome us as pastors and as friends" despite the instances in which Jesuits have committed, and been complicit in, sins against them (Canada Statement of Reconciliation).

Between 2008 and 2015, the Canadian people undertook a process with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools, which had been mandated by the government and run by churches, and which aimed to assimilate Indigenous people to European culture. The Jesuits ran one such school in Ontario. The TRC's findings, "particularly the testimonies of physical and sexual abuse from residential school survivors, helped to raise the consciousness and conscience of Canadian society" (Canada Report, p. 40). As part of the TRC process, the Jesuits in Canada "formally presented a Statement of Reconciliation: apologizing for our wrongs, thanking Indigenous people for their continued friendship with us, and committing ourselves to continue to support them" (p. 40). The Jesuits in South Dakota note the ongoing challenge of reconciliation: "Recovery from such historical trauma takes repeated reengagement for healing" (p. 46).

Jesuits in both countries are seeking new ways to help victims find healing and to rebuild bonds of trust and friendship. For example, in response to the Calls to Action of the TRC, the Canadian Jesuits commissioned an Indigenous culture immersion program for all Jesuits in formation.

Indigenous Leadership Development

Developing Indigenous Church leaders is a key part of the Jesuits' ministry to Indigenous people in North America, because "a vibrant local Church depends upon leaders coming from their own local culture who can best harness the energy and insights of their people" (South Dakota Report, p. 46).

In Alaska, the pastoral planning is centered on the need for an empowered Yup'ik/Cup'ik Catholic Church and includes training deacons and lay leaders. "We strive to be engaged in a cooperative effort with leaders in the region to develop an ecclesial presence that reflects and respects the traditional worldview and lifeways" (Alaska Report, p. 51). In Canada, Jesuits run leadership formation programs which include elements of traditional Indigenous spirituality. Indigenous deacons and lay ministers serve as spiritual leaders in their communities, "reflect[ing] a cultural preference and sensitivity of Indigenous Peoples" (Canada Report, p. 41).

Accompaniment

"Jesuits — well aware of the sorrow they carry for their shortcomings — ask only to accompany the Indigenous peoples with whom they live and work," note the Jesuits in the Rocky Mountain Mission (p. 48). This is true of all Jesuit ministries to Indigenous people in North America, which is best understood as accompaniment.

In Canada, for instance, inspired by the many positive aspects of the work of their predecessors, the Jesuits want to "continue to live in accompaniment with our Indigenous friends, especially in their communities" (p. 42). Likewise in Alaska, the Jesuits find that continuity of relationships is highly valued by the Yup'ik people. "To come here for short terms and then transition out is problematic for the local Church ... it is also important that men whom they know become part of the history of their lives" (p. 52).

The Jesuits in South Dakota note the struggle that has come in accompaniment in the context of the restoration of native culture:

> We have to work hard to reclaim Christian Catholic identity beyond the "ghosts" of our early cultural insensitivities and missiology. In the past, missionaries told natives: You cannot be both Catholic and Lakota (or Ojibwe, etc.) in your religion. Today local traditionalists often repeat that back. So we struggle to find ways to co-create a faith and Church that is truly Lakota-Catholic, boldly embracing both as a fuller, more enriching faith than that described by either adjective alone (South Dakota Report, p. 46).

In this context, education ministries are an important way Jesuits accompany Indigenous people, as "they try to focus not just on academic success, but in creative ways try to support the re-flourishing of native culture and identity in students" (South Dakota Report, p. 46).

Walking with Indigenous people is a tremendous grace and a blessing for the Jesuits in Canada and the U.S. We are committed to supporting Indigenous peoples as they continue to address the many challenges they face and rebuild traditional languages and cultures. "Jesuits and the wider Church need to continue our long journey with native people, walking with them and following their lead toward a brighter future" (South Dakota Report, p. 47).

Thank you for considering these reflections based on the long and continuing experience of Jesuits working with Indigenous people in Canada and the U.S. Our prayers are with you and all those working to prepare for the upcoming Synod.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Father Timothy Kesicki, SJ
President

Original in English

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From Reconciliation to Decolonization: A Rough Guide

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As Jesuits take stock of Pope Francis' twin commitments to ecological justice and Indigenous rights as featured in the upcoming synod on Amazonia, we must acknowledge our own need for deepened understanding of the complex and often deeply destructive impact of Jesuit missions to Indigenous Peoples in the Americas. This understanding and the conversion of perspective that it demands includes many common elements: coming to terms with the shadow side of our missionary past by acknowledging the bias of cultural superiority and ethnocentric racism; misguided and destructive attempts to "civilize" Indigenous People by outlawing their ceremonies, seizing their children, and forcing a European style education upon them; imposed baptism, just to name a few offenses. Many of these abuses were described in detail in the US Bishops' *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - a Pastoral Letter Against Racism*. As contemporary Jesuits seek to accompany Indigenous people today in a spirit of solidarity, it is necessary first to come to a deep understanding of the painful and traumatic past, including our responsibility for unwittingly introducing subjugation, colonialism, and even genocide to the very people we were attempting to offer means of spiritual salvation. In this essay, two Jesuits from the Great Lakes watershed, one Canadian, and one American, reflect on their experiences of gradually coming to consciousness about this fraught past and its current implications for how we answer the Church's call to work for justice, healing, and reconciliation among Indigenous Peoples.

Peter's Experience in Canada

In the Society of Jesus we might feel proud of our call to reconciliation, whether in the *Formula of the Institute* (1550), or in *Decree 1* of *GC 36*. It is however one thing to promote reconciliation among others; it is quite another thing when it is the Society and the Church who need reconciliation. I would like to share with you some aspects of the Jesuit journey of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada and draw from it some insights that might apply elsewhere.

On my very first day as provincial of the Jesuits in English Canada (2012-2018) I went to public hearings in Toronto of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. There I completely misinterpreted my role as a church representative and made some serious cultural and pastoral mistakes. More on this in a moment.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission or TRC (2008-2015) was mandated to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians by hearing and documenting the experiences of Indigenous people whom the government had taken from their families and communities as children and moved to "Indian residential schools", where both students and staff lived. These schools operated in Canada from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. They were part of a national policy of removing Indigenous cultures from Indigenous people and transforming them into "civilized", "white" Canadians, fit for employment in industry and domestic service. These schools were mandated, owned and paid for by the Canadian government, but their day-to-day operations were entrusted to the Christian churches. Catholic religious orders and dioceses ran the majority of residential schools. The Jesuits ran one, which closed in 1959. The churches were more interested in evangelization than in the government's long-term strategies of colonization, which were not widely known at the time, but nevertheless most church and government people shared similar attitudes of superiority and "paternal responsibility" toward Indigenous people.

The overall impact of these schools on Indigenous Peoples in Canada has been devastating. Separated from their families and communities, sometimes for years, young Indigenous people experienced loss of culture, traditions, languages, spiritualties, and close family ties. When they grew up they did not know how to parent, because they no longer remembered how their own parents had cared for them. Many felt ashamed at being "Indian" and did not fit well into either Indigenous or white cultures. Many experienced physical and sexual abuse in the schools. They also felt ashamed to express their pain and anger. The loss of identity and self-respect has expressed itself in addictions, violence, broken families, and suicides. The woundedness has been passed on from generation to generation.

In the 1980's a resurgence of Indigenous Peoples in Canada started to be felt. This helped break the culture of silence and shame around residential schools, and in the 1990's Indigenous people's pain and anger exploded publicly in much litigation, which was directed at the government and the churches. This shocked and confused the churches, as for over two decades we had sided with Indigenous Peoples against the government in many social justice issues. It seemed that "suddenly" residential school questions sidelined all of these apparently postcolonial alliances. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was part of a massive alternative dispute agreement between the former students, Indigenous political organizations, the major Christian churches and the government of Canada to admit responsibility, to compensate for the injustice done, to preserve the memory of what had happened, to promote healing and, eventually, reconciliation. The implementation of this "Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement" (IRSSA) began in 2007 and continues today.

Now, back to the story of my first day as provincial.

I had been warned that the Church would be weakly represented at the gathering, so it would be good that I attend the meeting, and furthermore that I go dressed as a priest in order to make the Church's concern visible. So I did. What a mistake! My roman collar was not a symbol of evangelical care and solidarity but instead was a trigger for terrible memories of

trauma. I tried to "dress down" by removing the tab from my collar and rolling up my sleeves. Indigenous people were still obviously uncomfortable. I felt ashamed, awkward and exposed. I wanted to hide with other church people, but I realized it was appropriate and important that I feel ashamed and exposed as a church person, as this was part of experiencing our corporate responsibility for harms done in the residential schools and for our own roles in colonization. What really melted my heart though, was that despite their discomfort, Indigenous people were not rude to me or disrespectful. Some even tried to make me feel welcome. I felt like the prodigal son returning home. This experience marked my service as provincial from beginning to end.

Three years later, in 2015, our Jesuit province gathered a large number of Jesuits and lay apostolic leaders for a communal discernment exercise about our priorities. The first priority to emerge, the Spiritual Exercises, came as no surprise. The second priority however was a surprise, Indigenous relations. This did not mean Indigenous ministry, which has always been important in Canada. Instead it meant that all our apostolates, no matter what they were, should develop relations with Indigenous People and that this should be part of our way of proceeding in Canada. This grace was a switch from "helping" Indigenous Peoples to becoming partners in building the Kingdom of God. An Indigenous Elder who was part of the discernment exercise exclaimed, "Finally I feel like a friend!" And this was after 40 years of collaboration!

These two experiences were made possible by an earlier transformation. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, Indigenous people in the communities where we worked started complaining to us about having been sexually abused by Jesuits in the past, either in our parishes or in our residential school. At first we did not believe them, so they started to sue us. We reacted defensively in the courts. After a while we realized that we were treating old friends like they were enemies, and that many of their stories had the ring of truth. We started to listen seriously and respectfully. We started to believe. We started to admit guilt and responsibility, and to offer help for healing. We learned to put the victims and their needs before our own desires to defend ourselves. Indigenous people were showing us a side of ourselves and of our story that we had not been aware of, yet they did not want us to go away. Once we learned to listen, and to listen in a transformative way, this enabled further changes, like the ones described above.

All of the Christian churches in Canada seem to be moving along similar trajectories of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, although the Catholic Church seems slower than the others. These transformations have all happened because of our actual relationships with Indigenous people, because we have stayed with them and they with us, even when it has been painful. The challenge, and the source of resistance to meeting it, is that the reconciliation means not only a change in relationships but also a change of identity for us. It has been painful for people of faith to recognize that we have not been as innocent as we thought, and it has been especially difficult for religious leaders to be at the receiving end of moral and spiritual critique and teaching.

The pattern that I see in our own reconciliation and healing goes something like this. First there is disbelief, indignation and anger towards our accusers. Next there is listening, growing

trust and acceptance. Third comes admission of guilt and responsibility, apology and repentance, accompanied by loss of innocence. But this is only the beginning of reconciliation - "first reconciliation", if you will. For reconciliation to take root and be genuine it must also transform us. So in a fourth phase, the process must go beyond apology and restitution for concrete wrongs toward new relationships of mutuality and partnership and a new "postcolonial" identity – "second reconciliation". This can be called "transformative reconciliation"[1]. Thus, in the end, reconciliation must also be decolonization. The engine that moves us along the reconciliation trajectory is grace, and ongoing peer and critical relationships with newly self-confident Indigenous Peoples[2] and grace.

I believe that reconciliation is a sign of the times. If so, then it is filled with the Holy Spirit inviting us to participate in it. Furthermore, if this is indeed a sign of the times, then the phases of reconciliation might represent the communal spiritual movements of desolation and consolation at the level of societies and cultures, which constitute signs of the times[3].

David's Experience in the U.S.

The majority of Peter's experience has been with Indigenous Catholics in Canada, and through his work as Provincial at the national level, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. By contrast, "reconciliation" is not the project here, but rather, work toward justice and healing.[4] I offer a more local perspective based on my relationships with Indigenous People who do not espouse Christianity here on the other side of Lake Ontario. Though Peter and I certainly have in common the experience of learning the hard way about the impact of our forbearers in faith, and of our own blind spots. In Syracuse, New York, several of us at Le Moyne College are involved with local Indigenous leaders attempting to promote healing of relations that originate in the disastrous 17th century encounters between the French Jesuits and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people. This engagement has been sensitive, and challenging, and yet marked by hope for mutual relations that allow for collaboration on several initiatives related to the common good: environmental and ecological justice; Indigenous rights; education to transform racial and cultural biases; and an effort to secure the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, a 15th Century series of papal bull which have been a deep source of suffering and which continues to have impact today as it is still used in

[1] John Borrows and James Tully, "Reconciliation and Resurgence in Practice and in Question" in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings;* edited by Michael Asch, John Borrows and James Tully; Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2018; p.5

[2] Ibid.

[3] For this notion of the signs of the times, see Peter Bisson, S.J., "Breaking Open the Mysteries: Changing Jesuit Practices of Reading the Signs of the Times" in Johan Verstraeten, ed., *Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times in the Light of the Gospel* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanensium CCVIII); Leuven, Paris, Dudley MA: Leuven University Press, 2007, p. 121-148.

[4] "Reconciliation" is not a goal that is acceptable to the Haudenosaunee, as their view is that there is no point or circumstance in the historic past to which we can "reconcile". They were living on turtle island for centuries as free, independent and sovereign nations and people, before the Europeans, French and Jesuits invaded their homelands, bring war, devastating disease, ethnic cleaning, force assimilation, etc. They prefer the goal of healing.

property law (Sherrill vs. Oneida 2005 as decided in the US Supreme Court),a means of alienating land from Indigenous People.

My journey began when I arrived at Le Moyne College in 2009. Prof. Mary McDonald, PhD, who taught religious studies and specialized in Indigenous anthropology, approached me at the time, telling me, "Get to know the Onondaga (the central fire of the Haudenosaunee Nation). Of all Indigenous Peoples, they are very special in terms of the way that they have preserved their sovereignty. Their relationship with the Jesuits can be traced back to the 17th century when the Jesuits built a failed mission on Lake Onondaga. This relationship needs attention."

It took me several years before I took up Mary's charge. Mistakenly assuming that we could make up missed time, I set in process the motion that Le Moyne College would give an honorary degree to Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga and an internationally known indigenous rights activist. But this initiative was met with suspicion, with Oren asking, "Why would you want to do a thing like that?" As a representative of the Onondaga and an active critic of the Church for the missionary activities in the 17th Century and since, Oren couldn't understand why a Jesuit college would want to honor him. I began to learn just how deep these historic wounds were rooted and that the only way forward was by revisiting and working thru the past.

What began as a conversation about the College's desire to honor Oren Lyons gradually became a working group of faculty, local activists who are allies of the Onondaga Nation, and key Onondaga leaders engaged in a deep and difficult dialogue about everything that matters in this conversation about the implications of the Jesuit mission, the Christian roots of white privilege, and the need for justice and healing. It became clear right away that reconciliation was not a viable goal of this group. Goals and concerns of the group included the re-writing of the narrative presented at the "French Fort," a replica built in the 1930's to represent the 17th Century Jesuit mission, St. Marie Among the Iroquois, as well as support in securing the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, discussion of re-writing Le Moyne College's account of the Jesuit historical presence in Central New York, collaboration on issues related to climate change, and for consciousness raising related to Indigenous rights. But while each of these initiatives are important in their own right, I believe that the deeper work we're doing involves coming to terms with the Indigenous perspectives of that 17th Century history, including the destructive consequences of that mission and subsequent colonialism for Indigenous lives, cultures, land rights, and social welfare up to the present day.

In particular, since the 1980's, the Onondaga, have traced the origin of this wave of religious and cultural colonialism to the 15th century papal bulls known collectively as the Doctrine of Discovery. This "doctrine" licensed the colonial powers of the 17th and 18th centuries to seize lands unoccupied by Christians, forcibly removing or exterminating indigenous peoples who were not compliant. Not only do our indigenous leaders equate our forebears' missionary efforts with this militant, settler-colonial project, they also implicate Christianity in the origins of what they experience as white superiority, and systematic efforts at disenfranchising them from their rights, sovereignty, and cultural legacy.

Like Peter, I have found this process of coming to consciousness a complex and often painful one involving acknowledgement of my own missteps, letting go of defensiveness, developing empathy, and seeing anew. As relationships continue to deepen with my working group partners, I must see history through their eyes, and acknowledge the moral claim that this new vision makes upon me as an ally going forward.

Original in English

Jesuits of Canada: Our Apostolates among Indigenous Peoples Today

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Canadian Jesuit apostolates among Indigenous Peoples are centred in the cities of Montreal, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg and Regina; at the Shrine of the North American Jesuit Martyrs in Midland, Ontario; and in the Great Lakes regions of Northern Ontario. The origin of the mission in the 19th century was the request of the Catholic Church to provide pastoral care for the Indigenous Peoples of the Great Lakes regions, First Nations known as Anishinaabe.

The Canadian Context

Canada's Indigenous Peoples (Inuit, Métis, First Nations) have been revitalizing their traditional cultures since the middle of the last century. Nearly three centuries of authoritative policies, during both colonial times and after confederation, were directed toward excluding them and their concerns in the making of the Canadian nation, by way of isolation or assimilation. Indigenous cultures were suppressed at times and in places, but never were completely lost. Today, the fruits of their cultural revival are clearly evident: Indigenous languages are being learned at all school levels as never before; cultural expressions of music, drumming, dance, theatre, and art are a part of the national heritage; Indigenous voices are heard in politics, academics, and the media; Indigenous activists are speaking out for justice, fairness, human rights, and land and water rights; they administrate their own healthcare, education, and band or territorial government. The self-respect and pride Indigenous People feel today can be felt throughout the nation.

Indigenous Canadians still face many challenges. Racism and prejudice are still widespread in Canadian society. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected on material and social levels: physical poverty; lack of clean drinking water on many reserves; lower employment levels; lack of educational and recreational opportunities for youth; endemic health issues, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease; issues and failures of child welfare and the well-being of families; higher percentage than the rest of society of Indigenous men and women incarcerated by the justice system; higher percentage than the rest of society of Indigenous women and girls missing or murdered. It is widely recognized by Indigenous Canadians that alcohol was not a part of their traditional cultures and that its availability has been one of the greatest causes of problems for their people. The variety of addictive drugs available today is equally troublesome to Indigenous people and communities.

Indigenous Peoples are overcoming these troubles with tremendous resilience. Canadian society is now beginning to realize the great wealth of spiritual wisdom held by Indigenous Peoples and cultures. For some Indigenous persons, the teachings of traditional spirituality is their way of life, and for others, traditional teachings have become integrated into the Christian faith that they received and in which they were raised. Indigenous spirituality is influencing social and global concerns, such as the development of restorative justice systems and the care of Creation.

During this time of cultural revitalization, many former students of Indian Residential Schools have come forward publicly with stories of abuses they suffered in these institutions. For over a century, these schools were mandated by the Canadian government, but operated by churches and church-affiliated organizations. This included many residential schools operated under the auspices of some Catholic religious orders and congregations, and the Catholic dioceses in which they were located. Jesuits operated a residential school at Spanish, Ontario.

Between 2008 and 2015, the Canadian people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, undertook the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), on the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools. The TRC was one part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which went into effect in 2007, a massive alternative dispute agreement between the Survivors of residential schools, the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the major Christian churches and the government of Canada. The Jesuits in English Canada participated fully in the TRC, and as a part of this process formally presented a Statement of Reconciliation: apologizing for our wrongs, thanking Indigenous people for their continued friendship with us, and committing ourselves to continue to support them. The findings of the TRC, particularly the testimonies of physical and sexual abuse from residential school survivors, helped to raise the consciousness and conscience of Canadian society. The process of healing and reconciliation of Canada with Indigenous Canadians is outlined through 94 Calls to Action that the TRC presented to be implemented by Canadian society as a whole. A number of these Calls to Action are directed to the Churches of Canada.

Another current issue of great magnitude in Canada is the disproportionate number of Indigenous women and girls who go missing or are murdered compared to the rest of Canadian society. Canada initiated the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2015. The National Inquiry is scheduled to conclude in June 2019.

The Catholic Church's Response

During this same period of Indigenous cultural revitalization, the Catholic Church has also been in the process of renewal. From the spiritual energy that was moving Indigenous Catholics even before the Second Vatican Council, the cause for the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, a First Nations Catholic woman of the 17th century, grew into a strong movement in the Church, calling forth many Indigenous spiritual leaders.

In the dioceses of Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, Ontario, where the Jesuit order has longstanding missions among the Anishinaabe, several Indigenous men became deacons, and many women — deacons' wives first, but others later — became lay ministers, mandated by their bishops to serve as spiritual leaders in their communities. The leadership of men and women in the Church reflects a cultural preference and sensitivity of Indigenous Peoples. In 1984, many Indigenous deacons and members of the Diocesan Order of Women (DOW) were present before the pope, St. John Paul II, during a ceremony at the Shrine of the North American Jesuit Martyrs in Midland, Ontario. It was here that St. John Paul proclaimed, "Christ, in the members of his body, is himself Indian" (i.e., Indigenous).

The formation of Indigenous deacons, DOW, and later DOS (Diocesan Order of Service) in the Catholic dioceses of Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay was in large part the work of the Jesuits. This was the original purpose of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre in Espanola, Ontario, though this beautiful place has since seen Indigenous youth camps, as well as being used in other service to the Catholic Church and ecumenical partners. Today, Jesuits continue these formation programs for ministry in both dioceses. The same Jesuit builders of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre continued their work in Thunder Bay, creating the Anemki Wadj Centre.

Recently, three Indigenous deacons were ordained and four women were mandated as Ministers of Service (MOS) for the Thunder Bay diocese. These programs have their theological and spiritual roots in the typical course of study for deacons and priests in the Catholic Church; inculturation, contextual theology and interreligious dialogue; Indigenous traditional spirituality and cultural way of life; and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. As a result, these Indigenous ministers are prepared to serve their Churches in culturally sensitive ways.

The Catholic Church in Canada is committed to the work of reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. The Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council is the primary committee of the Canadian Bishops' Conference for addressing the Church's relationship and ongoing mission of reconciliation. The newly formed Our Lady of Guadeloupe Circle is a Catholic coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, from bishops and clergy to members of lay movements, who are "engaged in renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada" (OLGC website).

In the cities of Regina and Winnipeg, where the urban Indigenous populations are quite large and many young people contend with problems at home and in the community, making educational success difficult, the Nativity School model was utilized to begin two inner-city schools to help at-risk youth, especially Indigenous youth. The model was adapted to meet the needs of Indigenous youth and their families. Mother Theresa and Gonzaga middle schools, in Regina and Winnipeg respectively, are Catholic schools and Ignatian apostolates that help their students succeed, and continue to accompany them long after they have left these schools. The schools also teach positively about their students' Indigenous cultural heritage.

In response to the Calls to Action of the TRC and to assist in the formation of non-Indigenous priests and Church ministers, the Jesuits have commissioned two Indigenous culture

immersion programs for Jesuits in formation: in Regina, Saskatchewan, and in Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation, Ontario. The Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa, a work supported by the Archdiocese of Ottawa, presents an Indigenous Ministry program annually and is now developing an Indigenous cultural immersion program, also to help the formation of non-Indigenous ministers.

In the summer of 2017, another innovative work of reconciliation took place in Canada. The Canoe Pilgrimage from Midland to Montreal, led by one of the youngest Canadian Jesuit scholastics, revisited the journey made by Jesuits of old and their First Nations companions in the 17th century. For the Indigenous and non-Indigenous pilgrims, the Canoe Pilgrimage unfolded as a model of the journey of reconciliation that the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples are undertaking.

Looking Forward

The Church's model of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Canada's Indigenous Peoples has moved: from pastoral care and evangelical proclamation, quite often with a colonizing mentality (before the cultural revitalization); then to the formation and empowerment of Indigenous spiritual leaders to proclaim the Gospel in culturally appropriate ways, as well as solidarity with Indigenous social justice issues (in the early cultural revitalization); and now to the work of reconciliation, dialogue, and the healing of colonizing impacts on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The priority of all our apostolates among Indigenous Peoples is reconciliation: the pursuit of real friendship and trust among each other. Real friendship is to have a desire in one's heart for the well-being of the other in body, mind, and spirit. This holds both for each person and the communities we encounter.

As representatives of the Church among Indigenous Peoples today, we always embody, in a visible way, the representatives of many generations of our ancestors who caused harm to these people, their way of life, their land, and their waters. Thus, we are sorry for past harms and desire to make amends.

Indigenous Elders often recall the missionaries of days gone by: priests and religious sisters who lived among the people in their communities and learned their languages, who hunted, fished, cooked, and ate with them, some even playing hockey with them. They became true friends of the people by living closely the way of life of the people and coming to know "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" of the people they served (Gaudium et spes).

We are inspired by the examples of our ancestors in this work: priests, religious, and lay persons who built friendship and trust by their way of life — the friendship and trust we experience among those we live and work. Thus, we will continue to live in accompaniment with our Indigenous friends, especially in their communities, where this is possible.

Though there are fewer young priests and religious serving among Indigenous Peoples today, we are grateful for the few there are, especially as we hear that they are becoming trusted friends of Indigenous persons with each passing day.

Dialogue is fundamental for reconciliation. We will continue to engage in the Catholic-Traditional dialogue with humility, respecting each other's way of life. In this, we will also look toward experts in the field of interreligious dialogue and endeavour to learn from them.

We are always learning more and becoming aware of the legacy of residential school and abuse by clergy. Thus, we will seek and be open to ways of helping survivors and victims of abuse to find healing.

We feel that we are still being called to the education and formation of Indigenous Church leaders, those who are already mandated to work in their communities, and those who are, at this time, growing in faith and knowledge and discerning their calls to service. Therefore, we continue to build up ministries programs for Indigenous Church leaders at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie; at the Anemki Wadj Centre, Diocese of Thunder Bay; and in support of the Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa, Indigenous Pastoral Leadership Formation Program. We will call upon experts from our institutions of higher learning to help us in this work.

There are many Indigenous Canadians who, though not Catholic or Christian, share the same desires we have for the coming of reconciliation and the healing work necessary among the people of our land. Some desire to have us as collaborators, or partners, in work. Thus, we are open to cooperation with others in such works as: reconciliation; the special care of young people; the care and protection of Mother Earth; and the cause of restorative justice.

For Indigenous Peoples, the Earth is our Mother, who gives life to all. For the Catholic Church, the Care of Our Common Home is also a priority work of reconciliation and healing. Indigenous Peoples across North America are deeply moved to protect Mother Earth, especially in these days, the water. Movements of both protest and prayer to protect the water from poisoning are arising among Indigenous Peoples, such as the Mother Earth Water Walk of the Great Lakes, and the Standing Rock protest. In the spirit of Laudato Si', we will strive to join the movement of prayer for protection of the water. Our reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples must include reconciliation with the earth.

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Native American Issues and Challenges for the Church in Native Ministries

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This report is based on discussions with Jesuits and Lakota elders in western South Dakota, where Jesuits and Indigenous tribes have worked together since 1875 on several large reservations and surrounding areas. Currently 14 Jesuits and Lakota collaborators operate five schools and 15 parishes on the 7000 square miles of the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations, and in Rapid City, South Dakota. This report will naturally be from that perspective, but will try to identify issues and challenges affecting U.S. Indigenous peoples generally, even if seen from a regional and largely reservation perspective.

Nationally, the U.S. native population is over 5 million, made up of 573 tribes with over 300 distinct languages and quite diverse histories and cultural backgrounds. Through intermarriage about 40 percent of native people have some mixture of other ethnicities, though for tribes the important identifier is cultural upbringing, not the percentage of Indian blood. With such diversity, it is difficult to describe an overall general picture of Native Americans socially or religiously. There are some common elements, but the tribes have always operated as separate and distinct "nations," both politically and culturally. Today a majority of native people live mixed in with mainstream American culture outside of Indian reservations. Only a quarter of them live on reservations, to which they were once confined by the U.S. government, but which are often regarded today as "homelands" where their cultural identity can best be fostered.

In common, it can be said that all native cultures have some similar elements in their worldviews and spirituality, though expressed in a wide variety of practices and beliefs. All native cultures have a strong sense of the presence of God's spirit in all creation. They have deep connections to the land, to nature, and to all creatures — "the two-legged, the four legged, the winged and the finned." Group solidarity and inter-relatedness are emphasized in their ethos, rather than individualism.

All American Indigenous peoples have experienced subjugation and oppression by Euro-American waves of immigration. Early U.S. government policy focused on separating native people from "civilized" immigrants, with forced marches away from the native people's traditional lands upon which white settlers were increasingly encroaching. After the Civil War, U.S. policy became forced assimilation into the dominant Euro-American culture. Typical was a statement in the late 19th century U.S. Senate: "It is necessary to kill the Indian

to save the man." The "manifest destiny" of American expansion, supported by military campaigns, forced many native people onto "reservations," in reality prisoner of war camps on small portions of their traditional territories.

U.S. government treaty obligations, in exchange for confiscated native lands, have often been honored mostly in the breach. This history of subjugation and forced assimilation is often now referred to as cultural genocide. In the last half century, the dominant U.S. society and government have moved away from active suppression; they now largely ignore native people, leaving them mostly voiceless politically and socially.

Presently, reservations have the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the U.S., along with the highest rates for infant deaths, suicides, diabetes, and tuberculosis. Native people have the lowest life expectancy of any ethnic group, and many native reservations are the poorest counties in the U.S. In many ways, generations of impoverishment and oppression from the outside have led to widespread alcoholism and addiction, which is now the major "enemy within," causing a lot of dysfunction in families and social structures.

Yet in the face of all these difficulties, as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things." In the past half century or so there has been a remarkable resurgence of Native American culture, reclaiming their identity, fostering their own sense of dignity in the face of widespread discrimination. Native people are moving in important ways to reclaim leadership over their own lives and sovereignty. This is more evident where tribes are located near major cities with casinos generating substantial revenues, or where tribes have been left lands with valuable mineral, agricultural, or fishery resources. This frees them from over-dependency on the U.S. government's sclerotic delivery of treaty-promised but inadequate assistance. But most native reservations do not have such economic advancement possibilities, including all the reservations where the Midwest Jesuit Province works in native ministries.

Even where economic resources are scarce, as on reservations in South Dakota, there are increasing native entrepreneurial efforts to create some businesses on reservations, which in turn can provide badly needed local employment. Indigenous leadership is becoming more abundant, lessening dependence on outsiders to control economic and political affairs on the reservation. Native people have successfully worked together to challenge environmental depredations of their lands by corporations and governments. More native people are moving ahead with their education, enabling them to pursue meaningful careers of leadership both on and off the reservation.

In these social conditions for native people, often difficult but improving in places, the Church faces a number of challenges in re-imaging the traditional ways it once carried out native ministries. Traditional missiology (pre-Vatican II) and great sacrifices by past missionaries created the foundations of a native Church; about 20 percent of native people in the U.S. are Catholic. But changes in Indigenous society as well as in the Church require discerning new directions in native ministries.

Increasingly the Church needs to develop native leadership at all levels of ministry. This is not only because of substantial diminishment in the number of non-native priests, sisters, and other ministers. In any situation, a vibrant local church depends upon leaders coming from their own local culture who can best harness the energy and insights of their people. Such development of Indigenous leadership is moving ahead slowly, but somewhat fitfully, at least in native ministries in the Midwest Jesuit Province.

There are several particular challenges the Church and Jesuits face currently in developing such leadership and in dealing with evangelization in general on reservations.

First there is the challenge of reconciliation with Native Americans over the wrongs that we Christians and Jesuits were complicit in or perpetuated in the past. It was not just the government that treated native people badly. As part of the colonializing forces, Christianity played an integral role in the program of "civilizing" native people, cooperating with the government in removing native cultures and forcing assimilation to Euro-American ways. Particularly where churches ran boarding schools in the past, these dealt real blows to native identity and sense of self-worth. Jesuits have publicly apologized for such complicity in the mainstream culture's deprecation of native culture, particularly in dealing with children in the past. For example, in 1993 Superior General Kolvenbach made such a public apology in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. But recovery from such historical trauma takes repeated reengagement for healing.

With the welcome restoration and re-flourishing of native culture, many once Christian families have left Christianity, often saying they want to return to only traditional ways of spiritual faith and practice. We have to work hard to reclaim Christian Catholic identity beyond the "ghosts" of our early cultural insensitivities and missiology. In the past, missionaries told native people: *You cannot be both Catholic and Lakota (or Ojibwe, etc.) in your religion*. Today local traditionalists often repeat that back. So we struggle to find ways to co-create a faith and Church that is truly Lakota-Catholic, boldly embracing both as a fuller, more enriching faith than that described by either adjective alone. The current canonization process for Nicholas Black Elk, initiated at the request of many native people, will be very helpful in presenting a model of integrating Lakota values and spirituality into Catholic faith. Declaring him a saint will not only legitimize the many *seeds of the word* and *enlightening rays* (Vatican II) found in Lakota and Indigenous spiritualities, it will also illumine them for the enrichment of the universal Church.

Current native ministries are also continuing their emphasis on education. They try to focus not just on academic success, but in creative ways try to support the re-flourishing of native culture and identity in students. This can enable them to withstand pressures from a dominant and increasingly global culture to conform and leave behind their cultural richness. If they are taught their native languages, spiritual traditions, and history, they can acquire the confidence and inner fortitude to overcome their inner feelings of inadequacy, as well as the discrimination they will face in the wider society. Such education also helps form them as "men and women for others," with both social responsibility and a strong faith.

Finally, Jesuits and the wider Church need to continue our long journey with native people, one that brought the Society to the New World in the first place. We need to keep walking with them and following their lead toward a brighter future. Native ministries are difficult not because they are native, but because of the difficult situations the native people have been forced to live in. For the Church and for Jesuits, walking with the Indigenous is a grace and a blessing. So it is not time to pull back from native ministries because of difficulty or diminishment in personnel or resources. Reservations are especially among the "peripheries" where Pope Francis urges the Church to go in ministry, to give and to be given grace, and to meet the Lord.

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The Rocky Mountain Mission Today

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Most tribes in the Northwest United States are rushing into the 21st century with a new energy to re-envision themselves and care for their peoples, lands, and waters. With substantial resources and revenue from the casino business and other diverse financial adventures they have been able to create their own school systems, medical and recreational centers, elder retirement complexes, housing for tribal members, police departments, and tribal court systems that better reflect tribal values. Tribal lobbying on the state and federal level has steadily grown in focus, skill, and intensity.

This is all a clear pushback against the cultural forces in the United States that tried to treat Indigenous Peoples as extinct or irrelevant in the ongoing story of our nation. The tribes want the peoples around them to know that they are rising, emerging from a long suffering into a vibrant life. There is still the undertow of drug and alcohol abuse that devastates family structures, but there is an even stronger cresting wave of disciplined and informed tribal leadership. This leadership is intent on strengthening tribal infrastructures and saving what is left of the surrounding natural environment. Indeed, the Northwest tribes are the last potent line of defense against international oil, gas, and coal companies that threaten to destroy the beauty inherent in the Pacific Northwest.

In the midst of the Indigenous artistic and spiritual renaissance that has taken place these last 60 years, the Catholic Church is no longer in the center of Indigenous Peoples' awareness. The people themselves are the focus of awareness, racing into post-modernity with their increasingly complex tribal infrastructures. Large tribal administration buildings — with all of the related tribal services close by — are the centers of the peoples' ongoing life together.

Within this growing context, Jesuits — well aware of the sorrow they carry for their shortcomings — ask only to accompany the Indigenous peoples with whom they live and work. Jesuits seek to understand and support the goals that tribal leaders have chosen in order to protect and care for their peoples. Indigenous Peoples in the Northwest are centered on resistance to forces that would disappear and destroy them. Their survival, confidence, and joy are the work of the Spirit in them.

This may seem to be a humble or unimportant role for the Jesuits who live and work with Indigenous Peoples, but it is for the Jesuits involved a Christic experience as they share in the Indigenous journey through life, death, and the journey into the world to come. In this

process, Indigenous and Jesuit sense of joy and fulfillment become joined together in a seamless manner. We live, we die, and we go on together in union with all living ones. Profound friendships and family ties make us transparent to one another, and together we share in all of the help sent from the unseen part of the world. We experience bonds of love and respect that are eternal. These experiences of spiritual consolation confirm for us that our journey together is truly affirmed, sustained, and guided by the Spirit.

Where the gift of this encounter is going will only gradually be revealed to us. Indigenous Peoples and Jesuits in the Northwest are walking a road together that has not yet been named.

Our Manner of Proceeding

As Indigenous and Jesuit companions, we need to reframe the general perspectives that inform our work together with some helpful premises.

1. European-American wisdom traditions are not more profound, nor intellectually and morally superior than Indigenous wisdom traditions.

2. Indigenous Peoples do not need to be rescued from being themselves nor to abrogate their autonomy and sovereignty to the descendants of the Europeans who continue to rush like a tsunami over these lands and waters we now name the Americas.

3. Over untold thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples were taught their sacred lifeways by the same Spirit that taught and guided Jesus of Nazareth through his own sacred ancestral teachings.

4. The Risen Jesus, the Christ, in union with the Father and the Spirit, is alive in Indigenous sacred lifeways as they continue to evolve amidst changing cultural contexts.

5. Both the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian churches with their own ways of social organization, religious teaching, and sacred ceremonies, in no way erase or supplant Indigenous ways of social organization, teaching, and ceremonial ways. Indigenous sacred lifeways offer a valuable contribution to our common search for ultimate meaning and value. Original Indigenous understandings of the cosmos must be respected as much as early Judeo-Christion understandings of the cosmos. These cosmologies can mutually and harmoniously complement each other.

6. Indigenous Peoples and Jesuits who choose to live both Indigenous sacred lifeways and Christian sacred lifeways should be honored and encouraged in their endeavors to find and integrate spiritual enrichment and strength from both spiritual ways.

7. The road we are on now as Indigenous Peoples and Jesuits is a road created and sustained by profound and lasting friendships in which we continually learn from one another and try to discern the road forward together. We also acknowledge

that our past journey together has often been painful, difficult, and a slow process of growth toward a greater emergence of the beauty of our lives together.

8. The ongoing colonial invasion that continues to gravely wound Indigenous Peoples and the lands and waters given by the Creator must continue to be addressed not only by Indigenous Peoples, but also by Jesuit universities, high schools, parishes, and in all spheres of public discourse, seeking understanding, compassion, and a greater solidarity.

9. Indigenous Peoples and Jesuit companions will continue their focus on the critical importance of Indigenous autonomy. This includes all forms of sovereignty: spiritual, political, educational, economic, jurisdictional, environmental, and medical.

10. Indigenous Peoples and Jesuit companions must continue the necessary reflection and conversation to discern and re-imagine their ongoing work together in the continually changing environmental, social, political, and economic contexts of the 21st century.

Original in English

Jesuit Native Ministry in Alaska

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Jesuits have ministered among the Yup'ik and Cup'ik (Eskimo) peoples since 1887. Today we provide priestly ministry in eight parishes in the Missionary Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska. We also lead programs for Rural Deacon and Native Ministry Training in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region of the diocese. Ministry to this region includes three Franciscan Sisters and several diocesan priests.

Our ministry is situated in a cross-cultural context. In most villages the languages spoken are a mix of Yup'ik/Cup'ik and English. Some villages adhere closely to traditional language use in their homes and normal interactions, while others have transitioned to a more English standard. Some elders still find the use of English difficult and confusing. But even for those whose English skills are advanced, their worldviews are tightly bound to traditional ways. To many, Euro-Western lifeways and patterns still feel uncomfortable, unfair, and unwelcome. Nevertheless, the needs for shifting from a mostly subsistence economy and way of life to a cash-based society are rapidly overtaking the population.

The people live in villages near the coast or beside rivers. They are traditionally hunters and gatherers and still in large measure live off the land and the water in subsistence fashion. Many traditional skills and customs are being replaced, as they transition to the use of modern implements and to the elements of modern culture.

Those among whom we minister are highly adaptable and autonomous people for whom learning is at the initiative of the learner and the ability to take care of one's self and to honor relationships with others is of highest value. With our Euro-American tradition of direct and enforced instruction, it seems that we have not yet learned or quite understood how to transmit the faith in the manner that they learn from their culture.

We have centered our contemporary pastoral planning on the need for an empowered Yup'ik/Cup'ik Catholic Church. We strive to be engaged in a cooperative effort with leaders in the region to develop an ecclesial presence that reflects and respects the traditional worldview and lifeways. Our strategies involve leadership training of lay and diaconate leaders as well as participation in formal and informal intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The aim of Jesuit missionaries since the 1960s has been to build an Indigenous Church in which the people recognize themselves and the ways of their ancestors. This has happened primarily in developing parish ministry cohorts that includes a leadership team (priest, deacon, parish administrator); worship ministers (Eucharist ministers, lectors, music ministry); and religious education (catechists, sacrament preparers). With the exception of the church in Bethel, in one year a particular village will have a priest for about 20 percent of the Sundays. On 80 percent of the Sundays, the worship is led by either a deacon or a Eucharist minister.

The generation of elders deeply steeped in the practice of the old ways is waning. Practices of the Church have changed from what was learned from European Jesuits in the early to mid-1900s. Involvement in Church activities seems less than in years past. The young have little knowledge of the Catholic faith. Renewal is experienced as something that is foreign to traditional culture.

The people here are imaginative in adapting. Elders are respected and consulted. Their word is powerful. With the changing of language and new resources from outside, the young experience confusion. Some use resources outside of the Church to advance themselves, but many others feel lost. The first five years after high school ends are especially challenging for the young: many sudden deaths occur in this timeframe and usually with the involvement of drugs.

Young people are pulled in multiple ways. They are being proselytized by fundamentalists and enticed by modern pleasures, philosophies of life and a plethora of distractions and invitations. How does the Church find leaders among them to help them stabilize their inner lives as they struggle amidst the winds of change here and called by sirens beyond?

Since 1996 we have gone from 10 to four Jesuits ministering here, though the number of diocesan priests has increased during this time. We need some infusion of younger men with imagination. They need not be many in number. We need men who operate out of the charism of the Society of Jesus — that alone would be a great gift to the Yup'ik Church.

Continuity of relationships is very important among the Yup'ik people. To come here for short terms and then transition out is problematic for the local Church. There can be men who come into this region with expertise which helps the Yup'ik, but it is also important that men whom they know become part of the history of their lives. There should be men in long-term connection and continuity who can mediate the use of the expertise of other Jesuits for the development of the Church in the Yukon Kusokwim Delta. The people are eager to learn and in many other areas are used to constant development and updating through education.

Essential to the future of our work will be access to Jesuits and others who have a gift for working with youth, as well as theological training and skills in the intellectual fields of social and cultural anthropology. Young people in this region are experiencing rapid adaptations in these areas. As their social and cultural worlds evolve, they experience disconnects, as all young people do, with the ways of their ancestors, as well as the ways of Euro-Western

society. The Church in this region is being challenged to straddle multiple worlds alongside the young.

As one example of this, for about five years now, Fr. Tri Dinh, SJ, of Christus Ministries, has led spring retreats for young people, supported by Jesuits and others here, as well as Jesuit scholastics. The long-range goals of this include: 1) developing durable relationships between young people and their parishes and 2) bringing more active ministry of spiritual life development into our ministry here.

We must continue to be a welcoming community to fellow Jesuits, especially to novices, scholastics, tertians and Jesuits in special studies in order to give them a taste of ministry with the Native people of Alaska and in this way allow the Holy Spirit to sow seeds of desire in their hearts to share in this work. This is the way the Holy Spirit can move in the hearts of younger Jesuits and invite their generous "yes" to this ministry.

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Our Relationship to the Forest: *African Wisdom and Respect for Our Common Home*

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I was ten years old when the event I am about to relate took place. I was living at the time with my whole family in this small multi-ethnic community where my Dad was both a teacher and a religious instructor. Kabwanga – that is the name of the small community – lies in the heart of the Congo Republic, in a then province of Western Kasai. We were therefore a long way from the city.

The context in which we found ourselves was quite dramatic. One of my younger brothers, Rodrigue Kavula, was critically ill. Various attempts to cure him were not met with much success. Tension was mounting and we were very worried. A friend of the family was at our side and observed our confusion. He suggested to my father that we try African traditional medicine, in a last attempt to save his life and spare my family. He asked him to immediately call on a well-regarded traditional local healer with great experience. My father hesitated. We must keep in mind that he was a teacher and a religious instructor. On both accounts he had reservations. That is understandable. But in view of the desperate situation my younger brother was finding himself in, Hubert Matadi, my father, decided to bring his case to the healer whose talent and skills were recognized by all.

Forewarned, Mr. Ubeme (his name meaning 'beauty'), the healer, was waiting for us. He requested that my father accompany him to the small forest located a short distance from his house. I followed. The healer came to a sudden halt when he found the tree that he had been searching for. He then signalled for us to stop. He looked at the tree with insistence and with a form of reverence. A smile briefly lit up his face and he started to talk to the tree.

Here are, approximately, the words he spoke to the tree:

"*We have come here to seek your help. One of your brothers is sick. He is dying. From our ancestors, we have learnt that the disease, which threatens to take him away from us, may be healed by your generosity. We need to take an infinitely small piece of you. Don't refuse us this favour. We rely on your generosity. Your brother will heal from this gift. Joy and peace will be with us again*".

Mr. Ubeme touched the earth as a sign of respect. And then, armed with his long knife, he cut a piece of the bark that he needed. I couldn't say what he did exactly with this piece of bark or how he prepared the remedy that he immediately gave my younger brother to drink. However, I remember the words he uttered before giving my sick younger brother the

medicine. "*Creation is filled with remedies and food for our living. The medicine you are about to take comes from the forest, our support. When you drink it you will recover your strength. May our Creator and our ancestors answer our prayers. May they hear us".* After a few days of treatment, my younger brother regained his health. He is still alive.

I probably wouldn't be relating this event had I not carefully read Pope Francis' Laudato Si' encyclical. I would even go as far as saying: this event was the key to my understanding of the first encyclical of the first Jesuit pope. Whose name Francis refers not to his companion Francis Xavier but rather to Francis of Assisi, author of the Laudato Si' prayer [Praise be to You…]. The pope wrote that he took Francis of Assisi's name as a guide and inspiration because:

> [he] is the example par excellence of care fo rhte vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron Saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christian. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply love for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim, who lived in simplicity and wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. (LS, 10)

Let us now go back to the story of the healing of my brother to try and point out a few of its more meaningful aspects.

Firstly, the sad circumstances surrounding the event. What prompted our healer to go in search of a tree's generosity was the disease suffered by my brother, the nature of which was related to him by my father. The context is therefore one in which a life had to be saved, joy regained and peace recovered.

Secondly: the meaning of the relationship with the tree. The reverence of our healer toward the tree was impressive. To listen to a human being talk to a tree, with such respect, and to hold the space in the forest with such reverence, would have brought a smile to my lips, had I not found myself in a situation with no place for amusement. In the light of this event, even though I don't want to compare my brother's healer with Francis of Assisi, I must admit that when I read *Laudato Si'* again, I have an even better understanding of the attitude of Francis of Assisi, for whom every creature reveals the presence of the Creator. I shall return to this.

Thirdly, the concurring of several elements in nature towards the protection of life

Understanding *Laudato Si'* appears to me easier in view of the elements which I have just mentioned – the context of suffering and disease – as an opening to the beneficence of nature, reverence and respect, as the just and dignified attitude in the presence of creation, and finally, the necessity for an interconnectedness with nature as a condition for the protection of human life.

1. Suffering and creation, what do they have in common?

A hasty reading of *The Canticle of the Creatures* by Francis of Assisi, which inspired the title of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, can be misleading. Let us read these few verses to understand what I mean:

Praised be to You, my Lord,
In all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,
Through whom You give us day and light;
And he is beautiful and radiant, with great splendour,
And bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord,
For Sister Moon and the Stars.
In heaven You have formed them
Clear and bright and fair.

A hasty reading of these few verses, as I said, could mislead one into thinking that their author wrote them in a state of great joy. And yet it is the exact opposite! The man who *glorifies, honours and praises* his Creator was a creature devastated by illness. The context in which he found himself – circa 1225 - was one characterised by epidemics and calamities of all sorts. We must not forget that the dominant theology, at the time when Francis was praising the Creator through his creation, regarded with great suspicion "this earthly world in danger of being corrupted" and that "epidemics and calamities themselves also contributed to engender a fear of nature."[1] Francis of Assisi was familiar with this theology and used to put it into practice, but, once again, as Francois Cheung wrote, this Assisi pauper "…could see higher and further. He was sustained by his desire to glorify the greatness of Creation, thus praising all the gifts granted to us through which Life lasts, renews and transforms itself."

Thus, suffering turns into a path of adoration and praise. A difficult path but a path that is hard to avoid for someone who wants to meet the Creator face to face. Job's experience brought me some understanding of this. To bring Job back to reason, to help him find, as Francois Cheung says again, the exact measure of his human capacity, God guided him back to the creation. To a suffering and agitated Job who – with great audacity and courage – proposed to bring God to court, Yahve introduced himself as the Creator. But let us listen to him and try to understand that creative wisdom alone is capable of confounding a man conceited and full of himself:

Who is this who darkens counsel with words of ignorance?
Gird up your loins, now, like a man;
I will question you, and you tell me the answers!
Where were you when I founded the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its size? Surely you know?
Who stretched out the measuring line for it? (Jb 38: 2-5)

[1] François Cheng, *Assise, une rencontre inattendue* [Assisi, an unexpected encounter], Paris, Albin Michel, 2012, p. 30.

Have you ever in your lifetime commanded the morning
and shown the dawn its place
For taking hold of the ends of the earth,
till the wicked are shaken from it?" (Jb 38: 12-13)

From chapter 38 to chapter 41, God teaches Job the wonders of Creation and forces him to give this meaningful response: *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be hindered. By hearsay I had heard of you, but now my eye has seen you". (Jb 42: 2-5)*

Let us go back to Francis of Assisi. It seems to us that his sincere praise of creation and his acknowledging of the love and kindness of the Creator through his creation gives back to him, to he who is sick, suffering, exhausted and infinitely small, strength, and renews his hope. According to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, "Man is created to praise, respect and serve God our Lord, and thereby save his soul. Other things on the face of the earth are created for Man, to help him pursue the end for which he was created" (SE 23). He thus helps us to realize that it would be difficult to understand the beauty and depth of *Laudato Si* if we don't incorporate the dimension of suffering in our earthly pilgrimage. Francis of Assisi praised the divine creation because he became acutely aware that

> …what he saw said to him that, despite everything, there is cause for praising; What else if not creation itself, with the splendour of the starry sky and the magnificence of the fertile earth, this creation where, once, Everything arose from Nothing. While praising, he clearly saw the whole process of creation, an all-out gift which we have every reason to be wholly grateful for. He recognized the fact that, miraculously, the Being is and that because of this primary event, just as miraculously, he, the infinitely small, is too. Praising, he immersed himself into the Boundless, the Open. He knew he was an integral part of an immense adventure unfolding, the adventure of life, with all its challenges and passions, its sufferings and joys, its hurtling towards the abyss and rising to transcendence.[2]

The experience of my brother's sickness was what triggered these thoughts. Dramatic circumstances met with a happy ending, thanks to the healer enamoured with creation. He helped us understand that we can rely on creation to prolong life and, above all, to celebrate it. It is this, our relationship to creation which I would like to briefly explore.

2. Reverence and respect as the dignified and just attitude towards creation

The attitude of reverence and absolute respect of Mr Ubeme, my younger brother's healer, has never ceased to impress me. Words sadly cannot convey with enough emphasis this attitude which revealed the mysterious interaction between him and the tree. Reading and meditating on Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures helps us to better understand the mysterious relationship between man and creation. The sun becomes our brother as he gives us daylight, a symbol of The Almighty; the moon becomes our sister as she bestows upon us, along with

[2] François Cheng, *Assise, une rencontre inattendue* [Assisi, an unexpected encounter], p. 34.

the stars, radiance and beauty… one knows how much light and beauty are capable of healing and strengthening life. The preservation of our planet, our common home, depends on our attitude towards the elements which make it up. If we respected creation, we would also respect the humanity to whom the Creator entrusted it.

3. The mystique of Ecology: when several elements come together as a condition to safeguarding our common home.

My brother's disease required an new course of action on the part of my family. We needed several events to happen together in order to see my younger brother recover. We were among friends, one of whom suggested to my father that he consult with a traditional healer. The latter gave his trust to a tree from the forest, a tree with whom he engaged with. He spoke to the tree, calling on our ancestors, even better, calling to the Creator, who created both the tree and our ancestors. The concurrence of these events restored peace and joy to our family.

This experience, both sad and joyful, made me aware of the different challenges that Africa will need to face. This is the subject of what follows.

4. The Society's challenges in Africa

a. Preserving ancestral (indigenous) knowledge

One of the main objectives of the Center for Research and Sustainable Development Communication (CERED) of which I am the managing director, is to gather, to encode and to validate or invalidate ancient African knowledge.

My connections with the rural world have revealed to me not only the richness of ancestral wisdom, but also the risk of losing it. There is a rich and unquestionable knowledge that those who came before us have built on over the centuries. This knowledge has been mostly orally transmitted through generations (myths and story-telling). Amadou Hampate Ban, a famous African writer wrote: "In Africa, every time an older person dies, a library burns to the ground". The generation of the wise African elders is disappearing. It is becoming urgent to start researching African wisdom and share it, through writing, with the world and future generations. The areas which could be the object of such research are: medicinal plants, art, traditional initiations and their learning processes, etc.

b. Education and training of young people in the area of social networking

Another challenge is related to the education and training of young people at a time of social networking and globalization. While they are an essential tool for communication and interpersonal relations, social networks challenge our ways of educating and training young religious people and any other young people to a sense of responsibility, discretion, patience and self-reflective work. They also challenge the adults who can feel overwhelmed by their omnipresence. Everything seems to be happening instantaneously. Little time and importance are given to thinking. Events happen at such a rate and are shared so quickly that we need new tools for analysis in this dynamic context.

c. The challenge of educating through role modelling

Young people don't really need discourses anymore. They sometimes challenge their tutors and teachers. They want to follow those who act rather than those who make the rules and who are often quite removed from their day-to-day reality.

d. The Environmental Challenge

The Republic of Congo, my country, is one of the lungs of the biodiversity mentioned by Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si* encyclical. This document challenges us. How do we avoid wasting our resources, such as water or electricity? How do we use renewable energies in a context of poverty? How do we educate people, in a practical way, in preserving our 'common home' in a context of injustice, where those who decide what the future of the world will be, are the same people who destroy, for often selfish reasons, this very 'common home' of ours. How do we explain to those who think they are its victims that they also have, at their level, a share of responsibility in the destruction of our 'common home' and that they must contribute to safeguarding it?

These four challenges are intertwined. To name differentiate between them is not to separate them. We must find the common thread which highlights their intrinsic unity.

Conclusion

The serious disease suffered by my younger brother, and its subsequent cure, started me on this train of thought. A sad, even dramatic situation gave us some lessons on the nature of our relationship with creation and its Creator. The attitude of Mr Ubeme, our healer, is no different from that of one of the lovers of creation that humanity has known, Francis of Assisi. The appeal of Pope Francis for the safeguarding of our 'common home' will be achieved through respect and reverence for creation, whose mission is to protect our lives and the life of humanity. Only the creator of the heavens and the earth is capable of bestowing this grace upon us.

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Ecology as a Tool of Peace in Northeast India

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Northeast India (NEI) which is the territory of seven states that form the Kohima Region of the Society of Jesus is one of two mega-biodiversity zones in India. It is also a biodiversity hotspot. Its diversity goes beyond flora and fauna to human communities and languages. Because this diversity faces various threats (that are explained below) it is also a region of ethnic conflicts. There is a close link between the conflicts, its ethnic and ecological diversity and environmental degradation. One can see its human diversity from the fact that, this region which is home to around four percent of India's population has 213 (33.54%) of its 635 ethnic communities and some 400 of its 1,600 languages and dialects.

Amid this diversity ecology is understood not as the urban middle class view of "beautiful trees and tigers" that are more often than not to be protected from people. It is understood as people's livelihood or an ecosystem with people's communities at its centre. Most communities that live in the biodiversity rich areas of NEI are tribal (indigenous). As a result, a threat to the ecosystem is a threat also to the indigenous communities that have developed their economy, cultural, social and political systems and identity around it. The inverse is equally true. Action around ecology has to be seen within this perspective.

The State of Ecology

In NEI land has become the centre of the ecosystem. Threat to it is high because of encroachment by immigrants from North India, Nepal and Bangladesh as well as by local people. In addition is regular acquisition by the government for highways, defence, industries dams and similar projects. Employment generation is poor in NEI because of low investment in productive industries. As a result, dependence on land and forests is high. So its alienation is a major cause of ethnic conflicts. For example, in recent decades Assam which accounted for 31 million of NEI's 42 million population in 2011, has received two million immigrants who have occupied much land. In Tripura during the last five decades the proportion of its indigenous peoples has declined from 59 percent to 32 percent because of the influx of Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh. According to estimates they have occupied 30 to 40 percent of tribal land. Resentment against it has spilled into conflicts and bloodshed.

Also the flora and fauna are under threat because NEI has become the last source of industrial timber for most of India. Deforestation in India is done through what the biologist Prof.

Madhav Gadgil calls sequential exhaustion. It began in the 19th century in the South and the West and moved North and Eastwards. By the 1980s much of Eastern India was deforested and in the 1990s NEI became the main source of timber and bamboos for industries all over the country. It is destroying much of the biodiversity and people's livelihood that is linked to it. In addition, traditional knowledge that the indigenous communities have developed around its biodiversity, particularly medicinal herbs, is under threat. The agents of pharmaceutical companies coming as tourists pirate this knowledge and smuggle the herbs out of the region. Once the pharmaceutical companies patent their knowledge, the herbs and their traditional system go beyond their reach. Such bio-piracy has increased after being legalised at the signing of the World Trade Organisation Agreement in 1994. It puts traditional knowledge in the 'public domain' thus legalising bio-piracy since anyone can appropriate what is in the public domain with no legal restriction put on it. It is an attack on people's livelihood, culture and identity.

Equally important is linguistic diversity. From an ecological perspective a language is not merely a mode of communication but also a depositary of people's knowledge around their environmental resources. Because of the domination of the languages of bigger communities and the thrust of globalisation to impose a single culture everywhere, many languages, particularly of small tribes are endangered. They may die soon if efforts are not made to save them.

Conflicts are an offshoot of such threats to people's livelihood. In this context the efforts of the Kohima Jesuit Region take three main forms namely research, action in the field and efforts to protect their languages. Most efforts are in their initial stages. It means that, what is being done is totally inadequate to deal with the massive problem of threats to the environment and people's livelihood. It is a beginning that needs to be pushed forward and developed further.

Action on Environmental Threats

Action on this front takes several forms and is coordinated by Purvanchal Pragati Samaj (PPS) the social action wing of Kohima Region which works mainly through women's Self-Help Groups (SHG). Its first step is awareness building about environmental degradation and the possibilities of people taking steps as a group to counter it. In its training programmes during the last three years PPS has been making efforts to share knowledge on sustainable development with the SHG members. Basic to it is respecting and nurturing nature and keeping the earth safe for their children.

Small actions follow from its awareness building efforts. For example, in Arunachal Pradesh, one of the seven states, the SHGs came together to plant saplings along the newly paved roads in order to counter the heat produced by the asphalt. Within their villages women planted trees on fallow community lands as well as on private lands. While improving vegetation the type of trees chosen ensure that their nutritional status and income improve. Side by side women try to motivate men folk not to cut trees excessively and protect especially the trees close to the water bodies.

Another area of concern is slash and burn cultivation known also as shifting cultivation. It has traditionally been the best agricultural practice for their terrain i.e. on slopes up to 20 degree gradient. However, it tends to become destructive today because of reduced forest cover and deforestation by industrial forces and encroachment of their land. As needs like children's education and health care grow, one of the ways of earning additional income is by cutting forests and selling land. Thus they too add to deforestation and lose both their land and forests. Because of shortage of land people are now forced to overexploit the slash and burn cultivation plots. Their land is thus slowly becoming infertile. People realise today that both land and flora and fauna have to be preserved. So the SHGs plan to introduce organic settled cultivation in order to prevent or at the least reduce the destruction of forests. PPS would also like to introduce organic farming by setting up organic compost pits for every family garden. This alternative is a mode of preventing land loss and deforestation.

In Senapati District of Manipur state three villages have introduced family vegetable gardens. The variety of vegetables they grow in these gardens improves their food intake and will also reduce slash and burn cultivation and secure the flora and fauna. Side by side they are making an effort to conserve most of the medicinal plants which are being destroyed. Moreover, there is water shortage in many villages since the streams flowing from the hilltops have gone dry because of deforestation. People today feel the need to protect their land, forests and water sources. The training programmes of PPS have contributed much to this awareness.

The effort today is to introduce sustainable organic fruit and vegetable gardens with compost manure to sustain the land and also counter endemic malnourishment particularly among women and children. People are unable to increase their income with their traditional crops like cabbages because their market is controlled by middlemen who pay them a very low price. The family gardens will hopefully be an answer to this problem by growing a variety of vegetables on a minimum of a third of an acre of land. During autumn the SHGs lend to each family the amount required to cultivate that land and the family repays the loan during winter. The variety of vegetables grown improves their food intake and the excess produced pays for needs such as children's education, thus preventing land alienation and deforestation.

Research and Action

Research is being done mainly by North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) of the Region. Its mandate is to combine serious intellectual inputs with action and networking with civil society organisations active among the poor for policy changes in their favour. Its focus is on land, tribal customary laws and the processes of conflicts and peace building. NESRC tries to take its findings back to the communities studied and bring the leaders of communities in conflict together for a face to face dialogue, as a confidence building measure and an initial step of a long peace process. It does much of this work with its partners four states of NEI. All of them encourage SHGs made up of women from all the communities in conflict. Together these women are encouraged to take up action centred around land and the environment as a peace building measure.

To give two examples, in the Bongaigaon area of Assam, there is an ongoing conflict between the local Bodo tribe and the Santhal and other tribes originally from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh states in Eastern India. They were brought to Assam in slavelike conditions to work in the British owned tea gardens. After their tenure ended they were encouraged to occupy and settle down on what the government called common land but was in fact Bodo livelihood. That began the conflict between them and it has continued for decades. There have been three major conflagrations during the last two decades. People displaced by the conflict found refuge in what was once a lush green forest. They cut the forest at first to build their camps and them for sale as firewood or timber since it was their only source of income. It has now become forest land without trees and competition has begun among people to occupy and cultivate it.

That is where the Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society (BGSS) is working for the ecological revival of that land as a step towards peace. The SHGs are made up of women from all the groups in conflict. They have decided to work together on the degraded forest land instead of competing for that dry land. During the last one year and more meetings have been organised by BGSS with support from NESRC to discuss the studies done on conflicts and find a way out. Their leaders meet off and on to find ways of rebuilding confidence among themselves. Women as well as men are slowly coming to believe that the best path to peace is to optimise the production of the land that is left with them and to revive degraded forests. Research on the causes of conflicts, on action to prevent further conflagration and efforts to revive their land and ecology go hand in hand in this effort.

Similarly, there is an ongoing conflict in Manipur between the Hill Tribes and plains people around land. There has been bloodshed and ongoing tension. As a small step to find a solution, the Diocesan Social Service Society (DSSS) together with NESRC is trying to bring leaders of communities in conflict together for a dialogue as a confidence building measure. These meetings are being used to begin work with the SHGs to revive the environment. These are small efforts and there is a long way to go. But through them one is beginning to see the revival of land and other environmental sources as steps towards peace.

Protecting Dying Languages

Reviving and protecting endangered languages is equally important for the revival of ecology and movement towards peace. An important step has been taken in the Kohima Region by setting a person aside for this purpose. Fr Vijay D'Souza began with the language of the Aka tribe of Arunachal Pradesh that has only about 6,000 speakers. Amid the fear of its extinction Vijay lived with the people, learnt their language and with the help of their leaders developed a script for it. With the help of some young persons of their tribe he has written two books in the language of the Aka. They are the very first books in their language.

At present Vijay is doing his doctorate in linguistics. As part of its golden jubilee in 2020 Kohima Region is planning a Centre for Indigenous Cultures and Languages because there are more tribes whose language, identity and traditional knowledge are under threat. Like the remaining initiatives described above, this one too is a small beginning which requires a strong push to develop. One hopes that the challenge will be accepted.

Is There a Way Out?

It should be clear from the description of the ecological resources of NEI and threats to the livelihood of its indigenous peoples, that the Kohima Region has made a very small beginning in the direction of combining peace processes with the cause of the indigenous peoples and ecological revival. It has a long way to go. The future lies in finding creative ways of combining these components. Jesuits alone cannot achieve it but they can take the initiative in bringing together people involved in ecological revival, peace processes and protecting their land that is under threat from immigrants, from the government and from alienation within the communities since some richer individuals try to monopolise it.

It shows that the search for alternatives is not going to be easy because the forces causing the destruction of their livelihood are extremely strong. Most communities tend to stop at fighting to protect their land and the conflicts continue. A possible way out of this vicious circle may be to help the communities to find ways of moving away from fighting to protect their land to reviving what is left of it. It involves members of the communities in conflict working together. It is a step towards peace by improving the productivity of that land. It requires a long process of confidence building among the members of these communities. Together they also need to resist the forces that are destroying their livelihood and it requires much support from people who are convinced that the environment is first and foremost their livelihood and the centre of their culture and identity.

Equally important is for those who support the indigenous peoples to realise that their communities have a right to change but on their terms, not on those imposed on them by outsiders. Those who support them need to avoid the patronising attitude of viewing the traditional indigenous systems like slash and burn cultivation as destructive in themselves. Their systems have to be analysed and alternatives should take the form of updating their tradition to deal with changing times. Skill training and other types of outside support have to be within this perspective. Outsiders can also join the indigenous communities to demand cost-effective education and health care that is within their reach. The role of these inputs is to support the revival of their ecology to counter the threats they face from various forces.

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Indigenous Peoples in India and Integral Ecology

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Introduction

Ecology is the science of relationship of living beings with their *environment* or surroundings - the external conditions – influencing life and its growth. Ecology and environment both refer to the interaction of the living beings with their life-sustaining surroundings.[1] An *integral ecology*[2] would therefore include natural, economic, social, political and cultural surroundings. Here is an attempt to look at some of these aspects of ecology among indigenous peoples of the world in general and India in particular for reflection and action at national and international levels.

Indigenous Peoples in India

Indigenous peoples in India are called tribals or Adivasis[3] as interchangeable terms and in Government documents, they are Scheduled Tribes or STs. There are 104,281,034 (104.28 million)[4] persons as Scheduled Tribes forming 8.61% of Indian population. The figure, however, covers only those Adivasis/tribals who are in the lists of the (a) 6th Schedule of the North-East States, and (b) 5th Schedule of the rest of the States in the Constitution of the Indian Union, whereas there are many more Adivasi groups still that are not listed in these Schedules. Ironically, the Government of India does not accept that there are indigenous peoples in the country and yet it has been enlisting Scheduled Tribes in all the past decennial census! Over the years, the Adivasis have attained a distinct identity by fostering a balance between man, nature and the Supreme Being. Their village councils in action foster and promote democratic political thinking at the grass root level. This is important because the present day systems of administration and other institutions depend on the ruling elite and not on the people. Socio-culturally, there is no place for caste hierarchy among the Adivasis because they are not part of any caste society.

[1] "We live in a broken world," *Promotio Iustitiae*, No. 70, April 1999, p. 2
[2] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*
[3] Original and autochthonous (native) inhabitants of a given region.
[4] Source: Census of India, 2011

Values of the Adivasis/Indigenous Peoples

The indigenous peoples in general are "able to instil a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the *land* [Emphasis added].They are also concerned about what they will eventually leave to their children and grandchildren. These values are deeply rooted in them."[5] However, the said values do not exist in their totality in the Adivasi societies of India today. For under the impact of globalization, they have been considerably fragmented, resources have been largely individualized and socio-economic competition has sharpened. Though their existence and uniqueness are in their togetherness and solidarity, globalisation has introduced "deviation from their central values in relation to nature (land, forest, water), a relation characterised by harmony, co-existence, accommodation and symbiosis."[6] Yet, the "positive elements in their values remain a kind of ideal types in terms of which the Adivasi societies may be evaluated or reconstructed."[7]

Adivasi/Indigenous Spirituality

In the Adivasi world view everything has to be understood in the perspective of creation. Harmony with creation is the starting point of their spirituality and their search for liberation. An awareness of being one with the whole of creation is, therefore, the spiritual foundation of the Adivasi/tribal people. Characteristics of their spiritual life is their harmonious and symbiotic relationship with God, one another and nature. They cherish a community centred approach in their living. It is essential, therefore, to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. "[They] should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best."[8]

Creation

Before the Supreme Being created the present world, in all the creation accounts of major tribal groups, that is, Mundas, Hos, Santals, Khadias and Uraons in central and eastern India; there is mention of the sea with its creatures covering everywhere. In His works of creation He takes the help of these creatures, especially the crab, prawn, fish, turtle, separately in bringing a tiny bit of clay to Him from the bottom of the sea in order to make the present earth. All of them failed in fetching the clay because the water of the sea washed it away. Finally, the earthworm succeeds in fetching it by swallowing and throwing it out on His palm. It is from this tiny bit

[5] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si,* # 179
[6] Kujur J. Marianus, "Globalisation and Marginalisation: The Context of Tribals and Jesuits in India," *Promotio Iustitiae: Narratives on Globalisation*, No. 88, 2005/3, p. 10.
[7] Tirkey Agapit, "Tribal Culture and Identity," in J. Desrochers (ed.), *Promoting Tribal Rights and Culture*, NBCLC Series on Current Issues, Bangalore, 2004, pp.21-22.
[8] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, # 146.*

of clay that He forms the present earth and all its creatures. He divides the human beings into different totemic exogamous clans taking their origin from specific plants, animals, birds, fish, minerals, etc. In their poetry and folklore, these creatures form their recurrent themes. They respect and protect them in their ecological practices.

Ecological Crisis

In the decades after independence (1947) in India, exploitation of nature has increased enormously. Various mineral resources are found in the areas inhabited by the Adivasis. Large-scale development projects, such as, mining, industrial plants, multi-purpose hydro-electric power dams, irrigation projects, tourist development centres, transportation networks, military bases, toxic waste dumps including nuclear waste, use of explosives and landmines, contaminate the land, water and air. Together they affect the life of the people, their lands and territories by causing ecological disaster, such as, environmental pollution, deforestation, displacement resulting in landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, lack of food security, and untimely death!

The forest once known as the Dandakaranya, which stretches from West Bengal through Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, is home to millions of India's Adivasi people. The print and electronic media call it the 'Red Corridor' or the Maoist corridor. "A number of corporations from relatively unknown ones to the biggest mining companies and steel manufacturers in the world – the Mittals, Jindals, Tata, Essar, Posco, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and Vedanta"[9] -are in the line to appropriate Adivasi homelands. "Such unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources and environment degrades the quality of life"[10]. It sinks the poor, especially the indigenous peoples in misery which can be understood with the fact that "at the national level, 45.86% of all Adivasis in India live below the poverty line which is nothing more than a starvation line."[11] It means that almost half of India's Adivasis go to bed every night starving.

The Supreme Court while dealing with a case relating to the acquisition of tribal land in the State of Odisha, India; held the State responsible for fuelling extreme discontent and giving rise to naxalism[12] and militancy. The Court also referred to the large-scale displacement of the Adivasis and said, "Non-settlement of their rights and non-provision of timely compensation of their lost land has created the worst kind of hatred among them towards development, possibly giving birth to extremism."[13] In 2008, an expert group appointed by the Planning Commission submitted to the government a report called "Development Challenges in

[9] Roy Arundhati, "The Heart of India is under Attack," Guardian.co.uk, Friday, October 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/oct/30/mining-india-maoists-green-hunt
[10] Kolvenbach, P.H., "We live in a broken world," *Promotio Iustitiae*, No. 70, April 1999, p. 7ff.
[11] Guruswamy Mohan & Ronald Abraham, *Redefining Poverty: A New Poverty Line for a New India,* Centre for Policy Alternatives, www.cpasindia.org
[12] This is a movement which derivesits name from 'Naxalbari', a village and a region in North Bengal, under the district of Darjeeling with its sub-divisional headquarters at Siligudi, India.
[13] Mahapatra, D., "Skewed Growth to blame for the rise of Naxals: SC," in *The Times of India*, New Delhi, July 20, 2010.https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Skewed-growth-to-blame-for-rise-of-Naxals-SC/articleshow/6193052.cms

Extremist-Affected Areas". It said, the Naxalite (Maoist[14]) movement had to be recognised as a political movement with a strong base among the landless and poor peasantry and Adivasis. Its emergence and growth need to be contextualised in the social conditions and experience of people who form a part of it. The huge gap between State policy and performance is a feature of these conditions. "Though the movement's professed long-term ideology is capturing State power by force, in its day-to-day manifestation, it is to be looked upon as basically a fight for social justice, equality, protection, security and local development."[15]

Indigenous Issues and Problems

In the erstwhile Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, India, special police with totemic names like Greyhounds, Scorpions and Commando of Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) are roaming around in the forests with licence to kill those whom they suspect to be their enemies. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the notorious Naga Battalion have already caused havoc and committed terrible atrocities in remote forest villages. "The government supported and armed the *Salwa Judum,* which has killed and raped men and women passing through the forests of Dantewada leaving 300,000 people homeless."[16] It was a State sponsored 'private militia' of the Adivasis recruited to wage war against their own people who were opposing the State's unjust development policies, killing innocent Adivasis, burning their villages, and committing extreme atrocities among them to induce terror. Its prime objective was to clear all obstacles for the safe entry of the corporate houses into the mineral rich region where the Adivasis had protested against land acquisition for development projects.

Indigenous Peoples fighting for Forest Rights

The tribal people in India are on the warpath against a Supreme Court of India order that threatens to evict millions of them from their natural environment. Hundreds of them blocked trains and road traffic in several cities across India on 5 March, 2019 as they held a shutdown protesting the court's move and the federal government's inability to overrule it. The protesters wanted the federal government to enact an ordinance to secure forest rights for tribal and other people dwelling there. They pledged to continue their struggle until their forest rights are secured. The unrest began on February 13, 2019 when the court asked 21 states to evict people living on forest land whose applications for land rights according to a 2006 Law were rejected. This Law was enacted to give land titles and user rights to tribal people and others living in forests for generations but government officials rejected their applications on flimsy grounds as part of a plan to usurp forest land and give it to industrial groups. It is estimated that at least "25% of India's 104 million tribal people face eviction after officials

[14] Maoist movement has its origin in the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) – CPI (Maoist) – one branch of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), that led the 1969 Naxalite uprising and was subsequently liquidated by the Indian government. The Maoists believe that the innate, structural inequality of Indian society can only be redressed by the violent overthrow of the Indian state.
[15] Roy Arundhati, *op. cit.* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/oct/30/mining-india-maoists-green-hunt
[16] *Ibid.*

rejected their applications for land rights."[17] Following a federal appeal, the court on 28 February, 2019 suspended that order until a hearing in July 2019.

Church Response

Church groups have been supporting the struggle as a significant number of Christians in central, northern and north-eastern Indian states come from tribal communities. "The Catholic Church stands with indigenous peoples for all their legitimate demands,"[18] said Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, Secretary-General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). Similarly, Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal, capital city of Madhya Pradesh State said, "Tribals do not threaten wildlife or destroy forest resources because they have been part of forest equilibrium for centuries."[19] It is a fact that the "forest cover, including dense forest, is the best in tribal areas even today. This should lead to the questioning of the practices of forest and wildlife conservation that are being followed at present."[20]

Jesuits and Indigenous Peoples Today

The ecological scenario mapped out above presents a very harsh, cruel and inhuman reality of the indigenous peoples in different parts of India today. Still there are some Jesuits with other civil society organizations doing advocacy works for the Adivasis. Sadly, the present anti-Christian political regime at the centre and several States in India puts obstacles in their works. Apart from what has been referred to above, some tribal Jesuits have done good works to promote tribal culture and identity and are involved in the people's movements for getting justice. There are other Jesuits, who have opted to live and work among various tribal communities and have given their best in championing their cause for obtaining justice.

Recommendations

In general, let the Jesuits of all ministries among the tribals study their languages and cultures. Let there be basic courses on Tribal Philosophy and Tribal Theology at National Centres - Delhi, Pune and Chennai - of Formation in the South Asian Conference. Let them read the accounts on heroic works of early missionaries, get acquainted with and draw inspiration from them for the present and future ministries. Inter-Province and inter-ministerial collaboration of Jesuits has to be the first priority among them in working for tribal concerns today. In doing so, let them be reminded that they "have sometimes sided with the 'high culture' of the elite in a particular setting: disregarding the cultures of the poor and sometimes allowing indigenous cultures or communities to be destroyed."[21] Let *Jesuit Ministry Among Indigenous Peoples* (JEMAI) in the South Asian Jesuit Conference be strengthened by way of engaging in research and publication on various tribal issues, problems and concerns. It has been suggested that in every area where the challenge regarding the ministry among the

[17] UCAN, March 7, 2019, New Delhi.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Editorials, "Who Is the Encroacher of Tribal Lands?", *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. LIV, No. 9, March 2, 2019, p. 9.
[21] GC 34, D. 4, # 95

indigenous peoples exists, the "Conference of Provincials form 'work groups' of Jesuits working in this apostolate."[22] This has to be implemented in the Conference promptly. Association and collaboration of Jesuits with other civil society organizations doing advocacy work have to be included in Jesuit ministries. Finally, more and more Jesuits working among the indigenous peoples need to go for the study of the Law of the land and its practice and in turn help the indigenous peoples themselves to become lawyers and legal experts as part of their long-term empowerment.

Original in English

[22]GC35: Other Documents, *Issues for the Ordinary Government of the Society of Jesus studied at the 35th GC.*

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Walking an Extra Mile with the Indigenous

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Need of Urgent Apology

The world stands in need of reconciliation with the indigenous peoples. First, an apology to them! An apology for ignoring them, for under-estimating them, for marginalising them, and for the consequent damages caused to them! Such an awakening and understanding need to be followed by the healing touch of acknowledging their identity, respecting their human and fundamental rights and integrating them into our mainstream communities. We need to make up for the brunt of neglect, marginalization, exploitation and even enslavement which this important segment of humanity has suffered for centuries!

The invaders, the explorers, the land grabbers, the business class, the colonizers etc., of the so-called liberal economy propaganda share the loot of indigenous peoples' resources facilitated by political favour.

The areas, where the indigenous live, are rich in resources like land, forest, minerals, wildlife, water, medicinal herbs, wholesome air and a peaceful atmosphere. Coupled with these is the proverbial hospitality of these simple people. Hence, the invader and the foreigner abundantly exploit the rich human resources of simplicity and hospitality of these generous hosts and make them a springboard for tapping the material resources they own. This activity has resulted in turning the affected people into victims; victims of impoverishment, slave trade, illiteracy, deportation, displacement, and underdevelopment.

History is Witness

The British period in India from mid 17th century to mid 20th century stands as abundant testimony to the dark age of the Indian subcontinent. Britain spawned and sponsored the East India Company with its initial trade interest. The Company, in turn, facilitated the process of Britain's political subjugation of India and catered to home interests.

The worst affected were areas inhabited by the indigenous. The vast expanse of land and the rich forest resources ignited the imagination of the invader. Gaining a secure foothold, the British administration soon introduced land survey as a springboard for extracting land tax as revenue. Cash economy and the money lending system replaced barter economy. With British blessing, moneylenders and petty traders mushroomed. The locals, having little purchasing power, had no other option than beg and borrow. The pressure of land tax and

the thrust of cash economy forced the indigenous to run into the lap of the waiting money lending class.

Pauperisation of the Resource-Rich People

Suffocated by exorbitant compound interest, people had to surrender their land to the moneylender-business class confraternity. The occupying government did little to encourage the agrarian economy. Draught and famine aggravated the situation. The lands of poor defaulting taxpayers were auctioned off by the government and handed over to the bidders who soon grew into an oppressive landlord class. Increasing pauperization and loss of land forced many to become wage labourers in north-eastern states' tea plantations, in central India's coal mines or as rail line workers. Such a situation added to the swelling army of the working class, alienated from even their homestead land.

The rich forest resources from the areas of the indigenous were shipped off to Britain for its industries which flourished in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. This was facilitated by the clever introduction of forest related laws. For example, the British introduced the Forest Act of 1878 which divided forests into (i) reserved, (ii) protected, and (iii) village forests. The best forests went under reserved forests. Villagers could not take anything from reserved forests, not even for their personal needs. For home needs, like poles or beams for house construction or fuel, they had the right of approach only to the village forests. Such harsh laws militated against the age old customary rights of the indigenous people and forest dwellers.

Mounting Frustration and Tsunami of Revolt

No wonder, the British period was laced with revolts and revolutionary uprisings, particularly of the indigenous, in several parts of India. This was very noticeable in central and eastern Indian belts which have a concentration of ethnic/indigenous people like the Mundas, the Oraons, the Hos, the Santals, the Gonds, the Saorias, the Bhatras, the Parjas, to name a few of the many tribal communities.

The 1770s and 1780s saw the **Saoria Paharia resistance** against the British incursion into their age old secure abode of the Rajmahal Hill Range in eastern India. The **Kol Revolt** in the Western Ghats of 1816-18 and the **Kol insurrection** of 1831 in Chotanagpur (in today's Jharkhand) demonstrated the anger of the Kol indigenous community against the oppressive tactics of the British. They resisted the leasing out of their land by the administration to non-indigenous money lenders for revenue collection. In the offensive, thousands of ethnic men, women and children were killed and the rebellion was suppressed with an iron hand.

The 1855 **Santal uprising** by Sido - Kanhu family members of Bhognadih in Jharkhand was an uprising of the whole community of Santals with traditional weapons against the harsh British laws and against the British-encouraged money lending and landlord systems.

The **Khond Revolt** (1835), the **Munda uprising** under the leadership of Birsa Munda in Jharkhand towards the fag end of the 19th century, the **Manipuri, Khasia and Garo uprisings** in the north-east around 1826, and numerous other insurrections were natural consequences

of harsh British laws and unjust administrative machinery. The traditional ethnic leadership system was demolished by the British by bringing the village chieftains under their administrative control.

Class versus Communitarian Structure

The class structure, pampered and fostered by the western occupying forces in India, saw to the denting of the social and communitarian fabric of the indigenous. The indigenous communities had been enjoying a pattern of traditional common ownership of the land and other community resources like water and forest. Their dispute resolution method was communitarian. And even their sense of justice within the community had a humanitarian touch as it did not follow the Hammurabi code of an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth. Instead, an amicable settlement was opted for. Under community consensus, both contending groups were reconciled after a symbolic fine on the guilty. Finally, it was followed by a community celebration with traditional drinks. This appreciable practice was alien to the adversarial system of the law courts introduced by the British. The invaders tried to demolish this indigenous wholesome system by introducing the individualistic and adversarial pattern of their judicial system. Thus, a culture of individualism and disharmony invaded an area where cohesion and consensus were honoured and time-tested customary practices.

Post-Independent India

Even after the British vacated and India became independent in 1947, India's indigenous population has remained very far from the mainstream population in economy, literacy, administration, quality education, capacity building and in getting a fair share of the national wealth and development. On the contrary, the land on which they have ancestral rights has been coming under heavy threat from the ruling class and big business corporations.

The resources of the indigenous area are mind-boggling. The indigenous belt of central and eastern Indian states contain at least one third of the national mineral wealth. The Chota Nagpur plateau in Jharkhand state in eastern India is known as the mineral heartland of India. This region reportedly possesses India's 100 per cent Kyanite, 93 per cent iron ore, 84 per cent coal, 70 per cent chromite, 70 per cent mica, 50 per cent fire clay, 45 per cent asbestos, 45 per cent china clay, 20 per cent limestone and 10 per cent manganese.

The central Indian belt, encompassing parts of the states such as Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, is the second largest mineral belt of India. Large deposits of manganese, bauxite, limestone, marble, coal, gems, mica, iron ore, graphite, etc. are available here.

The important fact is that all these areas are heavily occupied by indigenous communities who have been living there for ages. But, today, the so-called development push of particular governments and the interests of the business classes are on a marathon rush to push out the indigenous and other locals in order to excavate minerals, build factories and thermal plants or lay out highways to transport material resources to ports and manufacturing centres. Increasing land alienation, outmigration due to lack of irrigation facilities, non-existence of

crop insurance schemes and in-migration of the non-indigenous into indigenous areas have been drastically thinning down the indigenous population in these areas.

Land Tenancy Laws Sidelined

In spite of existing constitutional laws prohibiting sale or transfer of land belonging to the indigenous people, the local governments circumvent the laws or even change them to cater to the demands of the big business corporations.

Following the independence of India in 1947, in the name of national Five Year Plan Projects, several big industries, mega power plants and mining projects came up on indigenous people's lands. Jharkhand-based Jesuit social activist Stan Swamy's study shows that "during the past 50 years, approximately 20 million people have been displaced in India due to mines, dams, industries, wildlife sanctuaries and field-firing ranges. (Report, *Homeless in our own Homeland Jharkhand*, by Stan Swamy). It is very disturbing to note that the 55-60 per cent indigenous population in Jharkhand state in 1901 has come down to a current 26 per cent. Such is the price indigenous people have to pay by becoming victims of a top-heavy development.

Humanitarian Value System of the Indigenous

Apart from rich material resources, the indigenous people offer us good lessons in humanistic and ecological values the sense of which is fast eroding among the rest of us in the modern world. Their simplicity, accommodating hospitality towards even a stranger, their community living spirit, their consensus approach in decision making, their humane judicial sense and practice in criminal matters, among others, are wholesome lessons for us. In addition, their ecological sense is so marvellous. This is manifested in their reverence for mother earth, and their judicious utilization of forest produces or natural resources. There is no mine and thine in this arena. They take as much as they need for the day, as it were, from the forest, without any hoarding avarice. That itself is a protective cover over the forest, because they do not loot the forest for commercial purposes. In this aspect, they are the best forest conservators.

I have been told by my herbal teacher, a respected indigenous healer, that, when his people go to pluck a herb, they do it with one jerk so as to let some roots remain back in the earth for regeneration. Such wise practices are alien to us who want to uproot plants and trees wholesale for our business needs. Therefore, in terms of ecology, in terms of respect for mother earth or for the forest, we have much to learn from the age-old traditional practices of the indigenous peoples. Further, we need to apologize to them for not wanting to understand them, for taking undue advantage of their hospitality and for looting their resources for our selfish commercial needs.

Go to the Margins – Walk an Extra Mile!

In all this, where are we Jesuits? How does our option for the poor translate into ground level solidarity with the people living on the margins? It is consoling to know that the Provinces of the South Asian Conference have, in principle, acknowledged the timely need to stand with the oppressed and the marginalized. It is encouraging to see that there are pockets in different

Provinces where our men are engaged in advocacy, awareness programs, people's movements, legal aid, seminars, etc. Some of us may be on the censure list of government surveillance. Some have been falsely accused of allegedly colluding with anti-social elements; offices of some get raided and litigations clamped. But, these do not deter those conscientiously committed in espousing the cause of the marginalized.

However, it is to be pointed out that, even as the Indian Provinces profess a well-defined commitment to the marginalised, those who are of that frame of mind form a minuscule minority. Most of us Jesuits prefer to remain well ensconced with soft options in well established institutions with a seven-to-one or nine-to-four work schedule. Formation reports often indicate that the younger generation have little taste for taking up challenging tasks. They may admire from a safe distance the work of those who struggle in the battlefield, but, when it comes to participating in active solidarity with the struggling masses, they look the other way. Reports say that the modern day attractions of social media and 'googling' trends consume much of their time and energy, and, thus, they have little time or interest to walk an extra mile with the victims of marginalization.

Need to Turn on the Ignition Key

In order that all our ministries may show an appreciable solidarity with the poor, Provinces have to take steps to instil and inculcate in their members a deeper commitment that will make them feel challenged rather than enervated or incapacitated. The indolent spirit has to go. The spirit of Ignatian discernment and election, dormant in many instances, has to be re-ignited. This can be done through purposeful Province gatherings, socially oriented retreats, seminars, dialogues, and even spiritual counselling.

Provincial visitations can be well utilised to inspire and challenge our young and otherwise energetic men to channelize their human and spiritual resources towards creative use. I, personally, was disappointed to hear from the Provincial the statement: 'What can I do? He likes to be in the school ministry.' This was in reference to a recently ordained young man whose artistic talents took him to foreign countries for further training as an artist. If such is the predicament of a Provincial, then there is something wrong with us from top to bottom. Are we ready to sincerely look into such a phenomenon?

Courses such as social analysis, community resource utilization survey, agricultural or industrial mapping, legal awareness seminars, etc., which used to be part of summer programs of our scholastics are becoming a rare phenomenon. In this matter, the choice of personnel for formation-in-charge is of great importance. They need to be men of experience in different fields of apostolate rather than raw hands who could not fit anywhere else. Even the constitution and role of Province consultors need to be looked into. Very often, compulsive representation to different group formations within the Province, as a pacifying option, can have regressive effect. Provinces also need to encourage and equip people for journalistic and writing ministry.

Our keeping a safe distance from politics and politicians may be ok as far as active politics is concerned. But, there are occasions when we, in the interests of justice, need to challenge local

politicians for promoting the good of the oppressed, the marginalized or the indigenous. Such advocacy can yield good results. Given our status in imparting quality education through schools, colleges, social institutes and training centres, we have good access to important personalities in society and to the alumni. Such persons can be good sources for cooperating with us in reaching out to the oppressed and to the indigenous. Our networking with good social organizations like People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), or well-meaning advocates' forums, etc. can be helpful in highlighting and propagating issues related to our apostolate. Seeking judicial intervention through Public Interest Litigations (PIL) can go a long way in helping persons or communities, who have no other recourse to get their legal and constitutional rights.

In a word, walking an extra mile with the indigenous peoples is, indeed, an **EMMAUS WALK!**

Original in English

Indigenous Jharkhand: Where Birds and Fish Foretell Nature's Seasons

Stan L. Swamy, SJ
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The ancestors of the adivasis initially lived in the jungles, gathered food and hunted animals. Then slowly they started to produce food through agriculture. For that they had to clear small portions of jungles and gradually bring them under cultivation. This process not only brought them close to nature but also enabled them to understand the dynamics of nature. Even up to the present day, they have been keen observers of the behaviour of animals, birds, fish and changes in vegetation which helps them to predict and forecast the different seasons. This capacity enabled them to devise the what, the when and the how of the crops they would grow.

Here are some examples:

- The south-western monsoon (mid-June to mid-September) reaches Jharkhand region by way of the Bay of Bengal and is directed by the Himalayan range. Hence the rains come from the north-easterly direction. Now before the onset of monsoon, if the birds construct their nests facing the north it then means that the monsoon will be timely and good; if on the one hand the nests face the south that means the rains will come from the south and it will be erratic and there is a possibility of drought

- When monsoon rains start in mid-June with heavy showers, if fish go upstream and remain in upper level fields and streams, it means the monsoon will be plentiful and the water level will be high so the fish will not be cut off from lower-level water bodies. On the other hand, if all the fish remain at the lowest-level water bodies, then it means the monsoon will be scanty and faulty.

- *Palas* is a summer fruit, and *sharbath* (soft drink) made out of it is very healthy and cooling. It has three vertically placed seeds inside. If the top seed is missing in a particular year, then it means the monsoon will be late in coming. If the middle seed is missing, it means the mid-part of the monsoon will be deficient. Finally, if the lowest seed is missing, it would mean the end part of the monsoon will be faulty & scarce. This was a great help for the Jharkhandi farmer to decide on the type of crop and the time of sowing it.

- If summer fruits like mango, leechi, jamun are plentiful, it means the monsoon will come on time and the rains will be plentiful; if not, that year's monsoon will be scanty and untimely.

- When mini-doves (dove-like but smaller in size) build their nests and lay their eggs in very thick shrubs in low-lying areas, it is an indication that strong wind & storm will accompany the monsoon rains. If On the one hand they build their nests on tree branches, it can signify a more normal situation.

- Fresh leaves sprouting on plants & trees during summer… if even all over, indicate a good monsoon evenly spread out. If leaves on the lower part are scanty or sprout later than the upper part, then monsoon will be late and deficient.

- If during *Makkar Sankranti* period (mid-January), foxes call from the north and get a response from the south, the different seasons will be good and favourable during the rest of the year.

- Again, if during *Makkar* season there is good breeze from the northerly direction… it is an indication that all the seasons will be good. If the wind blows from any other direction, especially the south, it is a bad sign.

- If ants move their eggs from the holes and deposit them on the bund of the field or the pond, rain is approaching soon. If they take them up the tree, disasters like storm with consequent floods are possible.

- If cobra snakes at the height of summer make a short intermittent sound at night, it means good & timely monsoon. If instead it makes longish groans, it signifies a bad monsoon.

- If field-rats make their holes in the field itself, there will be a faulty or even no monsoon.

- During May if the moon is closely surrounded by a colourful ring, it is a sign of a fast approaching monsoon. A wider ring away from the moon indicates late rains.

- If the setting sun is red as it goes down during summer, a good monsoon is likely to follow. If it is whitish & pale, a weak or late monsoon will follow.

- Sal trees, especially Sal forest are positive help for good rains and beneficial seasons.

(The above observations were obtained from Shri Dhanur Singh Purty, a Ho Adivasi and a resident of a village close to Chaibasa. He is himself a keen observer and interpreter of nature)

Sad but true, such beautiful and observational ways of relating to nature are becoming a thing of the past. Needless to say the main reason for this great loss is the assault on nature (*jal, jangal, jamin)* by the capitalist ruling class and its instrument the govt. This assault came in two ways: (1) in the form of the political act of depriving the adivasi of his access to *jal, jangal, jamin*; and (2) in the form of violation of the eco-ethic norms & behaviour of the adivasi and his surroundings.

We all know that Capitalism will dig its own grave. We see that happening with regard to pollution of water, air, earth, vegetation and the destruction of the Ozone layer etc. The problem of 'earth warming' is being spoken about by environmentalists. But nobody is listening. The real tragedy is that the adivasi who has been the custodian of the forest from time immemorial has now been reduced to a situation where he himself has begun to denude the forest to eke out his livelihood. Verily adding injury to insult.

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Jesuits Journeying Amongst the Indigenous Peoples of Asia Pacific

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"The right to a sustainable future is a universal human right of the indigenous peoples."

Introduction

In her universal mission of a faith that does justice and reconciliation, the Society of Jesus worldwide is called upon to accompany a global population of 302.45 million indigenous peoples which make up approximately only 4.4% of the global population and about 10% of the poor, with nearly 80% of them living in Asia[1] and approximately 34% in the Pacific.

1. Plight of Indigenous Peoples

Generally the global population of indigenous communities face the relentless onslaughts of the plural sociocultural-religious and economic-geopolitical processes of globalization. These virulent processes de-territorialize their ancestral homelands and de-religionize their traditional everyday mysticism that facilitates their access to the Creator/Supreme Being, ancestral and nature spirits through their sacred chants, dances as they celebrate the seasonal agro-rituals. In addition, such onslaughts threaten their total wellbeing and survival, from their land and to their environment to the extent that the "indigenous Peoples suffer gravely in the face of technological expansion and resource exploitation where their rights are lost in the drive for development" in the Asia Pacific region.[2]

2. Concerns of the Bishops of Asia and the Pacific

In the face of such adversities, it is no surprise that that the Asian Bishops state, "in the past 15 years the FABC has urged local churches to focus on indigenous peoples as a major pastoral priority. As a social group indigenous peoples remain among the poorest of the poor in Asia"

[1] A glimpse of the indigenous population in some Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam has 10 Million (14%) Indigenous peoples (IPs) out of 53 million total population; Cambodia, 197,000 (1.3%) out of 24 million; Laos, 2.4-4.8 million (35-70% out of 24 million; Thailand , 1.1 million (1.5% out of 24 million; Myanmar, 14.4-19.2 million (30-40%) out of 135million; Malaysia, 3.4 million (12%) out of 97 million; Indonesia, 50-70 million (20-29% (Govt. only 365) out of 700 million; Philippines, 12-15 million (10-15%) out of 110 million. Melanesia has a total of 6.4 million, Micronesia, 650,000 and Polynesia, 1.8 million indigenous populations in 30,000 islands with a mere 376,000 square miles.

[2] Task Force on Ecology, Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, *Healing A Broken World: Special Report on Ecology*, *Promotio Iustitiae* no. 106 (2011), no. 22.

and though "impoverished and marginalized, indigenous communities are nonetheless endowed by God with distinctively rich religio-cultural traditions, characterized by their intimate communion with nature and their ancestors."[3] In the same breadth, the bishops of the Pacific, voiced their concerted concern in *Ecclesia in Oceania, remarking that* the indigenous population is "struggling to maintain their identity as they come in contact with secularized and urbanized Western societies and with the growing cultural influence of Asian immigrants", leading to "a gradual lessening of the natural religious sense which has led to disorientation in people's moral life and conscience: due largely to secularization in which the "religion, and especially Christianity, is moved to the margin and tends to be regarded as a strictly private matter for the individual with little relevance to public life" and "religious convictions and the insights of faith are at times denied their due role in forming people's consciences."[4] Yet what is commendable is that the indigenous population manifests "a powerful sense of community and solidarity in family and tribe, village or neighbourhood" to the extent that "decisions are reached by consensus achieved through an often long and complex process of dialogue" and thus dispose them to "the mystery of *communio* offered in Christ" living with "a real spirit of cooperation", "deep respect for tradition and authority", with a "sense of solidarity with those who went before them, and the exceptional authority accorded to parents and traditional leaders" embodied by the present generation.[5]

By and large, the plight of indigenous people worldwide is that they are "isolated and relegated to marginal social roles, see their identity, cultural legacy and natural world threatened" while offering the sacred wisdom of their earth-nature-mysticism to the world reeling from the unprecedented impact of ecological crises.[6]

3. Jesuit Engagement in Asia and Pacific

In the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, the Society offers various services directly and through the ministry of integral human development of the local dioceses. In the diverse countries of Asia and the Pacific, the Jesuits serve the indigenous communities through the social apostolate with income-generating, adult literacy, skill training and capacity-building programs, supporting their local and national movements for self-determination vis-à-vis the nation-states. In the education apostolate, the Jesuit schools and colleges offers scholarship to enable the young to avail themselves of the mainstream education sometimes, oftentimes at the cost of cultural self-alienation, while promoting the culture-based learning. Through the pastoral apostolate, the Jesuit administered parishes attempt to integrate the indigenous beliefs and rituals into the liturgy, and the traditional structures (Council of elders) and values (consensus building) into the parish life.

[3] The X Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Plenary Assembly, Xuan Loc & Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 10-16 December 2012, "Responding to the Challenges of Asia; A New Evangelization", no. 22.
[4] John Paul II, "*Ecclesia de Oceania*", promulgated on November 21, 2001, no. 7.
[5] Ibid.
[6] See GC34, Decree 3, "Our Mission and Justice," no. 14.

4. Our Challenges Opportunities and Proposals in the Light of UAPs

With the Society's Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP), [7] the Jesuits in the indigenous apostolate are exhorted to offer pastoral accompaniment (in all ministries, ranging from parish, schools, retreat and social centres, amongst the indigenous peoples) that commit Ours to promote "a process of globalization that recognizes multiplicity of cultures as a human treasure, protects cultural diversity, and promotes intercultural exchange."[8] This commitment has to be discerned and further articulated in the light of the Society's four Universal Apostolic Preferences.

4.1. *Show the Way to God through the Spiritual Exercise*

With reference to the first UAP that enjoins Ours are challenged to bridge the indigenous earth/nature mysticism with the Spiritual Exercises. A case in point is Point 2 of *Contemplatio ad amorem*. This contemplation will enable the indigenous wo/men elders, healers, mystics, shamans and the indigenous professionals to realize that the incarnational dimension of God's indwelling in creatures, in the elements, in the plants and animals and in humans as the particularized indwelling of *Ruach Elhohim* as the spirit of the earth, fire, wind, plant, animal and humans. Furthermore, by virtue of the principles of Creation and the Incarnation, there will be a further realization that *theo-en-passim* – all things in God is the flipside of *pan-en-passim* as all things subsist in God.[9] Acting on the premise that the cultures of indigenous peoples are the loci of God's self-communication and "much of the indigenous peoples' worldview and ethos is compatible with the Christian faith,"[10] the engagement in this indigenous-specific and sensitive "theologizing" truly evaluates, revalues and integrate the "otherness" of the indigenous sacred wisdom, beliefs, chants and rituals.

4.2. *To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice*

The second UAP enjoins the Society to support the indigenous communities' rights "to *self-determination,*" to their "*own governance and self-determined development,*" their *"inherent rights to lands, territories and resources*."[11] The Jesuits need to network with various international organizations and learn to mount online campaigns (for example, GIAN using Avaaz) when

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[7] The 4 UAPS are promulgated in a letter of Fr. General Arturo Sosa, SJ, entitled, "Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029, 2019/06," Rome, 19 February 2019.
[8] Ibid.
[9] See Jojo M. Fung, *Creation is Spirited and Sacred: An Asian Indigenous Mysticism of Sacred Sustainability,* foreword by Michael Amaladoss SJ (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, INC, Institute of Spirituality in Asia, Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc., 2017), 35.
[10] The document entitled *The Spirit at Work In Asia Today* is a paper published in 1997 by the FABC Office of Theological Concern in the edition of the 1998 FABC Papers, no. 23.
[11] See Kari-Oca II : Indigenous Peoples at Rio 20+, https://redd-monitor.org/2012/06/20/kari-oca-ii-declaration-indigenous-peoples-at-rio-20-reject-the-green-economy-and-redd/, accessed April 12, 2012.

their leaders and activists "*are increasingly and alarmingly under* attack" when their national governments collude with the multi/transnational corporations and they "*suffer repression, militarization, including assassination, imprisonment, harassment and vilification as "terrorists".*[12] The same advocacy needs to represent the aspirations of the indigenous peoples to the states, obliging the government to "*recognize the traditional systems of resource management of the Indigenous Peoples that have existed for the millennia, sustaining us even in the face of colonialism.*"[13]

4.3. *To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future*

The third UAP exhorts the Society to audaciously emulate the boundary-breaking Spirit of Jesus by encouraging the indigenous young women and men to value their ancestral heritage and actively participate in the perpetuation of their earth/nature mysticism by being apprenticed as the in/upcoming generations of wo/men healers, herbalists, and shamans. In this way, the Jesuits enable the youth to actualize Article 3 of UNDRIP[14] in terms of their collective right to self-determination, especially religio-cultural development and the dream of John Paul II for indigenous peoples. In his historic address at Alice Spring in 1986, he unequivocally stated that the *"Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, Aboriginal Christians. It meets your deepest desires. You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an Aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or a pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture. To develop in this way will make you more than ever truly Aboriginal."*[15]

4.4. To *collaborate in the care of our Common Home*

Finally, this UAP truly disposes the Jesuits to imbibe the sacred wisdom that enable indigenous communities to enjoy "*a distinct spiritual and material relationship with indigenous lands and territories and they are inextricably linked to the survival and to the preservation and further development of indigenous knowledge systems and cultures, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem management" of "the last remaining sustainable ecosystems and biodiversity hotspots in the world."*[16] Given the Society's universality, many of our Jesuit institutions are in the privileged social positions to offer the sacred wisdom of the indigenous wo/man elders, healers, mystics, shamans and sages and lobby the academic, multi/transnational corporate, political and scientific (natural and social sciences) leaders of the plural organizations and networks (such as the COP, the Davos Forum, the Bilderberg meeting, the Club of Rome…etc.) to acknowledge and recognize that the self-regulating and organic earth is also "a sacred living whole" where "the many gods and goddesses that connected human beings to the sacredness of the Earth" and allow the inflow of "the ancient wisdom contained in our understanding of the sacred in creation – its rhythms, its meaningful

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is
[15] Address of John Paul II to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs (Australia), 29 November 1986, no. 12.
[16] See Kari-Oca II : Indigenous Peoples at Rio 20+.

magic".[17] This sacred wisdom will enable humankind to once again learn to behold the Earth as a sacred and spirited web of interdependent interrelations (LS 70, 85, 86, 92, 138), oriented towards divinization. (LS 83)

5. Ministry of marginality

Indeed, Jesuits who engages an indigenous peoples in marginality as the indigenous peoples are "not only being forced to live "in-between" but also actively choosing to live "in-both" and our universal mission is committing Ours to change & transform the margin "because creativity flourishes there", leading those from the dominant and the margin to the creation of "a new marginality" which lives "in-beyond" belonging "to the new city to come" (Heb. 13:14).[18] Engaging in the creativity at the margin enables the Society of Jesus to insert ourselves as "a presence *born of respect for people …* in which we *share their cultural and spiritual values and offer our own cultural and spiritual treasures*, in order to build up *a communion of peoples* enlivened by the Spirit as at Pentecost" and in doing promote "the best impulses of the cultures" but "leads [cultures] to the Kingdom" and therefore ascertain that "our ministry will be *a ministry of consolation* when it is guided by ways that bring to light the character of God's activity in those cultures, and which strengthen our sense of the divine mystery."[19]

6. Imagining Synodality and Polyhedronicity

In this mission of accompanying the indigenous peoples, guided by the spirit of *aggiornamento* harnessed by Pope Francis, the Society will learn how to become synodal, encouraging participation and solidarity and transparency in our services of the poorest of the indigenous poor, across the regions-provinces, Conferences and the universal Society and thus become "polyhedronic" in which the Society is increasingly incarnated and inculturated in the midst of the indigenous communities, more attuned to how God's Spirit is a work through discerning the signs of the times therein and collaborating with God's liberating actions in the local inter-religio-cultural contexts of the indigenous peoples.

Such intercultural-religious mission of inculturation in the midst of indigenous will enable the Society to reflect the "polyhedronic" aspirations of Pope Francis "which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness" where different communities of believers within Catholicism "and their cultures, their aspirations and their potential" converges within the universal order and still "maintain their own individuality" because the polyhedron "is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone."[20] A "polyhedronic" Society will render a service to the pioneering spirit of founding of an indigenous way of being church and the initiative of imagining a way of being a global world that is "polyhedronic", characterized less and less by coloniality (or eurocentricity) but more and more by interculturality,

[17] Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, "The Call of the Earth," in *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the* Earth, 2nd Edition, ed. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (Point Reyes, CA., The Golden Sufi Center, 2017), 295.
[18] Anthony J. Gittins, *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture and the Renewal of Praxis*, Foreword by Gerald A. Arbucle (Collegeville, Mn: Liturgical Press, 2015), 121-122.
[19] See Congregation 34, Decree 4 Our Mission and Culture, no. 8-9.
[20] Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Évangelii gaudium*, promulgated November 24, 2013, no. 236.

interdependent interrelations, pluri-versality (instead of a colonial universality that privileged the elitist White and their discourse from North America-Europe), solidarity and subsidiarity.

Conclusion

The indigenous peoples, from erstwhile Primal Kingdoms and Nations, confederated or otherwise, now relegated to the marginality of the peripheries, are being enkindled by the pneumatic presence of *Ruach Elohim* that acts as the galvanizing sacred power of indigenous peoples who are mobilizing themselves as national, regional, intercontinental and global countercultural plural movements in a mystical era of sacred sustainability of creation and the Earth. The "bursting forth" of the sacred indigenous wisdom and their earth/nature mysticism in this Anthropocene era is most timely as humankind, *imago mundi,* the self-reflexivity of the earth/creation, learn to embrace "a more contemplative and prophetic lifestyle" whence "less is more". (LS 222)

With a more mystical heart, humankind as *homo mysticus*, will be better poised to respond more affectively to the cries of Mother earth and the call of indigenous peoples worldwide for a life of *Buen viva,* with greater reverence for LIFE in the sacred and spirited web of interrelations that is enlivened by the Supreme-Creator-Mystic-Owner, animated by the ancestral spirits. The Earth, as the only known planet that is home to the innumerable species, continues to actualize her perennial vocation to resplendently reflect the eternal glory, power, justice and mercy of the Kingdom of God in our midst.

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Cultural Integrity, Rights and Accompaniment

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Cultural integrity, where I live in Mindanao, Philippines, is expressed and experienced through the *gaup,* the ancestral domain where all relations are acknowledged. And while it is human nature to have conflicts, the dignity of the other and the rights of all life (expressed through the spirits) are acknowledged in the culture (*kagēna*). Mutual trust is the basis for a cultural covenant of peace (*nalandangan).*

Indigenous rights are all based on this shared understanding of dignity, and while national governments may acknowledge these rights, communities are too often not heard or trusted and so ignored.[1]

Accompaniment is today's path in listening to the other and supporting their voices and participation. Accompaniment is a critical part of a deepening spirituality, and these are the aspects I briefly reflect on in this article.

1. A View of Asia and Oceania

Over 451 million Asians live in or around tropical forests and savannahs, of which 84 million live in extreme poverty. In Oceania, forests comprise 70% of the meagre land area of small island states. The rich seas and corals of the region are drastically diminishing, mainly due to commercial fishing and temperature changes but also pollution and plastics. Forests and trees are vital resources and a whole host of biodiversity also are part of the way of life, sources of income, livelihoods and well-being for rural populations, particularly indigenous communities, those living in close proximity to forests, and those who make use of trees outside forests. [2]

The Pacific and Indian Oceans play a crucial balance in the seasons, natural productivity and growth of the territory. The Pacific, one-third of the planet's surface, is the largest climate

[1] Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Graduation Keynote Speech, APC, March 2019. http://www.ecojesuit.com/indigenous-communities-and-youth-distinct-local-and-global-roles-in-sustaining-environment-and-culture/12172/

[2] Asia Forest Network. 2009. "Where is the Future for Cultures and Forests? Indigenous Peoples and Forest Management in 2020. Asia-Pacific Forestry Outlook Study II (Working Paper No. APFSOS II/WP/2009/23). Bangkok: FAO.

determinant of the planet. Recent and rapid changes in this region as a result of climate change are driving many of the extreme weather events, increasing the vulnerability of the people and lands. Atolls, other small islands, and whole cultures are beginning to disappear across the Pacific and billions more suffer the realities of droughts, floods, and landslides.[3]

This region has global importance in its contribution to biological diversity, climate change mitigation, water security, and food sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This region shares a common image in the 'River Above' – the Pacific Ocean its waters and winds are the life of Asia.

All indigenous communities are traditionally dependent on land, forests, rivers, oceans and other natural forms. However, much of the natural reality is already 'compromised' because mainstream society sees only the resources and their economic potential and thus retaining them under government control. 'Accelerated development' projects such as Indonesia's One Million Hectares of Paddy Field in Central Kalimantan since 1995 and the Merauke Integrated Food Energy Estate (MIFEE) in West Papua since 2010 were intended to increase national self-sufficiency in food and energy, but sadly at the expense of the local populace.[4]

It is not only small islands, but also large ones like Borneo and Papua that face integral ecology issues. Logging, mining, uncontrollable annual forest burning, and conversion of tropical rainforests to oil palm, rubber, and pulp plantations are leading to losses in biological diversity and triggering disastrous floods and landslides. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are getting marginalized as plantations employ migrants instead of locals.[5]

Trans-boundary environmental problems are of increasing concern, yet could be a source of hope in improved trans-boundary cultural relations, as this is where people may share the same resources and ecosystems. Even where cultures do not belong solely to one country, they belong to specific landscapes, rivers, and seas of the region. All cultures have much to offer, but sadly they are not understood nor incorporated into the greater plans for sustainability. Culture and land are inseparable and this is what for thousands of years has made community life viable yet vulnerable.

While in Latin America the vast majority of the rural poor (85%) live in forested landscapes, in Asia only one-third (27%) have stayed as many migrate to cities. Countries are faced with urban growth, increased poverty, and expanding environmental costs, creating pressure to sustain people where they are. The Latin American sense of 'good life' (*buen vivir*) is strong in places, but in Asia Pacific it is as yet in an early stage in forming and sharing an alternative amongst indigenous communities.

The degradation of the forests usually reflects the weakening of the community, in the same way that a community is often as healthy as the animals for which it cares. With pressures on the land, the rivers, and the community, there is an increasing trend among indigenous

[3] Turning the Tide: Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania 2017 Report
[4] Paulus Wiryono Priyotamtama SJ personal communications.
[5] ibid

families to move away from these relationships in exchange for 'a modern city life' where consumption is defined by markets not by seasons. They go to school as their roots wither, though dress and dance may still flower for a time. The youth see no dignity given to their culture and quickly see no future in their culture, so the integrity of holding together falls away. There is no living community to sustain their culture, as there is no living culture without lands; culture becoming but a livelihood in tourism.

Today we talk of countries as economies, ranging from first to fourth world. The world speaks of the land as a resource often without the people living on it. It is a struggle to make sure and to secure for future generations the continuity, the integrity of cultures and communities living on the land.

2. Jesuits are Engaged in Different Places and Models

The integral relations that indigenous communities have with the environment and natural resources form the core element in being accompanied and enabled by others. Jesuits have engagements with indigenous communities in both the social and education apostolates, such as providing advocacy support on concerns of displacement and unsustainable resource extraction, or in operating parish or private schools that are open to the indigenous.

JCAP has an Indigenous Ministry and accompany Indigenous Peoples in Australia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Thailand, Philippines, Myanmar, and Taiwan, while in the Pacific Islands the dominant culture is indigenous living with the lands and seas. There are different levels of presence and the work comes from a history of trying to develop or uplift peoples while moving more towards an empowerment dynamic and strengthening of voices.

It is recognized that "working in these areas is difficult due to the grave social injustice and social exclusion that emerge as a result of the apparent contradictions in the present world order. Moreover, such conditions not only neglect indigenous wisdom traditions, particularly with regards to the land and sea, but often enable the exploitation of natural resources, upon which these indigenous communities depend."[6]

Many Jesuits ask how their individual works of reconciling with creation can relate with a broader plan of action and research. Apostolically there is still a struggle to reflect upon and share the sense of interconnectedness with the land and the full breadth of life around given the management of natural resources that they may oversee.

3. Spirituality, Connectivity and Community

Community accepts all who are born within, whatever their character and however they grow up and move along the path of life. Community has extremes and what community provides is the balance of those. Community generally accepts the stranger, has compassion.

In community, one walks down the trail between the houses each day and receives the simple

[6] Walpole, Pedro, "Jesuits from Asia Pacific in the Time of *Laudato si'*: Reconciliation with Creation," Journal of Jesuit Studies 3 (2016), p 609.

acknowledgement of the other. This gesture comes upon the mind and the soul in a completely different way to the bustle and the fumes of a main thoroughfare where all I want to do is get through as I recoil at these pressures. This recoiling of sensitivity is the reverse of community sensitivity. Community is where my senses are formed by all that touches me, from the land to the sky. It is all relational. In community, I know every birth, death, event, marriage, event in community. And I have stories about everyone. It's a daily balancing of all relations. It's not a domination, it's a domain of balanced relations.

Some time ago one *datu* (local leader) told me: "The difference between your relationship with God and our relationship with the spirits (but not in reference to the Creator) is that we have to keep them happy (placate), but your God loves you!" What an insight! If I could live by that insight, if all Christians could live this, how different the world would be and the relationship with the indigenous. I need to understand and live by the attitude that the Church of Jesus Christ is for everyone. We work daily for everyone that is in need. Faith is a way of life, not a building and a power held within, but a love that goes out and includes all.

The indigenous way of life shows no separation of the social and environmental crisis being faced, it is one and the same. Everything that is happening to them, from the extractive nature of industry to personal economy in the face of consumerism, have an impact on their domain, their lands, their water, and diversity of life. Their rituals are generally not understood, though the Catholic Church shows a degree of tolerance. The Church's history also needs to be revisited as in many cases she was complicit in the process of colonization.

4. Challenges and Bridges

Coming from my own reflections I would say it takes an accompaniment of a generation to experience a groundedness, an enoughness, a deepening, and a sharing of reality and the freedom and the hope that this gives. Accompaniment means being there as the community develops all its nuances and characteristics through a generation. Together one imbibes (is inculcated in) what has been shared, spoken, learned, and lived with.

It is through accompanying for a generation that integrative change can be experienced. There is a collective weaving of change through each generation. Generational change is the most important focus with Indigenous Peoples. Short-term projects are of limited value and do not have the same empowerment of people vis-à-vis long-term engagements. Programs can be sustained by different people, but orientation is critical, clarity on how essential accompaniment is and the oversight that must be well focused.

I feel the bridges begin with the welcome (*pandawat*) and a complementing humility, with the quiet acknowledgement of what are our limits and the limits of the times, and with our willingness to share and search deeply. I love the Tagalog for truth (*katotohanan)*, and where truth as such (*totoo*) is not revealed, not found, unless it is with the other (*ka*).[7]

That's what happens in culture. We share and together come to an understanding; that's what

[7] Thanks to my philosophy teacher Fr. Roque Ferriols SJ.

we honour and give witness to. I know I have a friend (*kaibigan*) because together we have discovered *totoo*. I posit in the other and between friends, no gossip will separate us in my absence. The other will wait for when I am present.

There are different cultural traditions of justice. Justice for some is retribution and I personally can't forget the *magahat* (revenge killings) across a series of villages and pleading with a grandmother not to send out her six grandsons to avenge the headless body of her son.

I have fortunately lived in a community of one of the last spiritual *datus* (tribal leaders) in the province who works according to a tradition of *pulang* (of waiting to settle a difference without arms). *Pulang* is a true characteristic of a serving datu. He takes upon himself that which must be sacrificed to maintain the peace.

This is one of the cultural processes I try to explain to the Armed Forces of the Philippines who have to work in areas not listened to by society but tagged and shunned. I'm trying to cope with how the indigenous youth are engaging in arms for lack of culturally responsive alternatives.

A very different context is where the Kachin, Shan and other non-Bamar cultures need to come together with central administration through the Panglong Peace Process to acknowledge cultural integrity and processes. One fundamental element is an agreement from all sides not to plunder the resources to sustain the fighting. What is suffering most in the conflict, aside from those caught in the encounters and the internally displaced, is the environment itself. Every gold seam and gemstone, jade or amber, is extracted and marks the culture for generations who see their landscape so trawled.

Recognition of integrity gives the local context strength to create opportunity *(kahigayunan)* with the youth. With opportunity come responsibility, greater relationship in community and a leadership of service, (*pēgpangamangēl)*. The presence as accompaniment (*dumala)* opens dialogue, (*amulamul)*, so that the youth can define their identity (*tuus)*, and sense of belonging in this world, bridging in a way so we can hear the other.

This is what gives peace, hope and integrity. When a culture can express a gratitude for life, a people can look for a way of life that will form a more sustainable livelihood. Here we recognize a culture's uniqueness and contribution to society and work with society emerges.

5. Commitment and Recommendations

The Society of Jesus needs to discern first its commitment to the social apostolate. Since the 1980s there is a weakening in commitment. We ourselves do not invest in our social institutes, we expect them to compete in the social development world. The social struggle and its spiritual depth need greater listening and comprehension.

The social investment and opportunities in a secular context are undervalued at a time when our colleges have become increasingly businesses. This International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) is taking up the challenge of a needed shift in the economic paradigm and how businesses operate with the Jesuit business schools.

Father General recently said we have to reflect deeply on our vow of poverty, as without this understanding, we cannot look at the social apostolate and give it value. He said that one of the challenges facing the Society is the tepid way Jesuits live the vow of poverty.[8]

Most countries are increasingly finding themselves defaulting on the basics of human rights. For example, in the Philippines, there is the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act but it is poorly implemented. Human dignity is increasingly undermined many countries, with a total loss of memory and ignorance of what was experienced in the horrors of two World Wars, and an initial coming to terms of slavery and the worst aspects of colonialism. We have a UN that in itself is grossly complacent in many respects, looking at the abuses by military forces that are supposed to be keeping the peace. And yet this is the best structure that we have globally, though what we have put above it is the global economy.

Many years go, I asked if there can be a university for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to teach in a manner that we can implement, not just study them, but go out and work with local governments and communities to accomplish them. When we go deeper in support of SDGs we are more likely to recognize the struggles to improve the quality of life, and understand how community strengthens commitment. We also recognize that none of these goals will be achieved without communities that share a hope for their youth at home. Hope and opportunity is what we can humbly share.

There is no ecology today, care for the environment and people if there is no economy for the environment and its people. The development of a four-lane highway does little for local people, it is just transports goods, often exploiting resources and is a development not necessary for or with the people.

On a more local scale there are many examples often designed as centres in the margins for exploring with communities and discerning new ways and sharing experiences, but these are too many to be explored here for their wealth of insight. Greater review is needed, as the process of discernment has to be of depth seeking greater conversion. Fundamentals have to be addressed again, especially now we have the Universal Apostolic Preferences.

Original in English

[8] Fr General Arturo Sosa, in his address to Jesuits of the Philippine Province on 9 December 2018.

Promotio Iustitiae, n. 127, 2019/1

Integral Ecology in an Indigenous Land

Bronwyn Lay
Jesuit Social Services, Australia

"It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical and biological – are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand." - Laudato Si, #138

Connections

In Australia, at the beginning of events there is normally a "Welcome to country" by the indigenous traditional owners of the lands or an "Acknowledgment of Country" if no traditional owners are present. This common practice pays respect to elders past, present and emerging of the Aboriginal nation on whose land we stand. It acknowledges that these indigenous cultures are in deep relationship to the place on which we meet. Often it is also stated that "sovereignty was never ceded." In Australia, the land where *terra nullius* was our official legal stance until the Mabo case of 1992, this statement is powerful. *Terra nullius* essentially said that no people or culture existed here before 1788; that is the indigenous were not human with their own law and cultures. 'Sovereignty was never ceded' is not merely a legal claim. It states a truth echoed in integral ecology: indigenous, intergenerational relationships of deep care and interconnection with country and the communities which inhabit these lands it, still are strong across the nation.

Integral ecology emerges as a connective possibility with the profound laws of indigenous Australians. Laudato Si brings forth the responsibilities of all humans to live with an awareness and practice of intergenerational care towards each other and what we share in common: the earth. "The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must be handed on to the next."[1] Indigenous worldviews and law throughout history have often been labelled as savage, utopian and a threat to progress and development. Integral ecology recognises that this approach is an injustice not only to indigenous people, but all of humanity and the earth itself. Integral ecology affirms the truth

[1] Laudato Si, # 159

that we are all interconnected and responsible for our common home and this introduces a whole new paradigm of justice into the ring.

In March 2019 the High Court of Australia quietly passed a judgement in the Timber Creek case that will have ripple effects for years to come.[2] It is belated recognition that the loss of connection to land caused suffering and loss for indigenous people of the Ngaliwurru and Nungali in the Northern Territory. They will receive substantial compensation for their economic loss but, importantly, also for the harm of losing their spiritual connection to the land. The judgement recognises the harm caused by forced separation from that deep relationship with country, with earth. This is also what integral ecology recognises: that the relationship with our environment is a deeply spiritual one and with it comes a responsibility to respect that relationship.

Integral ecology provides a perspective on justice that goes beyond distribution of costs and benefits, entitlements, and civil rights. It requires going deeper into understanding how humans and communities can co-exist in harmony and healing with eco-systems, economics, politics, labour, technology and each other. Indigenous Australia is the oldest continuous culture on the planet and is deeply and holistically relational, ecological and inter-connective. Both integral ecology and indigenous law recognise the depth and spirituality of the essential inter-connected web of ecological and social relationships humans live with and are sustained by.

Justice – Jesuit Social Services' Work and the Problems in Our Country

At Jesuit Social Services we give a lot of thought to justice and work with the most marginalised, including those involved in the criminal justice system. The people we work with, from all backgrounds, are often caught up in complex webs of disadvantage including intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, economic exclusion and social marginalisation. All too often our participants suffer from histories of broken relationships and disconnection from community. We witness daily how exclusion and separation from the possibility of flourishing healthy relationships is a major cause of poverty and abuse.

While the focus of our social change organisation has always been on relationships and restorative justice, in 2011 we introduced ecological justice and caring for our common home into our organisational culture process and practice. This extended our understanding of justice beyond looking not only at social relationships, but also the habitat and environments that our participants live within. Our commitment to the restorative work of healing broken connections extends from the very intimate, (such as neurological trauma), to the more structural neglect of suburbs and regions where intergenerational poverty persist. This now includes being aware of our responsibility to restore healthy ecological relationships.

[2] https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2019/03/19/what-next-after-most-significant-native-title-decision-mabo

Despite Australia's wealth and relatively healthy democratic systems, Aboriginal people across the nation continue to be over-represented across key areas of disadvantage. This includes higher rates of incarceration, suicide, family violence and mortality. Despite our advanced health system, the rates of chronic and debilitating diseases amongst the aboriginal population read like a third world country.[3]

Power was wielded against Aboriginal people by separating them from their land, their families, from economic self-determination and from practising and living their culture and law. These policies of forced separation, that continue today, abuse what lies at the heart of integral ecology – a respect and protection of healthy interdependent and interconnected relationships. Tracing the resultant disadvantage, suffering and marginalisation of Aboriginal people, leads back to dispossession of land and of livelihood. As the Timber Creek case recognises, the impact of the loss of spiritual connection and sovereignty has upon indigenous peoples is real and ongoing. It leads us to acknowledge the long history of the state forcing indigenous essential relationships and nourishing connections to be broken or damaged: it is a sorry history of damaging vital interconnectedness. Ecological and social relationships profoundly affect each other.

Following invasion of Australia, the white legal system carved up the land and created legal fictions that land, water, air and human communities can be separated and given different and often competing regimes of rights and entitlements. This means that while indigenous people may have native title, water rights and the minerals under the topsoil do not come with that title and can be exploited for profit by others. Across Australia a labyrinthine system of legal entitlements and regulations severs ancient ecological connections with limited accountability or redress for the consequential harm, which affects everyone. The lack of recognition of the indigenous right to care for and protect their country has had a devastating impact on Australia's eco-systems.

Integral ecology highlights how it "is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity. When indigenous communities remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture."[4] This statement from Laudato Si recognises the continuing sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples in Australia.

Jesuit Socials Services' work in the Northern Territory commenced in 2007 with an invitation to work collaboratively with the Central and Eastern Arrernte people in Santa Teresa and Alice Springs. Since then, at the invitation of a number of other communities and Aboriginal

[3] https://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples

[4] Laudato Si, # 146

Community Controlled Organisations, our work has grown to include the communities of Atitjere and Engawala on the Plenty Highway and Tennant Creek. Our work in Central Australia has focused on building the governance and service delivery capacity of the communities and organisations we work with. Supporting local indigenous communities to stay on country respects their self-determination and the vitality of their relationships with land.

To enable a more strategic response to the structural issues we see playing out in the lives of people on the ground, in 2015 we established a program delivery and an advocacy presence in Darwin. Over the last four years, we have developed a strong network of relationships with government, community, and legal sectors, and have been strong advocates on youth justice issues, which severely affect young indigenous.

Continuing our commitment to restorative justice, in early 2017, Jesuit Social Services piloted the Northern Territory's first pre-sentence Youth Justice Group Conferencing program in Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine. With the success of this pilot, we are working with other organisations and government to promote restorative practices in the 'Top End' and Central Australia. Throughout all our programs and advocacy work, building healthy connections is central to our approach.

At the same time the devastating impact of climate breakdown: droughts, coastal erosion, heatwaves, species extinction, bushfires, extreme flooding and cyclones are rising in frequency and intensity. As Laudato Si points out, it is the poor who first feel the impacts: from those unable to find shelter or evacuate during extreme weather events to those living in substandard housing during intense heatwaves. Indigenous peoples already deal with intergenerational dispossession and trauma. Climate breakdown threatens to multiply pre-existing marginalisation and injustice.

As we face the consequences of an abusive relationship with earth, there is a floundering amongst advocates, activists, and policy makers to grapple with uncertain futures, and sow seeds for ethical responses. The current structures we live within find it difficult to deal with the complexity at hand. The myopic pursuit of profit at the expense of the earth has hollowed out law, policy, economics, politics and civil society capacity to respond to the crisis. "Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational. This has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit."[5]

The 'wicked' problem of climate change demands an expansion of justice. Integral ecology emphasises that ecological and social justice are intertwined. One cannot exist without the other. The distributive and procedural paradigms of justice, relied upon for years, are not proving capable of protecting and nurturing marginalised communities and at risk eco-

[5] Laudato Si, # 106

systems. Integral ecology illuminates, in a deep way, how rights and justice become nebulous and illusive if we solely focus on social justice at the neglect of our common home: the earth. Climate breakdown and ecological destruction put the lives of millions in jeopardy and are resulting in major inequities and suffering for eco-systems and human communities. To hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor as one vocational call to justice and healing is the most important challenge of our time.

Jesuit Social Services is engaged with initiatives that bring restorative justice to the criminal justice system. At the same time as impacting directly on the lives of those people engaged in the process, our work involves advocating to heal our institutions of justice themselves. Indigenous professor of Law Irene Watson notes that law has a spiritual dimension. Integral ecology also asks that our institutions, including law, be healthy and restorative. Integral ecology doesn't remain outside institutions of politics and governance and therefore in Australia this means substantially recognising the validity of indigenous law.

In confronting the consequences of climate change interesting dialogues and coalitions are appearing. Solidarity and open dialogue is happening between communities that previously had limited relationships. Increasingly scientists and those working at the frontlines of climate adaptation and mitigation look to indigenous knowledges for guidance. Religious groups protest in solidarity with clans whose land is threatened by large corporations and unethical mining projects. Common values of protecting country are being articulated and openly expressed. Farmers and local indigenous people assist each other in healing waterways damaged by neglectful and exploitative practices.

The recognition and respect of the deep indigenous spiritual connection to, and knowledge of, land also challenges non-indigenous peoples to fulfil their own obligations. Integral ecology asks all of us to step into a healthy relationship with earth while at the same time recognising the depth of indigenous knowledge and law. The presumption that indigenous people are the only cultures with authority and legitimacy to protect the environment can result in an abdication of obligations and duties to care for our common home by non-indigenous people. In turn this serves to justify that our legal system and culture are somehow exempt from interconnection and have no responsibility for our ecological relationships. We all live in this common home, and in order to avert further erosion of indigenous peoples' livelihoods and the damage being done to earth, integral ecology calls us to remember what Wendell Berry so succinctly stated: "The earth is all we have in common." All around the world there is a need for genuine and substantial reconciliation not only with indigenous peoples, but also with the land itself. Integral ecology asks all cultures to care for the home we share and stop asking indigenous people to fulfil this responsibility on behalf. In this new paradigm of justice a flourishing of one is a flourishing of all.

Conclusion

Jesuit Social Services' exploration of what ecological justice and integral ecology mean for programs and advocacy has widened our perspective. It involves cultural, structural and institutional change as we deepen our understanding and practice of interconnection. This

has expanded our vision in our work with the most marginalised. The connections between the criminal justice system and ecological dispossession become clearer, and we are evolving new ways of being with our participants. The space for relationship with our indigenous brothers and sisters expands as our understanding of integral ecology deepens. Integral ecology brings to the conversation with indigenous people a perspective and way of being that can connect us more deeply as we work towards reconciliation with our common home. The strong interrelated legal and ontological basis of indigenous law and culture finds connection with integral ecology. The Timber creek case seems one small step in the face of the work integral ecology asks of all of us.

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