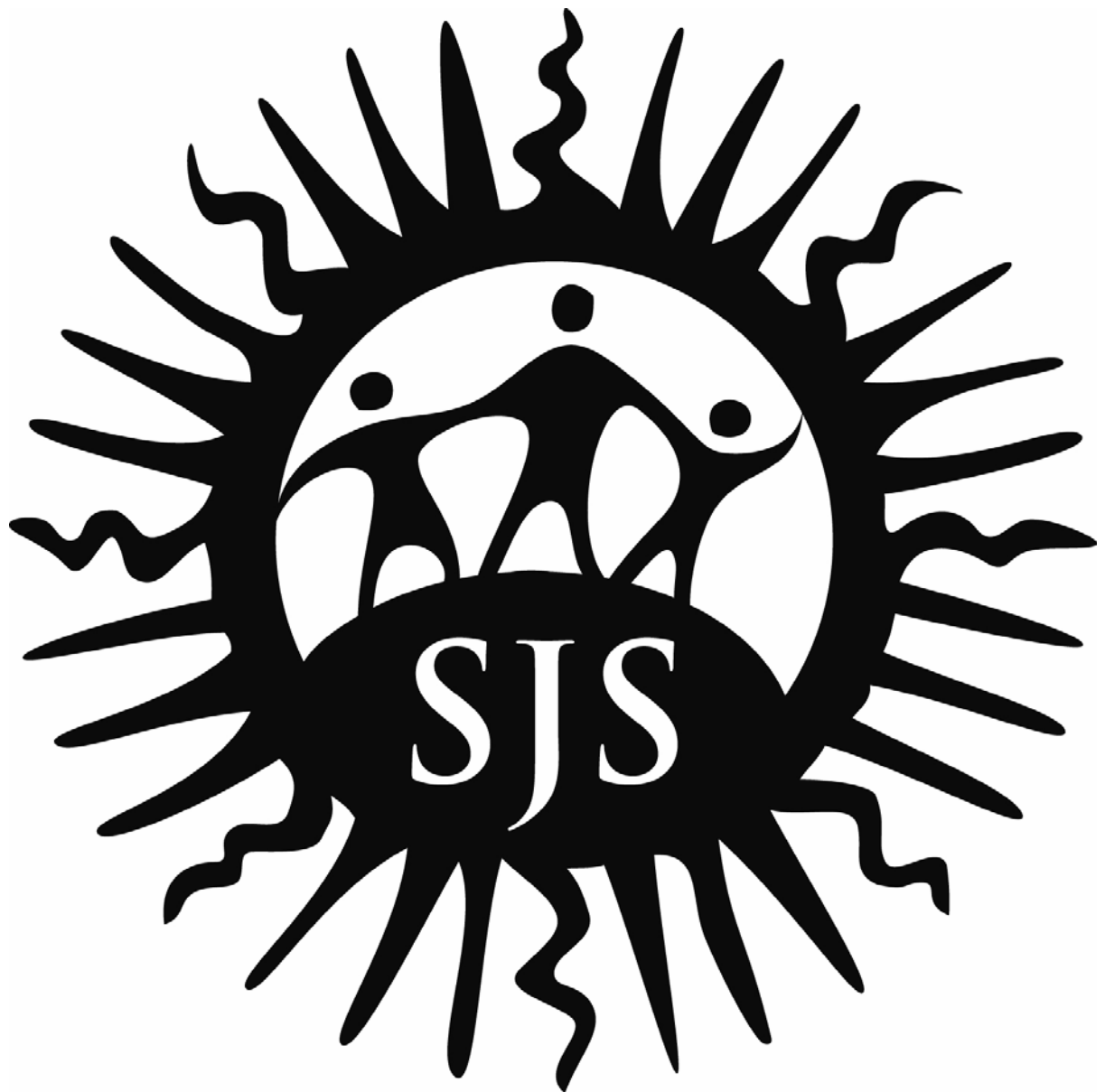


Jesuit Responsibility for the Environment

A Survey



Uta Sievers, Social Justice Secretariat, 17 March 2009

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This report can also be found on the internet at the address:

http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/networks/ecology/EcologySurvey_FrGeneral.pdf

Annexes B and C mentioned in the report can be found at:

http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/networks/ecology/EcologySurvey_AnnexesBC.pdf

Summary of recommendations

Out of the wealth of information and suggestions, the following three, apart from being mentioned by several people, are representative of the levels at which 'Ecology and the Society of Jesus' has been discussed and can bring fruit. We would like to offer them by way of summarizing the report. Since most of the replies came from the northern hemisphere, these issues are representative mostly of the lives and possibilities of Jesuits in that part of the world.

An issue that each individual Jesuit and each community can take responsibility for. Air travel is a major contributor to global warming and the Society could reduce its own ecological footprint massively by conducting networking activities and some meetings via tele-conferencing and video-messages. This can be implemented at all levels of governance, starting immediately.

An issue that needs to be discussed within 'Ordinary Governance' topics. A number of people have mentioned the need to establish structures within the Society at Curia/regional/local level. These new structures will be most fruitful (at any level) if the calling is strong, i.e. imitating Arrupe's prophetic insight into the refugee issue.

An issue that needs some planning and re-allocation of resources within provinces and communities. Energy audits and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) to assess the ecological footprint of communities, works and provinces should lead to ways of conserving resources and introduce renewable energy practices.

Introduction

The Ignatian Ecology Network (IEN) was created at the beginning of 2007 in order to prepare material on Ecology for GC35. Between March and December 2007, the Network wrote eight 2-page Fact Sheets on topics related to ecology as a basis for the reflection before and during GC35: Climate change, Biodiversity, Pollution and public health, Agriculture, Desertification, Floods, Landslides, Forests and Catholic social teaching and ecology.

After the task of preparing documents for GC35 had been completed, the mailing list was used to keep members informed on an irregular basis about activities and documents of interest to them. In September 2008, the Social Justice Secretariat sent a summary of GC35 statements on Ecology to the IEN. Added to the summary were some questions to the 166 members of the network (see the Annex for the summary and questions). There were about 30 replies to the questions, 22 of which were substantial and are summarized on the following pages.

As can be seen in the Annex, the respondents came mainly from the USA and Europe. Eight substantial contributions were submitted by Jesuits in the USA, five by Jesuits in Europe (including one from Canada), three came from Latin America, three from South Asia and two from Africa. At least two Jesuits (from CDA and MAL) consulted with their whole community and made their submission based on that consultation.

The **objective** of asking these questions was to garner ideas that could inspire the further development of Jesuit involvement with ecological questions. Because of its “brainstorming” (rather than survey) nature, the **limitations** that this report faces are obvious: (1) The 166 members of the Ignatian Ecology Network are self-selected and therefore not representative of Jesuit involvement in ecology within the overall Society of Jesus. Members of the IEN tend to come from academic backgrounds, social centres or governance structures of the Society. Many good projects on the ground have not been taken into account. (2) The number of replies coming from the USA make this report and the ideas contained in it heavily biased towards a democratic, “can do” approach, based on a high awareness within society of ecological challenges and ways to face them. This premise would not be applicable in other parts of the world. (3) There were no replies from the JCEAO although a good number among the members of the IEN are from that Conference.

Steps to be taken

(1) Raising awareness of the issues

1. Issue a letter (from Fr. General – *according to 2 respondents*) addressed to all involved in the works of the Society, asking them (both personally and institutionally) to
 - a) Become aware of the urgent need to protect the environment, given the issues of global warming and the international financial crisis (due mainly to the speculation and consumerism that affect our relationship with nature);
 - b) Renew our reflection in this field, using biblical and theological sources and the recent documents of the magisterium;
 - c) Underline the contribution that indigenous cultures can make, given their worldview that integrates the social, communitarian and ecological dimensions, as well as respect

- and caring for Mother Earth; make sure that the indigenous peoples are involved in any work which affects their environment;
- d) Raise awareness among the people we come in contact with in our daily and apostolic life, especially children and young people who are more apt to respond humanely and in a Christian way to such issues.
2. We need to assume the responsibility for ecological conscientization and empowerment at every level through local networks such as CLC (CVX), community organizations, parish communities, and neighbourhood and professional groups, and retreat/spirituality centres, to say nothing of private and liturgical prayer.

(2) Reflection on ecology

3. Underline that given the international interest in ecological issues, we cannot remain aloof; our contribution is necessary. The ecological issue is not just another social issue among the many social issues but it is the foundational issue. "Any progress achieved in addressing the goals of poverty and hunger eradication, improved health, and environmental protection is unlikely to be sustained if most of the ecosystem services on which humanity relies continue to be degraded" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).
4. Invite the whole Society to reflect seriously about the link between:
 - a) *Politics and the environment*: Ecology and peace are intricately linked; this is very evident in Africa, where natural resources risk becoming the new 'crude oil' fuelling the belligerent politics of local leaders, multinational companies and world powers.
 - b) *The economy and the environment*: We should all be concerned here, as a matter of moral responsibility. We need to find ways to overcome the current model of development, which requires each family member in the 'developed' world to have their personal car so that the car industry does not go bankrupt and hence avoiding recession and unemployment. Can we propose viable alternatives?
 - c) *Education and the environment*: We need to find effective ways of introducing environmental issues in the curricula of our schools, colleges and universities, but also to promote research, for instance in our higher institutions specialized in biology and agronomy.
5. Promote a regional reflection on various levels:
 - a) *Philosophy*: scholastics in formation and professors should reflect on the fundamentals, the ultimate reasons for protecting and caring for nature. Another contributor suggests that a course in modern cosmology (which includes ecology) should be given to all scholastics. Such a course will teach the origin and evolution of God's universe as well as the meaning it has for us humans.
 - b) *Theology*: scholastics in formation and professors should reflect on the mission of the Church in the context of international efforts to save our planet from a possible ecological catastrophe, basing this mission on a balanced vision of the relationship between humanity and nature. Some suggest that traditional African cosmology may have a valuable contribution to make in the building of a holistic spiritual vision of creation.
 - c) *Humanities and Natural Sciences*: those involved in these disciplines will surely find links to the environmental issues: environmental law, environmental sociology, environmental economics and management, biology, agronomy, chemistry... Some of our institutions in these fields could be proactive, for instance promoting sustainable agriculture, working out economic models and developing techniques for such agriculture to be economically viable and self-sustaining.
 - d) *All disciplines* should be re-thinking their understanding of ecology within their discipline.

- e) *Education and Pedagogy*: we should promote awareness among staff and students in our colleges, for instance through hands-on ecological projects; our regents could be involved in such initiatives.
- f) *Social centres*: Even the Centres of Social Justice should look beyond just primary causes of poverty and social inequities and link their analyses to a different worldview. One could create within such institutions specific workgroups to deal with ecological issues, or simply dedicate annual assemblies and 'social days' to these issues, from time to time.
- g) *Parishes*: we should raise awareness among the faithful, for instance regarding recycling, responsible use of water and electricity – this too should be included in a wider concept of 'pastoral care'.

(3) Educate about ecology

(a) Publications

6. Distribute widely in the Society, among our collaborators and students, the document "We live in a broken world", possibly updated and stylishly set on recycled paper. Add a bibliography of articles on ecology by Jesuits, or compile one separately. Re-visit the publication "ECOLOGY 1996" (see the separate **Annex C1**). One contributor suggests that the GC34 perspective as found in "ECOLOGY 1996" is broader and more comprehensive than the perspective of 'Mission' posed in GC35.
7. Make available (and possibly produce), in all our works, scholarly material and proper information (serious professional documentation, rather than ideological propaganda) regarding the current financial and ecological crisis in the international economic system.
8. Commission leading Jesuits, religious and lay collaborators to write on the topic of Ignatian Spirituality and the environment, particularly using the Spiritual Exercises. These could be developed for Jesuit publications (e.g. America, Studies in Ignatian Spirituality, etc) or compiled into a book.
9. Compile a bibliography of scholarly material on ecology; 'de-classify' the Fact Sheets and put all the material on a website that is accessible to everybody, as well as other articles and materials that individuals may chose to send. Ideally, a wiki page that could be modified by Jesuits all over the world could be an interesting idea, but it has to be well moderated. Alternatively, the material may be filtered by asking Jesuits from other provinces to 'sponsor' or 'review' the material, before it is included in the list. This webpage (or publication on ecology) could include individual experiences of how the suggestions in the document are being implemented (or have been tried and tested in the past) in specific Jesuit communities, institutions, provinces.
10. Make selections from articles and books published all over the world (sort of 'ecological readers') and translate them into the main languages of the Society, and publish them in special issues of Promotio Iustitiae – the same may be done on internet, through an Jesuit Ecological Portal.

(b) Formation

11. Promote and offer formations to young Jesuits and lay persons in this field. Such a course will teach the origin and evolution of God's universe as well as the meaning it has for us humans.
12. Competent Jesuits need to be encouraged to do higher studies and research in ecology. Three or four Provinces can combine to set up a Resource Centre which can offer programmes in Ecology. Some universities may be identified as centres of excellence in re-

searching this area and in the development of programmes of environmental education for schools.

13. Set up a forum for the sharing of material and resources.

(4) Strengthen the 'ecological' aspects of our spirituality

14. Encourage those in theology and spirituality to reflect and write on how Ignatian spirituality/theology takes creation seriously (finding, serving God in ALL THINGS). In some ways, our spirituality/theology is "this-worldly" - here and now, and not simply pointing beyond the present world with its problems to the next world. Ignatius was in-carnational and this very much coheres with ecological thinking and concerns. Such Ignatian spirituality - the Ignatian vision of the world/universe - and the link to ecological concerns should affect the way we preach and run parishes and give exercises and teach in universities.
15. Invite Superiors and Assistancy/Conference teams to promote and prioritize days of prayer, retreats and/or liturgies around the themes of Sustainability and Ecology for both Jesuit Communities and Collaborating Ministries.
16. Publish an Ecological Examen for our Collaborators and ministries: Using the Examen Format invite persons into a four or five step process to prayerfully look at our daily actions, impacts and habits regarding the Earth and the environment.
17. Invite all to meditate on the following statement: To the extent that we Jesuits ignore the Earth-human relationship we find ourselves in the category of "persons of the second class." (SpEx 154)
18. Encourage the giving of Eco-Retreats.

(5) Practical Action for communities

19. Make known and recognize the significance of what is actually being done by Jesuits. Evaluate regularly what is being done in our education centres, research institutions as well as our pastoral and social works concerning such issues. Religious Sisters are involved in caring for the earth and are in many ways further along the road of practical involvement than Jesuits.
20. Air travel has a significant contribution to global climate change; this should be factored in during our planning and any networking activities should be conducted via tele-conferencing (according to 4 people). Consider carbon offset and planting trees on Jesuit property.
21. Encourage local Jesuit communities to take the initiative in first complying with local mandated civil sustainability practices, and then go beyond them in a voluntary way. There is a need for each local community to examine its use of resources through energy audits and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), and to develop ways to conserve resources and introduce renewable energy practices (2 contributors) – more details in the separate **Annex B3**.

(6) Action within governance and networks of the Society

22. Use our vast network of parishes, schools, JRS, JVC, etc to piggy-back on existing projects and institutions already involved in promoting environmental sustainability. Publish 'best practices' examples, links for assistance, contacts, etc for institutions.
23. An ecological campaign "Reconciliation with nature – the *Ad Amorem* contemplation" could be interesting. We should speak about God, living in plants and animals, present in all sign of life. Our option for faith and justice may be refocused using this vision, allowing consensus and synergy within our apostolic works and better collaboration with other groups, civic and interreligious movements.
24. Designate a certain percentage of FASCI grants for projects related to 'healing the land,' or establish an environmental fund devoted specifically for this purpose.

25. Redefine the role of ministers in the Society who could be instrumental at practically implementing more ecological lifestyle decisions at the level of community.
26. Use the lens of environmental sustainability in evaluating the "Jesuit and Ignatian Characteristics" of schools and other institutions. Just as a Jesuit High School (in the USA) is academically rigorous, committed to justice, spiritually alive, etc, so too can a principle on environmental consciousness be added.
27. Raise the issue in the 'ordinary' meetings at Conference and Assistancy level and establish regional policies and priorities.
28. Create or reinforce medium-term interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial programmes among the works of the Society such as "caring for our home, our planet", evaluating the results after 10 years (to avoid the temptation of concentrating on haphazard, short-term projects, and being carried away by the fashion of the moment).

Responsibility for Ecology within the Society

(1) A network?

(a) Create a new network

1. Some feel that a **new network is necessary** (arguing that many participants in the Advocacy Workshop in El Escorial (Madrid) in November 2008 were in favour of such a proposal). Such a network would need
 - a) a full-time coordinator;
 - b) an appropriate institutional framework;
 - c) a clear mandate, expressing a serious 'structural' commitment of the Society;
 - d) if not, the network would be but a stillborn child.
2. Identify 2-3 core areas/issues on which to network, e.g. privatisation of water sources, conservation of biodiversity, environmental education. The network itself could have as its first task to reflect on what kind of institution or network would be appropriate to the task and sustainable.
3. Form **Green Committees**, at Curia level, at Provincial levels and at community levels, similar to how we have set up Vocation Committees.
4. Others suggest **regional networks**; for instance in Africa, something similar to AJAN may be formed to coordinate the initiatives taken throughout the African Assistancy concerning environmental issues.
5. Right now the issue of Ecology is taken up under Social Action. Hence it often gets neglected, or is seen only in the limited context of benefits to human society. If the whole Cosmic family is to receive due attention, then it would help to have a separate team for Ecology in each Assistancy (or appoint a contact person per Assistancy). This person or team can work out action plans and offer help/expertise for their implementation or take the process forward for perhaps two years and then have a general meeting of all these people to amalgamate findings and offer a more concrete way forward. Assistancy level meetings of those interested in this field should be called for soon. The same can also be done at the level of Provinces. (*2 contributors*)

(b) Alternatives to a network

6. Others feel that building a new international network may not be practical. We should rather
 - a) reinforce the existing ones, born from our universities, social centres, parishes, and retreat houses;

- b) organize meetings within and between the different apostolic sectors, on the regional and assistency level;
- c) organize meetings at the international, regional and local level for individual Jesuits interested in these issues, and later on, meetings for Jesuits and lay people.

(2) Create a structure at Curia level

7. Appoint a Jesuit responsible for the environmental issues at Curia level, someone competent and who could take the issue at heart. Some suggest that the person should be employed full time, possibly within the Social Justice Secretariat, with the following job description:
 - d) To map and make known Jesuit activity and commitment in environmental issues and projects worldwide;
 - e) To stimulate the Society to commit itself further in this field;
 - f) To suggest specific actions, on various levels (from the macro-policies of the big institutions to the simple decisions that can be taken at community or office level: sorting the rubbish for recycling, printing on both sides...)
 - g) To coordinate a network on the issue, building bridges with and between other institutions and networks.
 - h) To make available, publish and promote best practices and mature reflection on the issue (pooling material from different language areas and institutions), especially concerning spirituality and theology: this may be our specific contribution as Jesuits given our competence in these fields and the fact that the Church and society expects us to contribute especially in this manner;
 - i) To seek resources so as to reinforce and consolidate some specific, concrete, and emblematic projects.
 - j) To propose opportunities for formation and capacity building in the Society on such issues.
8. Look at establishing a Secretariat for the Environment and/or founding an organization akin to JRS whose purpose is to promote and assist the healing of the land. Imitate Arrupe's prophetic insight of his call for action on the refugee issue, so we need a clear direction on environmental issues as an apostolate where Jesuits will show a real commitment. (*2 contributors*)

Annex

Questions sent to the IEN (September 2008)

The following summary of what GC35 said on Ecology was sent to the Ignatian Ecology Network (co-ordinated by the Social Justice Secretariat at the Curia in Rome) in September 2008:

GC is telling us (Jesuits and partners in mission) that we need to establish right relationships with creation, at the service of the poor.

The Mission Decree is pointing out the following issues (paragraph numbers in brackets):

1) Over-exploitation of natural resources, leading to a number of acute problems:

- damage to earth, air, water, and our whole environment (33)
- affecting the poor, e.g. through the displacement of indigenous communities; we have heard their cry (34)

2) We are called to respond through (35):

Analysis of the causes (especially poverty) by universities and research centres

- Establishing linkages among those working with refugees and the displaced, and those working for the protection of the environment and in research institutions.
- The results must have practical benefit to society (advocacy), that is, public policies must change.
- These policy changes need to address the issues of distributing the costs fairly (Benedict XVI)

3) Foster a spirituality that respects the covenant with creation at various levels (36):

- political responsibility
- employment
- family life
- personal lifestyle

1) Is there any other issue/response from the Ordinary Government themes that needs to be added?

2) Suggest at Conference/Assistancy and at the international level

- steps that can be taken
- who could be responsible; a network?

List of Respondents

1. Athickal, Robert (PAT) - JCSA
2. Braverman, John (MAR) - JCUSA
3. Carver, Joseph (ORE) - JCUSA
4. Chandy, K.T. (?) – JCSA
5. Cobo, Sergio (MEX) – CPAL
6. Desmarais, Paul (ZAM) – JESAM
7. Ferro, Alfredo (COL) - CPAL
8. Fritsch, Albert (CHG) - JCUSA
9. Lanckenau, Thomas (ORE) - JCUSA
10. Mac Partlin, Brendan (HIB)* - CEP
11. Maguiro, Paco (PER)* - CPAL
12. Mbuyi Kulaya, Benoît (ACE) - JESAM
13. Naylor, Harold (CHN)* - EAO
14. Nicq, Hervé (GAL)* - CEP
15. Pace, Paul (MAL) - CEP
16. Revilla Grande, Felix (CAS) - CEP
17. Roca Alcazar, Fernando (PER) - CPAL
18. Rodrigues, Luke (BOM) - JCSA
19. Rodrigues, Malcolm (GUY) - CEP
20. Schineller, Peter (NYK) - JCUSA
21. Sequeiros, Leandro (BET) - CEP
22. Shulist, David (CDA) - CEP
23. Skelskey, David (NEN) - JCUSA
24. Surette, John (NEN) - JCUSA
25. Turner, Frank (BRI) - CEP
26. Whelan, Gerard (AOR)* - JESAM
27. Wood, William (CAL) - JCUSA

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* = general agreement but no contribution

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