



Living Green Mission

SEDOS

Editorial	1
Opening Reflection <i>Rachel Oommen, ICM and Geni Santos Camargo, SFB</i>	2
Opening Address <i>Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ</i>	3
The Call to Eco-Conversion <i>Jane Mellet</i>	5
Loving Sister Earth <i>Helen Grealy, RC</i>	12
Ecological Mourning: The Christian Response <i>Brian Grogan, SJ</i>	18
Sustainable Living and Agriculture for Indigenous People of Mindanao, the Philippines <i>Richie Gomez, MSC</i>	23
Climate Change & Sustainability, what can be done? Lessons from the corporate world <i>Ezrah Schraven</i>	28
Christian Hope for our Small Blue Planet <i>Brian Grogan, SJ</i>	34
Deep Relationality: Living in Communion <i>Amado L. Picardal, CSsR</i>	44
Sowing Seeds for the Future <i>Sheila Kinsey, FCJM</i>	53
Summary of the Seminar <i>Mary Dasari, ICM and Yolanda Florentinoy, ICM</i>	61

SEDOS

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which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of Global Mission.
It encourages research and disseminates information
through its Bulletin, Website, Seminars and Workshops.*

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Secretariat: Sr. Celine Kokkat, CJMJ

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Editorial



Dear Readers,

We are happy to present to you some of the talks that were given at the five-day SEDOS Residential Seminar 2021, which had been delayed from last year, and had to be held on-line because of the Covid-19 health crisis. The theme of the Seminar was “*Living Green Mission*”, which was very timely after the *Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region* of last year and just before the *Laudato Si Week 2021* organized to celebrate the five-year old Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis. The presence of two Speakers from the *Dicastery for Integral Human Development* (Rome), Fr. Joshtram Kureethadam, SDB, and Fr. Augusto Zampini Davies, was therefore much appreciated. The Seminar structure and choice of Speakers were worked out by Fr. Chris Chaplin, MSC, Sr. Kathleen Storms, SSND, and me. A great *Summary of the Seminar* was graciously made by CICM-sisters, Sr. Mary Dasari and Sr. Yolanda Florentinoy. Besides the opening session and the closing session, three Subthemes were discussed:

Education, Sustainability, and Spirituality. These three aspects are indeed essential when it comes to living and doing mission in a green way. We have to form people and missionaries to become more aware of the difficulties the ecological crisis is creating, not only on a material level, but also in the quality of our lives. Looking therefore at forms of sustainable farming, constructing homes, is important. Even the corporate world has to control its *ecological footprint* by law now. We are supported in doing this by our Christian Creation spirituality. Experiencing God in nature makes one automatically a “guardian of nature”. And we can know God from his Creation, as the Apostle Paul stated long ago. We only have to open ourselves to the beauty and complexity of Creation to discover the great mind that must have been – and still is – behind all that we see, hear, feel, taste, and create.

Religious Missionary Institutes are making their contribution to a greener world for all. Let us therefore also join in this effort to incorporate the “*Laudato Si Goals*” in our way of living and doing Mission today.



Opening Reflection

Let us contemplate for a while on this painting, painted by Sr. Eleanor L. Ianes, ICM, allowing the image to touch our hearts and speak to us.

The context of this painting is the Amazon forest. This painting by Sr. Eleanor L. Ianes, ICM, depicts the contrasting experiences in the Amazon forest.

The wounded Amazon forest is depicted as a *Pietà*, a mother holding her suffering, agonized child. We see two figures. One part is the agonized, wounded, dying part, which shows the woman carrying the agonizing wounded, dying forest on her lap. And the other is the living, green part of the Amazon forest, full of life, trees, flowing streams, full of biodiversity.

We see the light touching both parts. The agonized figure continues to touch and hold on to life.

We see signs of life, there is hope, life growing in spite of these opposing experiences.

We see the small green plant growing in the midst of pain and suffering.

The lines are connected, life and death, light and shade. In all this, we see the divine light flowing, permeating the living and agonizing parts of the forest.

As we gaze at this image, let us ask ourselves: *Have I listened to the groaning of creation and to my own groaning?*



Painting by Sr. Eleanor L. Ianes, ICM

Have I paid attention to the cry of the earth and to the cry of the poor?

Am I one with the groans of creation all over the world?

Let us become painfully aware of how we have plundered the earth and destroyed the eco-system. As agents of hope, let us dare to shoulder our responsibility as true stewards of God's creation.

“When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them.” (LS, 87)

This sentiment is wonderfully expressed in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi:

Laudato Sì, O Mi Signore.



Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ

Opening Address



Fr. Tesfaye Gebresilasie, President of SEDOS

“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Revelation, 5:13)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, participating in the Residential Seminar, with the title ***Living Green Mission***, I greet you using the words of the liturgy, **Christ our Hope is Risen, Alleluia.**

Fr. Peter Baekelmans, CICM, and the Staff of the Office of SEDOS, as well as the Executive Committee of SEDOS are happy that many are participating in this Seminar on a particularly important theme for our world,

the Church, and our daily missionary commitment.

We thank God that, with the prophetic and imperative input and emphasis of Pope Francis, the Church has strengthened its attention and commitment to one of the vital mission trends of our day, *Ecological Conversion and Care of God’s Creation* in an era where Climate Change is negatively affecting our life and the whole universe.

Once again, SEDOS is happy to dedicate time to prayer and reflection on the issue of taking care of Creation and the attention needed to heal the ecological wounds of our environment and the deep concern for the damage of nature and for the devastating effect of Climate Change.

As Pope Francis reminds us, we are not dealing with something new or an issue addressed only by us: *“These statements of the Popes echo the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians, and civic groups, all of which have enriched the Church’s thinking on these questions. Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which*

all of us find disturbing. To give just one striking example, I would mention the statements made by the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, with whom we share the hope of full ecclesial communion.” (LS, 7).

I believe that we can affirm once again that, our concern for the universe, for the environment and the whole of creation is part of our concern for human beings. More especially, it is part of our commitment to our brothers and sisters in dire need who live in miserable poverty.

It is a concern for the beauty of nature and its dignity as created by God, but it is also about our responsibility for humanity. The issue of climate change and the consequent natural crises, is a preoccupation for Nature at large and for humanity in particular way. *“Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So, we cannot fail to consider the effects on people’s lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture.” (LS, 43).*

We thank God for all those engaged in projects and life plans according to the inspiration coming from *Living Green Mission* in our difficult days of climate change and the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19: - As missionaries at the service of **Missio Dei, God’s Mission**, besides our human concern and creativity, we are first and basically, moved and motivated because of our faith. *“Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are*

genuinely concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. I would like from the outset to show how faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters. If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in turn ‘realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith’. It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognize the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions.”(LS, 63-64).

SEDOS is not alone in reflecting on this. Many Associations and NGO’s run by various congregations and church personnel are doing a lot of reflection and to make people aware of the ecological problems. Just to mention a few: the **Dicastery for Human Integral Development** at the Vatican, **VIVAT, REPAM, AEFJN, USG-UISG, JPIC commission**.

I thank all those who have agreed to help us these days, the Speakers at our Seminar and all the resource people who will help us and enrich our reflection and sharing in our groups.

From this moment, may we ask ourselves: What we can take from the seminar for our daily life? What homework will we do as we are called continuously to practice ecological conversion?

Thanks, and God Bless.

Jane Mellett

The Call to Eco-Conversion

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Jane Mellett, and I am delighted to be with you today for this conference. I work as the Laudato Si' Officer for Trócaire, which is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. My talk today is on "The Call to Ecological Conversion." This is an urgent call as outlined by Pope Francis in Laudato Si':

"The external deserts in the world are growing because the internal deserts have become so vast. ...For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to a profound interior conversion." (LS, 17)

There are three aspect of this call for Eco-conversion that I would like to highlight today, the call to:

- 1. Personal Conversion**
- 2. Communal Conversion**
- 3. Ongoing Conversion**

Our Common Home

As we are aware, in 2015 Pope Francis published *Laudato Si'* and invited "every single person on this planet" into a conversation about what is happening to our world. This is a call for all people of all faiths and cultures.

"Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life, and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us....

(Laudato Si', 1).

This is the first step on our journey of ecological conversion, to *put on* the spirituality of St. Francis and to look out at God's creation as he did, to see all creatures as family – Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and to see Planet Earth as Our Common Home. This is the wider charism of *Laudato Si'* we are called to embrace as part of our personal eco-conversion.

Earth Rise

The famous photograph called "Earth Rise", taken in 1968 by the astronauts from the Apollo missions, who famously noted, "We went to the moon and instead discovered the Earth". So, what word or phrase comes to you as you look at this image? (*Pause*)

As this image was beamed around the world as part of a Christmas message, the text of Genesis 1 was read by one of the astronauts. This photograph is known as an important ecological photograph, as it was the first time the human saw their home planet from this perspective. It changed our psyche and evoked big questions for us, such as our place in the universe. This is our common home, the home we all share.



On Pilgrimage for the Climate

The Climate Pilgrimage

I would like to share with you today my personal story of eco-conversion. In 2018, I joined a group of Climate Pilgrims who were walking from the Vatican in Rome to the UN Climate Talks in Katowice, Poland (COP24). This was a journey of 1,500km. The goal was to bring the message of *Laudato Si'* from Pope Francis to everyone they met along the way and ultimately to the leaders of the 24th Conference of Parties (COP) on Climate change. In our group were pilgrims from the Philippines, some of whom were survivors of Typhoon Haiyan which struck the Philippines in 2013. This typhoon is known as the strongest storm ever recorded in human history to make landfall, killing 10,000 people

in just two hours and displacing millions of others.

Joanna Sustento, a survivor of Typhoon Haiyan, is a friend and fellow Climate Pilgrim. Joanna lost her entire family in Haiyan, her parents, brother, sister-in-law and three-year-old nephew, washed away by the storm surge. She was the only one to survive from her household that night. As I journeyed with Joanna on the climate pilgrimage, I began to realize the importance of hearing the human story where climate change is concerned.

Love of Neighbour

So, the question for me is: *What does love of neighbour look like in an era of ecological breakdown?* We must really SEE those on the frontlines of this crisis, victims of climate disasters, displacement of peoples due to sea-level rise, drought, water and food insecurity. The Gospels show us that Jesus sides with the oppressed, always. Catholic Social Teaching shows us that we must always have a Preferential option for the poor. So, part of this personal ecological conversion, for me, is to keep this question to the fore: what does love of neighbour look like in an era of ecological breakdown?

Biodiversity crisis

- Living Planet report in 2020 stated that 68% of wildlife has been destroyed in the period from 1970 – 2016 due to human activity.
- Every day around 8 million pieces of plastic makes their way into our oceans.
- 88% of the sea's surface is polluted by plastic waste.
- Ireland is the largest producer of plastic waste in the EU.

Degrowth

“The time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth.” (LS, 193)

1. Personal Eco-Conversion

In *Laudato Si'* we read: *“Our goal [is to] become **painfully aware**, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own **personal suffering** and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (Laudato Si', 19).* Personal eco-conversion is a painful journey, it comes with a health warning. Psychologists now recognize that climate anxiety or ‘eco-mourning’ are becoming a real issue, especially amongst young people. So, this is difficult, it is not an easy journey. Pope Francis asks us to make the suffering of the world our own painful suffering. And we do feel it at a personal level whether we realize it or not. The ecological crisis affects us deeply because we are part of nature and dependent on it.

One shocking statistic I learned on the climate pilgrimage is that just 100 companies are responsible for 71% of global emissions. Just 100 companies! These are huge corporations with a lot of power. So even this example can leave us feel completely overwhelmed and helpless. It is important to recognize these feelings and name them as part of our personal eco-conversion. Yet, the call is to stay informed about the issues, to grow in painful awareness.

Signs of the Times

Laudato Si' urges us to examine the signs of the times in light of the gospel: Pope Francis calls us to **listen** to the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor, the science, the call of our faith and the youth of the world.



Reconnect with nature

Spiritual Crisis

So, where to begin. We hold this *painful awareness*, listening to the cry of the earth and the poor, but we cannot remain there only. It is one part of personal eco-conversion. At the heart of *Laudato Si'* is the reality that the roots of the ecological crisis are deeply spiritual. We have forgotten who we are and where we have come from. Pope Francis invites us to rekindle our relationship with God's creation, to look out at the world again with a child-like sense of awe and wonder. We must begin here.

My happy place is in the mountains, Carrauntoohil in Kerry, Ireland. It is where I feel deeply connected to nature and to God in nature. So, I ask you now, to reflect on your **favorite place in nature. Where is it? Connect to your senses, when you are there, what do you see, smell, touch, hear, how do you feel?** We are being urged to *reconnect* with these sacred places. *Laudato Si'* urges us to listen to the Book of Creation, nature itself.

"We cannot protect something we do not love; we cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not see. And touch. And hear." – Richard Louv.

Rooted in the spirituality of St. Francis: *"Just as what happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever [St. Francis] would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise."* (LS, 11)

"St. Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness." (LS, 12)

"We need to move from: a spirituality of the divine as revealed in words to a spirituality of the divine as revealed in the visible world about us." – Thomas Berry

A caress of God

There are beautiful mystical passages in *Laudato Si'* to help us on this journey: *"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, mountains everything is, as it were, a caress of God."*

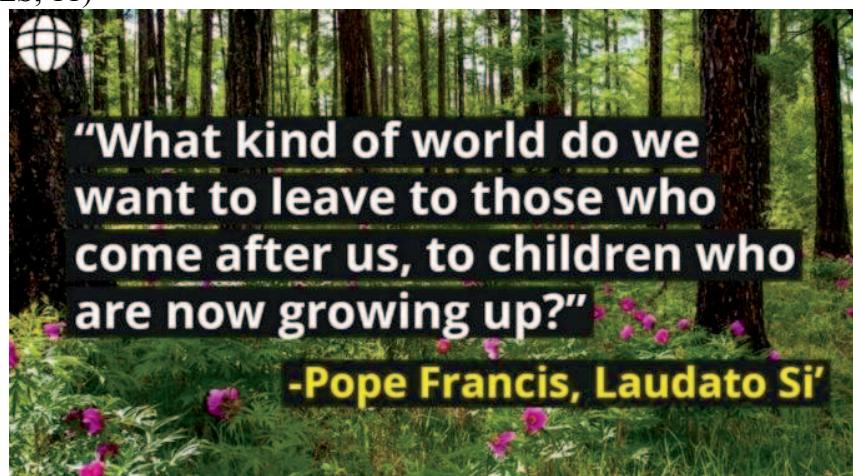
(LS 84)

We can meditate on these to grow in awareness that we are connected to one another, to the universe and to nature in ways we find it impossible to comprehend.

Profound Interior Conversion

The environmental crisis we are facing calls each of us into a profound interior conversion: *"Christians need an 'ecological conversion' where the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our lives and in our relationship with the world around us. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."* (*Laudato Si'*, 217)

In the past, perhaps care for creation was seen as an 'added extra', something which a small group of people were interested in or perhaps it was something we looked at when other issues were resolved. However, *Laudato Si'* is clear that protecting God's creation is an essential part of the church's mission and our own personal call as followers of Christ.



2. Communal Conversion

As well as a Personal Eco-Conversion, we are called to Communal Conversion. And for me, in *Laudato Si'* the key part of this Communal Conversion is the call for our communities to embrace what Pope Francis calls an Integral Ecology. What is this? Pope Francis says,

- *“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.”* (LS, 138). So integral ecology, as its basic, is the awareness of the **interconnectedness** of all things.
- *“Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”* (LS, 139).
- *Ecology*: A study (logos) of organisms in their home (from the Greek word οἶκος) and the vast web of interconnectedness that holds the universe together. We humans are part of this one sacred body.
- The terms Deep Ecology and Integral Ecology have become key in contemporary spiritual writers, theologians, anthropologists (Thomas Berry, Leonardo Boff, Teilhard de Chardin, Elizabeth Johnson, Ilio Delio).
- *“St. Francis is the example par excellence...of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.... He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace.”* (LS, 10)

The Field Mouse

Did you know 99.9% of your DNA is shared with chimps; 85% of your DNA with a field mouse. 60% of your genes are shared with a banana! Did you know you share one third of your DNA with a primrose? It is time we reconnected with our cousins. *“It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected...”*

The Tree of Life

This is an image which fascinates me, the Tree of Life, the many varied species of our world. And there we are, one branch of many, primate mammals, homo sapiens. This image might frighten some people because we are used to an image of a pyramid, where human beings are seen as having dominion over all of creation. This notion of dominion has contributed to the environmental crisis our world faces today, as it has been wrongly interpreted to give us permission to plunder and destroy God’s creation for our own gain. So, we are invited to instead, see ourselves as one species amongst many, part of nature, embedded in this tree of life. Uniquely loved by God; yes. Created in God’s image and likeness, yes; but also, part of a vast web of life.

The Gospel of Creation

In Chapter 2 Pope Francis reflects on the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. He emphasizes how the word “dominion” (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature. He notes that this *is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church* and we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.

“It is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.”

(*Laudato Si'*, 67)

The biblical texts are to be read in their **context**, with an appropriate **hermeneutic**, recognizing that they tell us to **“till and keep”** the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing, or working, while “keeping” means **caring, protecting**, overseeing and preserving.

We need to move away from ‘Dominion’ and even ‘Stewardship’ because Stewardship gives the sense of ‘duty’. *Laudato Si'* urges us to **“CARE for Our Common Home”**.

Care taps into something deeper, passion, love. *“This implies a relationship of **mutual responsibility** between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to **protect** the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations... The Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism (where humans are at the centre of everything) unconcerned for other creatures.”* (LS, 67). So, part of this **Communal Conversion** is that our faith communities share this vision with people. We need a new eco-spirituality, a new way of seeing the world and of interacting with the world that embraces the cosmic web of life.

The Mystery of the Universe

Laudato Si’ has beautiful passages to help us reflect on the vast mystery of the universe: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made (Ps 33:6). Creation is the order of love; God’s **love is the fundamental moving force in all created things**. God has created **everything from nothing**, in a free act of unconditional love.

‘For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made’ (Wisdom 11:24)

We are the first generations to have these images from space, to have the science, the physics of the workings of our universe. **The origins of life**, the unfolding of our universe, the evolution of matter from atoms to humanity. **We are living in the middle of a Paradigm shift**: New Universe Story, we are part of a 13.8-billion-year-old universe.

For people of faith, we are called to see God in all of it: **“The love which moves the sun**

and the stars.” (*Laudato Si’*, 77). This calls for a movement from a distorted view of Creation where God was seen as absent from created matter, a dualism, to seeing God in everything. To see God’s fingerprints in all of creation, the entire material universe.

Teilhard de Chardin: **Love energy was at the heart of the Big Bang.**

The Gaze of Jesus

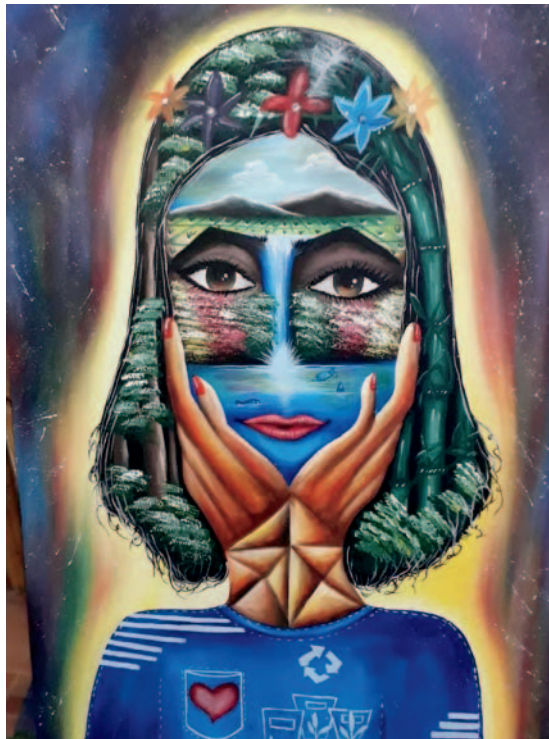
As well as putting on the spirituality of St. Francis, *Laudato Si’* urges us to look at Jesus’ relationship with nature. *“[Jesus]...was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder...’Lift*

up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest’ (Jn 4:35). *Jesus constantly prays outside in nature, on mountain tops, by a lake, from boats on the water. His followers were fishermen in tune with the rhythms of the seas.*

He uses nature in many parables: “The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed...” (Mt 13:31-32) *The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious,*

present throughout creation (Col 1:19-20). *The risen One mysteriously holds all creatures to himself and directs them towards fullness. “The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence”* (LS, 100)

In our liturgies, our preaching, our prayer and contemplation, are we sharing this wisdom with our faith communities?



GREEN JESUS
(St. Mary's University at Bayongbong Nueva Vizcaya, RP)

Ecology of Daily Life

Communal eco conversion also involves the setting in which people live their lives – what are we surrounding ourselves with? This greatly influences the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, our homes, our workspaces, and neighborhoods. How does our local environment affect our quality of life? Green spaces are essential for our communities, especially in urban areas and city neighborhoods where people are often surrounded by cement, asphalt, metal, and glass.

Beauty should hold a center space for our lives. Where people can gather safely, reminding us of what it means to be related to one another and to creation.

Artist

This is an image of a mural drawn by my friend and fellow climate pilgrim, Ag Sano. He describes himself as an “artist”. He wants to bring art and nature into spaces where people don’t have access to art or to nature. AG painted this mural in central Manila in the Philippines, in an underpass which runs under the chaotic busy streets of Manila. Thousands of people pass through there every day on their daily commute. It is an enormous mural stretching for hundreds of metres but bringing images of nature into spaces that are normally disconnected. *Laudato Si’* says, “Those who design buildings, neighbourhoods, public spaces and cities, ought to draw on various disciplines....” (LS, 150). We need the arts where communal conversion is concerned, poetry, art, music, storytelling, song. For as the famous phrase goes, ‘beauty will save the world’ and help us to fall in love again with the earth.

Intergenerational Justice

Must be kept to the fore as we explore communal conversion. “*What kind of world do we want to leave to generations who are coming after us? To children who are now growing up?*” **This question is at the heart of *Laudato Si’*** and it is the question that the youth climate movement is now asking the

world. *Laudato Si’* urges us to remember that all it takes is one person to make a difference. “*Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth.*”

Pope Francis met Greta Thunberg in 2019, congratulated her on her work and activism and urged her to continue. This is a short video about their meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cj-Erzvblfk>

The Call of Faith Communities

“*The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor and building networks of respect and fraternity.*” (LS, 201)

Faith communities have a huge responsibility to make this issue part of their mission, the Church’s mission, our individual missions.



Faiths for Climate Action

The Role of Religious Communities

We need an Ecological spirituality which can engage with the environmental crisis our world is facing. This ecological spirituality should not be pasted on top of an older, partly outdated theology, like icing on a cake but this ecological dimension must be at the very heart of all aspects of Christian spirituality going forward; an integral ecological spirituality which brings nourishment and Life.

If religious communities can join hands with popular movements they may well be able to provide the momentum that is needed for the

world to move forward, because **religious communities transcend nation states and they acknowledge intergenerational, long term responsibilities.**

Authentic Christian faith and spirituality offers us hope, this hope gives us the **spiritual energy** which is needed to work for change even when the situation seems quite hopeless.

Communal Conversion invites us to Civil and Political Love

- St. Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love.... Small gestures. Integral ecology of daily gestures.
- Wherever we find ourselves, we serve God and creation, with acts of kindness, love and care.
- Not all people are called to the same civic engagement, e.g. politics, but each of us are called to some sort of action in the broad civic sphere.
- *“these community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.” (LS, 232)*

To come back to the climate pilgrimage

“Our physical destination is COP 24, but our real destination is the mind and hearts of all those we meet on this road.” Yeb Sano, *The Climate Pilgrimage.*

This is part of our call to communal conversion. The move the hearts of all those we meet on this road. In faith communities this affects how we celebrate liturgy and prayer; celebrating the Season of Creation; marking *Laudato Si’ Week*; preaching, teaching, creating spaces for the ecological spirituality and transformation to take place.

3. Conversion is ongoing

It does not stop, this journey is continuous, a journey with all of creation towards “fullness of life”.

Hope

“Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems.” (LS, 61)

Arundathi Roy

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way; on a query day I can even hear her breathing.”

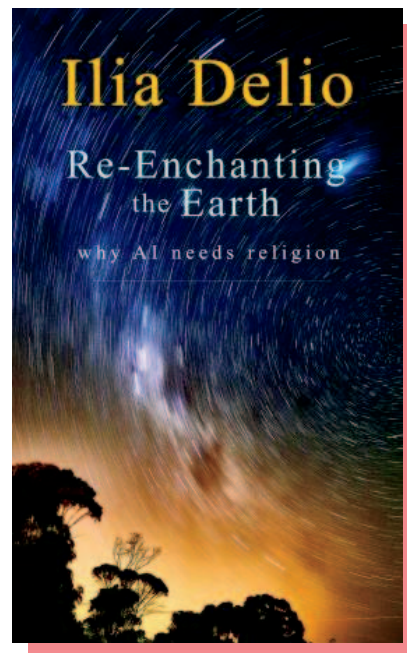
Greta Thunberg

“The one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come.” (TEDxStockholm, 2019)

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’*

“Let us sing as we go. May our struggles & our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.” “Truly, much can be done!” (Laudato Si’, 244, 180)

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Helen Grealy, RC

Loving Sister Earth

Good morning to you all. I am here to speak to you about *Loving Sister Earth*, a movement of prayer and care for our earth.

It is lovely to be connected to you and also to carry a sense of being connected to all of God's creation. We were meant to have met this time last year and look how our world has changed since then. Covid-19 has brought suffering right across the globe. People's lives have been changed and many are asking deep questions about the meaning of life itself. In the midst of the chaos, there is a renewed appreciation of things that we have often taken for granted such as family, friends, fresh air and the natural world around us. Many people have turned to prayer, to a closer relationship with God and some are developing a sense of belonging to the human family with the earth as our common home. We are seeing and experiencing first-hand what the poets and mystics have been telling us for centuries, the interconnectedness of all created reality. Our consciousness is coming to a new awareness of our oneness with our evolving universe. From this contemplative stance the call to live 'our green mission' is experienced in the depth of our being.

At one level it is humbling to speak to you about *Loving Sister Earth* as it is fairly new and you have been involved in the green mission for so long now. However, I will outline how *Loving Sister Earth* came to being and explore its spiritual ethos. It is founded on the bedrock of our own native spirituality, a creation-focused spirituality. This spirituality is known and popularized today as *Celtic Spirituality*. I will give examples of how the earlier Druidic religion and the Gospel message integrated so well it produced what we might call a green Christianity. I am aware that you come from many parts of our world and that you have been and are engaged in wonderful ministries in countries very different to your own. You

know what it is like to enter a new way of life and to embrace another culture. Over many years' missionaries have worked hard to enculture the Gospel message. We see this in beautiful Liturgies where worship is expressed bodily in the local dance and song. Sadly, we also know that indigenous spiritualities were often repressed by Christianity in the past. The word 'paganism' needs to be redeemed. The word itself actually refers to the countryside and most native religions have great respect for the earth. Can we now engage in the process of recovering some of the great wisdom that was handed down from generation to generation and allow it to be integrated into the Christian message? Hopefully this pathway will help to introduce love where there was fear, peace where there was strife and harmony where there was disconnection.

Loving Sister Earth has as its inspiration a desire for universal harmony, a perceived and experienced unity with our God, each other and all of nature.



Our Mission Statement

'We believe that life is all about love.

We live in a turbulent world where there is abuse of natural resources and disharmony caused by the inequality of gender, race and wealth. Pope Francis is calling for all people to take responsibility for our world.

Our aim is to foster a movement of prayer and care of our Common Home which will be rooted in our own sacred ground and carried by our people'.

Loving Sister Earth is our humble attempt to live ‘our green mission’. Our goal is to help Ireland to become a country that prays and acts for our earth. While *Loving Sister Earth* is only 7 years old, it is having a strong impact. The statistics for the hits on our website are quite phenomenal. At one level this comes as a surprise to us, however, at a deeper level, it is not so surprising. We are very aware that *Loving Sister Earth* is born of the Spirit. We did not set out to create yet another ‘Care of the Earth’ group. Individually, each of us had a strong sense that God was asking something of us. We are just a small group; Elaine, Brian, Phyllis and I, working with Marion who created and updates our website. Brian and Phyllis facilitated many Prayer Initiatives at Diocesan and National levels and share a desire for a global prayer movement. As we know deep prayer involves entering into the transformative inner journey and bringing about harmony between body, mind, feelings and spirit. The more inner harmony we experience the more

we can contribute to the harmony of our world. Elaine is drawn to the mystery of the Trinity and relationship is at the heart of the Trinity and of creation itself. Elaine feels that our world deeply needs a Divine breakthrough of love. In my ministry of Retreats and Spiritual Direction, I have seen the transformative power of the Spirit working deeply in people’s lives and realize that a global transformation is possible. While we were ministering separately in our own areas, it was my cry for help that brought us

together. I became aware that I was experiencing a call concerning Church transformation and in my search for help to respond to this call, I found my present companions. We began with meetings that were more a discerning process than working with an agenda. We were led to *create Loving Sister Earth*. The publication of *Laudato Si* the following year 2015 was a confirmation for us.

An inspirational backdrop to *Loving Sister Earth* is a message that has come down to us from Cardinal Newman. Being aware of the rich history of Christianity in the countries of

Northern Europe from the 4th century onwards, Newman wrote that these places were the ‘storehouse of the past and the birthplace of the future’. As Christianity developed in the countries on the edge of Europe a very distinctive spirituality emerged. Basically, there was an integration of the beliefs and spirituality of the old Druidic religion and those of Christianity.

Inculturation “Irish-style”

What happened in these early centuries in Ireland can be a model for the countries that

you live and work in today. When St Patrick came to Ireland in 432, he was already familiar with the language, customs and way of life of the people, as in his youth he had spent time in this country in captivity. A good example this inculturation is a legendary dialogue that took place between Eithne, the daughter of King Laoghaire, and Patrick. Eithne asked Patrick where his God lived, was it in the heavens, or the earth, in the mountains or the valleys, in the seas or the rivers and did his God have sons and daughters and were



(St. Mary's University at Bayongbong Nueva Vizcaya, RP)

they beautiful. These questions reflected her religious belief. Patrick listened to her, received what she said and responded;

*Our God is the God of all things,
the God of the heavens and earth,
the God of the seas and streams,
the God of the sun, moon and stars,
the God of the great mountains
and the deep glens,
the God above heaven and in heaven
and under heaven,
and our God has a household-heaven
and earth, and the sea and all they contain.*

As we see, Patrick echoed what Eithne has said, using her language. He entered into her experience and facilitated her to come to a new and deeper experience of God. Patrick's mission was very successful. By the 6th century Christianity was flourishing in Ireland with monasteries of men and women all over the country. These monasteries became centers of prayer, scholarship, and artistic expression. They were places of spiritual nourishment for the people as there was no parish or diocesan structure in Ireland until the 12th century. Monks went forth from these monasteries and helped to re-establish the Christian faith in Europe. Christianity was established on the bedrock of a creation-focused spirituality that came forth from the union of the nature mysticism of the Druidic religion and the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, peace, and joy. What a legacy St Patrick left. We know that his feast day is currently celebrated worldwide. This celebration has possibly more to do with the nostalgia of the Irish diaspora than recognition of faith. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the 'greening' of the iconic buildings of the world that takes place on March 17th could be used to raise awareness of the need to live a green mission?

God in all of creation

Loving Sister Earth is inspired by the mystical sense of God's presence in all of creation that is found in this early Christianity. The people of that time lived close to the earth; they were

people of the land whose very existence depended on the regular return of the seasons. They were in tune with nature and its cyclical rhythm of growth, decay and growth again. Behind this extraordinary natural rhythm, the people sensed the invigorating energy, power and dynamism of the Divine. This creative energy of the Divine was referred to in old Irish (Gaelic) as *Neart De*, God's energy. *Neart De*, they believed, pervaded the entire universe and enabled the birds to fly, the fish to swim, the crops to grow, the changes to occur in the seasons. Basically, our ancestors in the faith had a contemplative sense of God's presence in all of creation. *It is extremely important that our care of the earth today should come from a contemplative place within ourselves. A transformation of our own consciousness is the best gift we can bring to our green mission.* A spirituality sustained by love of our beautiful bio-diverse universe is the best motivation for becoming involved in the saving of our planet.



<https://gimnazium.jezsu.hu/index.php/component/k2/itemlist/category/2/feed?start=336>

The mystical sense of God's presence penetrating all of created reality is seen in the poetry, songs and prayers of these early Christians. It seems that our ancestors in the faith were in tune with the 'isness' or essence of all created reality. We will listen to a few selected lines of a poem reputed to have been recited by the bard Amergin on the arrival of the Celts in Ireland around the year 500 BC.

*I am the wind that breathes upon the sea.
I am the wave of the ocean.
I am murmur of the billows.
I am a beam of the sun.
I am the god who created in the head the fire.*

Who is it who throws light into the meeting on the mountains?

Who announces the ages of the moon?

Who teaches the place where couches the sun?

We cannot be sure if Amergin ever recited this poem but what it shows forth is a spirituality that recognizes the Divine Presence in all of creation, a spirituality that is still with us today.

We hear echoes of this creation- focused spirituality in the Breastplate prayers. These prayers ask for protection against the dark forces of life and nature. They had a pagan origin and were adopted by Christianity in the light of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 'Put on the amour of God, stand your ground with truth buckled around your waist and have integrity for a breastplate'. St Patrick's Breastplate, written in the 8th century captures the essence of the spirituality that had developed in the monasteries and among the people. The Breastplate shows a Christianity that is vibrant, Trinitarian, Christ-centered, in tune with creation and integral to the everyday lives of the people. The author of 'the Breastplate' calls on the Trinity, the angels, archangels, prophets and Christ in his mysteries, to give protection. In the fourth verse of this prayer it is the 'isness' or characteristics of nature that are called on; the light of sun, the radiance of moon, the splendour of fire, the speed of lightning, the swiftness of wind, the depth of sea, the stability of earth and the firmness of rock. This prayer begins and ends with a strong invocation to the Trinity. The people of this time were at home with the concept of our Triune God because their ancestors had believed in triple goddesses. An illustration of their intimate relationship with 'the Three' is seen in the following prayer:

Three folds in the cloth yet one cloth is there.

Three joints in the finger yet still one finger fair.

Three leaves in the shamrock yet one shamrock to wear.

Frost, snowflakes and ice all in water their origin share.

Three persons in God, to God alone we make prayer.



(taken from Loving Sister Earth, Facebook)

Ireland's Holy Wells

The line of the prayer we have just listened to 'Frost, snowflakes and ice all in water their origin share' is a powerful creation- focused image of our Triune God, the Divine energy invigorating all of creation. Water is one of the most precious gifts that nature has to offer and one we focus on in *Loving Sister Earth*. We are trying to revitalize an old devotion in a modern context. Praying at holy wells has a long tradition in Ireland and we are now encouraging people to pray and act for the protection and fair distribution of water both at home and across our world today.

Holy Wells are among the treasures in the storehouse of the past that can help to build our future. Ireland is rich with these treasures. We have ancient pilgrim paths, ruined monastic sites, holy mountains and islands, High Crosses with Scripture engravings, Round Towers, Beehive monastic cells, Mass rocks, and Illuminated Manuscripts, most notably, the Book of Kells, an inscribed account of the four Gospels with extraordinary artistic illumination. Nowadays, tourists and pilgrims are flocking to these sacred places. Many pilgrim paths and holy wells are being restored. Pilgrim paths all over the country are becoming Camino's. Our National TV Network recently relayed a program where our former President Mary McAleese walked these paths, making this

pilgrimage with some well-known people. Their conversation reflected their inner journey. In our *Loving Sister Earth* website, we have videos of people praying at some of these ancient monastic ruins and holy wells. Holy Wells are found throughout the country, numbering at least 3,000. The cult of these wells began in the times of the primitive natural religion and was integrated into the Christian faith and practice. These wells were blessed and dedicated to the saints and monastic founders and foundresses of early Christian times; Patrick, Brigid, who is patroness of the fertility of the land; Colmcille, otherwise known as Columba, a pilgrim for Christ; Ita, who founded churches all over the southern counties of Ireland and influenced Brendan the Navigator, who is said to have found America; Gobnet, who is patroness of bees, the preservation of which is a huge ecological issue today; Dympna, who is patroness of mental health and who is honoured in Gheel, near Antwerp, in Belgium whose inhabitants give special care to people suffering with mental health problems and Attracta who was known for her hospitality. It is interesting to note that a whole community of refugees have currently settled into the local community in the area where Attracta is most venerated, Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon. Not far away there is a holy well dedicated to her. The water of many of the wells is believed to have healing properties. Over the centuries pilgrimages to these wells have been very popular and were known as 'pattern days' from the word 'patron' which refers to the saint to whom the well is dedicated. Prayer rituals were preformed and these were often followed by a social event. Sometimes these events became rowdy and the practice was suppressed by Church authorities. However, a number of these 'pattern days' continue to this day. In '*Loving Sister Earth*' we have declared an annual National Holy Wells Day and ask people around the country to pray at their nearest well for the protection and fair distribution of water. As we know only too well, rivers and seas are polluted and some cities are suffering from shortage of clean fresh water. We hope

that the prayer at the wells will raise awareness of this world problem and inspire people to act towards resolving the situation. For National Holy Wells Day, we collaborate with the Columba community in Derry and Donegal which crosses the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland. This year *National Holy Wells Day* will be live-streamed by the Brigidine Sisters from Kildare at Brigid's Well on June 13th. We have written this prayer for the protection of water:

*O God of all creation,
Teach us how to protect water,
On which all living things depend,
Plants, animals, fish, birds,
And humans.
Help us to ensure that water
May always flow
Freely and purely
For all of your creation.
May your Spirit soften our hearts
And enlighten us,
So that we may act responsibly
To protect water,
The source of life
In our Common Home.*



(taken from Loving Sister Earth, Facebook)

Recent events

In 2018 the *World Meeting of Families* took place in Dublin. *Loving Sister Earth* worked in collaboration with Eco-Congregations, Churches together working for care of the earth; *Trocaire*, a Catholic development agency, and other groups to create a contemplative garden in the car park of a Poor Clare monastery. In this garden, hundreds of pilgrims walked the universe story honouring the different phases of creation. Next, they stopped at a native oak tree which had come from Derry, which name translates from the Irish language as ‘the oak’. Oak groves had been places of worship for the Druids and it is interesting to note that Columba and other Christian leaders of the 6th century founded their communities by the oak. The pilgrims then prayed at the holy well which was built especially for this occasion and is now a permanent feature of the monastery. This well was dedicated to St Broc, as requested by the Poor Clare nuns. St Broc was a woman who founded a monastic community in the 8th century in a place nearby called Donnybrook, a well-known area of Dublin. As with many town names in Ireland, the name Donnybrook is derived from the Irish language and linked to our early Christianity. ‘Domhach Broc’ means ‘The Church of Broc’. Pope Francis attended the World Meeting of Families but unfortunately didn’t get to the contemplative garden. However, Cardinal Tagle of the Philippines did visit, pray in and bless the garden and wished that many concrete places could become green again.

To summarize

So, as you see, *Loving Sister Earth* is one small though significant effort to live our green mission. Maybe some of the insights that have inspired us will be helpful to you as you continue your great ministry. In particular, it may be encouraging for people to explore more fully the native wisdom in your own area and learn how that can contribute to our green mission of today. Also, as emphasized throughout this reflection, our own inner journey has a tremendous role to play in the way forward. If the journey to authenticity was undertaken by us all then as balanced and rooted people we can change our world. By living harmoniously within ourselves we can make our contribution towards universal harmony. Our relationship with God and each other will be a pulsating powerful energy of pure love being poured out on our bio diverse universe. The more we are caught up in the love of our Triune God the more we will walk reverently on the face of the earth and live ‘our green mission’.

Let us end with *A Prayer for Universal Harmony*:

*‘Oh, Holy Spirit of God,
We stand united with all of humanity.
Open our hearts to the melody of your Divine love.*

We ask for healing of all we have damaged on this earth.

Bring us to a new place that we may learn to sing in perfect harmony with all of Creation’.

Amen.



Ecological Mourning The Christian Response

Introduction

This paper invites us to explore together the dimensions of Christian Ecological Mourning so that we can integrate it into the *Living Green Mission*.

As a starting point we can note the perilous state of our emerging world – we are at a tipping point: some scientists would say that we have already passed the point of no return. The media present disasters on a daily basis, and books on our crisis abound, such as W Sebald: *The Natural History of Destruction*, 2004 and David Wallace Wells: *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 2019, which begins with the apocalyptic statement: ‘It is worse, much worse than you think!’. *Laudato Si*’ is categorical: ‘The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth’ (21). ‘Who turned the wonder-world of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of colour and life?’ (41). Moreover, the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species has begun.

How can we redemptively cope with Ecological Disaster?

Disasters can lead to a great outpouring of creative energy, but also to grief, anxiety, desolation, depression, paralysis, fatalism and suicide. Must I file disastrous facts away and become anaesthetised to them? Does my spirituality of finding God in all things include finding God in ecological disaster? I suggest that it does, through redemptive mourning. ‘Those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them’ as George Santayana said. Unless we deeply mourn what, we have already done to Creation in the Anthropocene Era, we will not be living in the truth, and we will continue our destructive ways and repeat former patterns. The good we may do, even at great cost, will be to a greater or lesser degree undone by our

continuing the behaviours that created our crisis. Our Green Mission will founder.

Ignoring redemptive mourning leads to the recurrence of Wrong-doing

The *Book of Jeremiah* from the 6th century BCE, is a paradigm of redemptive mourning: the people sin, but over and over the prophet calls them to repentance, with the promise of safe return and restoration after their exile in Babylon. Yahweh is revealed as the lord of history who orchestrates all things in accord with his everlasting love for his wayward people. ‘I will visit you and fulfil my promise... I know the plans I have for you... plans for your welfare and not for harm... When you search for me you will find me... I will restore your fortunes and bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile’ (Jer 29:10-14).

The slaughter in North America of indigenous Indians by Spaniards around 1520 left 20 million killed. But who mourned these Indians? Instead those who survived became the enemy, to be eliminated by the settlers who saw themselves as on a divine mission to create the new Garden of Eden. Now a new racism is rife, leading to the challenge: Do Black Lives Matter?

After World War II and the Holocaust there emerged an implicit pact across Germany not to reflect and acknowledge what had happened: the focus instead was to be the rebuilding of the economy. *The Inability to Mourn* by A & M Mitscherlich, 1967, studies the collective suppression of guilt re the Third Reich. Nazism, they found, was to be interpreted as something like ‘an infectious childhood disease’ for which only Hitler and his comrades were to blame. Guilt, shame, grief, and empathy were dismissed. Though Germany had started the war that ended in the division of Germany, the enemy were those

now behind the Wall in East Berlin. This provocative book initiated a coming to terms with a terrible past through analyzing the reigning taboos. This new culture of remembrance can be a model for others for others to follow. It offers a counter-balance to the current emergence of Neo-Nazism.

The exploding of the Atom Bomb in 1945, instead of halting the Armaments Industry, has led to its phenomenal growth as the biggest industry in the world, at \$1822b in 2018. It has also created the phenomenon of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD).

After the 1947 founding of the State of Israel, the Jews did not redemptively mourn their Holocaust, and instead began the persecution of the Palestinians.

Ireland's Child Sexual Abuse scandal has accelerated the current collapse of the Irish Catholic Church. From the 1960's on, many knew that things were very wrong, but few protested. When they did they were silenced. As Derek Scally puts it in *The Best Catholics in the World*: Dublin, 2021: *'This book is not about taking sides but is an embrace of ambivalence, suggesting an informed and respectful discussion of the deep-rooted trauma of our Catholic legacy. Keeping the past as it is, buried in its shallow grave, leaves us stuck in a home-made limbo. If we don't want to know what's buried, or if we know and continue to deny it, we ensure that anything new we build over this grave risk repeating unconsciously and in new forms, the structural flaws of the past... Are we ready to own our past?'* (301-2).

Ten days after the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in New York, President Bush announced that we had finished grieving and now needed resolute action to take the



place of grief. So much for a period of redemptive mourning!

We must include the work of redemptive eco-mourning as an integral dimension of our Living Green Mission. Christian Eco-mourning, as part of Christian consciousness, will play an essential role in the healing of the planet, by alerting us to what is wrong in our ways of living and liberating us to live more genuinely the values of the Gospel. Grief-work holds the mystery of pain and evil in a steady and loving gaze: out of this contemplative stance emerges compassion and conversion.

Each of us may ask: *Do I find myself mourning the destruction of creation? If Yes, how can I respond creatively to it? Can Ecological Grief/Mourning become a dynamic and redemptive reality that is integrated into my spirituality and my pastoral approach?*

1. Redemptive Moments in Christian Mourning

I suggest various moments in Christian mourning, in the confident belief that the Holy Spirit who is among us will inspire each of us to do what is best suited to our unique situations.

Firstly, we must allow the reality of our ecological crisis to enter deeply into our souls: if we live in denial the destruction will continue unchecked. *Only the truth will set us free* (Jn 8:32). Currently the deep warnings of Covid 19 are not yet being adequately heard: as TS Eliot says: We have the experience but miss the meaning.

'The ecological crisis is a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive: they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So, what they all need is an 'ecological conversion' whereby the effects of their encounter with

Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience' (LS 218).

2. Love and Mourning

With an ever-deepening realization of what is wrong must come a deeper love of Creation. Reflection on the mystical passages of *Laudato Si* can be helpful here: I have gathered these in a booklet for easy reference: see the Reading List below. Loving and mourning go hand in hand: what I love little, I mourn little if it disappears. Redemptive mourning arises only when I realize that in the ravaging of Nature, part of my very being is gone, because I am a part of Nature: I attend a little funeral of Nature, and die a little death myself. I am the less for the disappearance of every detail of bio-diversity. I must allow myself to experience emotionally the pain of Mother Earth: *'We can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement' (LS 89).*

3. Mourning is linked to shame and sorrow for sin.

In this step I acknowledge that I am complicit in the sin against creation. *'Is it I, Lord?' 'Yes'.*

Pope Francis tells us: *'Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet, for inasmuch as we all generate some ecological damage, we are called to acknowledge our contribution to the disfigurement and destruction of creation. For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins. To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin*

against ourselves and a sin against God' (LS 15). 'A healthy relationship with creation.... entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire for change' (LS 218). This well describes ecological mourning, repentance and amendment.

4. The Gift of Tears

The gift of tears for sin is cherished in the contemplative tradition, and we need in our times to explore its richness as a remedy for sin against Creation. *'Tears for lost places, for a whole lost world of possibilities. Also, tears born of gratitude for what has been, for what might yet be retrieved and restored. Tears as a source of renewal. Tears as a gift. This is how the Christian monastics of the fourth century Egyptian desert thought about tears' (D. Christie: *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology*, 74).*

Tears are a gift: they make walls crumble and they break open the human heart. The heart of stone becomes flesh. Tears sear our souls, and break down pride and self-sufficiency: fragility and vulnerability take their place. Tears wash away sin and bring intimacy and closeness: we see some things rightly only with eyes that have wept.

Redemption begins when we identify with Jesus who weeps over the loss of what he loves.

- We can contemplate him at the grave of Lazarus, and learn that this divine weeping is born of his love. *'The one you love is sick' (Jn 11:3).* But the sharp edge now is that it is we who have brought this mortal sickness on the Creation God loves. We take our place with Martha in speaking with Jesus.
- We can sit with him as he weeps over the Jerusalem he loves, which is soon to be destroyed (*Lk 19:41-44*), and watch him weep over his ravaged Creation.
- We can watch and pray in Gethsemane as he weeps not just for himself but for the Sin of the World – he carries the sin that we inflict on Creation, and the grief and

suffering we bring thereby to innocent and good people, especially the poor.

- On the *Via Crucis* we meet him and he commands us to weep: ‘Weep for yourselves and for your children’ (Lk 23:28). This command has new resonances today: we speak with him about the sort of world we are handing on to our children, and allow ourselves to weep with him.
- We can weep with Creation, as he does: ‘For a long time I have held my peace... Now I will cry out like a woman in labour: I will gasp and pant’ (Is 42:14-15). ‘There is a time to weep... a time to mourn’ (Eccl 3:4). Creation is now in mourning, in agony, and we are part of Creation. ‘The vineyard is ruined, desolate, it mourns to me’ (Jer 12:11).
- Gazing at the Crucified One (Jn 19:37), we can include all Creation as suffering with him. The mystery of grace through which all created reality is healed is hidden here.

Note that in Scripture ‘mourning’, ‘weeping’ and ‘tears’ each occur more than 70 times. *Metanoia*—conversion, is hard work. It involves a re-creating of us, ‘from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh’ (Ez 36:26) and carries all the pain of heart-surgery! But this mourning is cleansing, graced, life-giving, redemptive, because it flows from God.

5. Now our trust in God has to grow!

Do we believe that God can and will intervene to save the world? ‘God loves the world so much...’ (Jn 3:16): can we believe that? Jesus is either Lord of all, or he is lord of nothing, so Thomas’ statement: ‘My Lord and my God’ (Jn 20:28) takes on new meaning. We are challenged here to a new appreciation of God’s greatness and providence. Let Jeremiah’s image sustain us in dark times:

*I went down to the potter’s house,
and there he was, working at his wheel.
The vessel he was making of clay was
spoiled in his hand,
and he reworked it into another vessel, as
seemed good to him.*

*Then the word of the Lord came to me:
‘Can I not do with you, O house of Israel,
just as this potter has done?’ says the Lord.
Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so
are you in mine’ (Jer 18:3-6).*



6. Intercession for Creation

We are to be delegates of prayer for humankind in pain; we may be few in number, but we are tasked as intercessors for the world. We take our place with the solitary figures of Abraham (Gn 18), Moses (Ex 32:14) and Jesus (Lk 22:39-46). Pope Benedict XVI quotes an ancient author: ‘The human race lives thanks to a few: were it not for them, the world would perish’ (*Spe Salvi*, 15). The great biblical scholar Bultmann says: ‘Prayer is to move God to do something which he otherwise would not do’.

Intercession demands great faith; it hopes against hope; it does not cease until what is asked is given; it trusts that ‘with God, all things are possible’—this theme recurs ten times in Scripture, from Gn 18:14 to Lk 18:27. Intercession has an extraordinary force. It calls God’s future into the present. New alternatives become feasible. ‘The unexpected becomes suddenly possible because people on earth have invoked heaven, the home of the possibles, and have been heard’ (Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 299).

We who engage in redemptive mourning for Creation are not left to bear its suffering alone. Jesus handed over his suffering to his Father, the God of all consolation: the trinitarian dynamic operates. He was

comforted, and we shall be too. *'Blessed are those who weep; they shall be comforted'* (Mt 5:8). *'His prayer was heard'* (Hb 5:7), and our prayer also shall be heard. Consolation comes also in our actions for the planet because we are in tune with God. *'Come to me, all you that labour... I will refresh you'* (Mt 11:28). *'I bandage, but God heals'* – so said Sigmund Freud, quoting a surgeon. We labour but it is God who *'makes things grow'* (1Cor 3:6), and we can see this happening when we get the order of things right.

We can include Creation in our regular prayer: see E Johnson: *Creation & the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*. Be inclusive, she says: let the word 'US' stand for 'All', wherever possible. We already pray: *'You save animals and humans alike'* (Ps 36:6). So let us pray: *'May God be gracious to us ALL and bless us All'* (including Creation) (Ps 67); *'Have mercy on us ALL'* (Ps 123); *'He took flesh and dwelt among us ALL'* (Jn 1:12); *'Emmanuel'* means *'God is with us ALL'* (Mt 1:23); *'God will raise us (ALL)'* (1C 6:4); *'In him we ALL live and move and have our being'* (Ac 17:28). Psalms 104 and 148 enable us to find our place within the great panorama of Being, not as its lords and dominators, but in fellowship with all that is.

7. Eco-conversion

This will mean the ending of a self-indulgent style lived at the expense of creation. Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* offers a vision of a world in harmony, based on reverence for all, including reverence for creation. Francis' new book, *Dare to Dream*, 2020, challenges us to make this vision a reality.

R W Kimmerer in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which has been described as a hymn of love to the world, unfolds the concept of *Reciprocity*. To maintain harmony between Nature and ourselves, she proposes that we learn the ways of Nature who cares for us, so that we may care rightly for her. We

are the ones who come asking for life from her.

'Introduce yourself: ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer. Never take the first, nor the last. Take only what you need. Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Never waste what you have taken. Share. Give thanks for what you have been given. Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken' – p. 183.

The Christian community is to be prophetic as we witness to Christian love and hope for the world. Communal discernment helps us to engage and to lobby effectively to bring about the massive changes which our crisis requires.

Summary

Among the People of God many are working hard to protect the planet. But good people can have a Messiah-like mind-set, as if their bright ideas and plans will solve the crisis. There is however no merely human solution to our problem, so I am proposing that while we commit ourselves to doing what we can, we must embed creative mourning in Christian practice and ritual, and acknowledge with *Laudato Si'* that the root of our crisis lies within our warped relationship with Creation and its Creator. Else we will be *'building on shallow graves'* and will repeat our errors. Mourning must be searingly honest: *'We have sinned!'* This admission brings us along the path to amendment. For example: if our challenge is to provide enough energy for the world, should we turn to fracking or to nuclear energy? Or must our focus be on reducing our energy NEEDS, and on identifying new and safer sources of energy? Mourning that is redemptive brings good from evil. Well-made decisions follow the promptings of God and become part of the comprehensive divine solution, for the new heavens and earth come from the One *'who makes all things new'* (Rev 21:5), and who will bring about *'the universal restoration'* that is promised (Acts 3:21).

Richie Gomez, MSC

Sustainable Living and Agriculture For Indigenous People of Mindanao, the Philippines

At this SEDOS Seminar, I shall be presenting to you the locus scenarios but with undeniable global implications due to the way we live our modern lifestyle. To present it in a simpler way, I shall use the “See – Discern – Act” methodology for a better hermeneutical understanding and a more balanced interpretation.

OUR SITUATION (SEE)

We are all on the One Boat of Globalization. Is it good to be on this boat? We have no choice but to continue our journey as we are on this boat of the Capitalistic, Consumeristic, Commercialistic, Materialistic, Profit-Driven Community. As a result, we have an excessive lifestyle and live the throw-away culture, rich and poor alike. The adverse impact of climate change on farmers has already penetrated their day to day suffering. Natural calamities such as El Niño, La Niña, Typhoons, Flashfloods, have devastated their farmlands. The unpredictable weather conditions affect the cycle of crops. To work in the fields from 10:00 a.m. onwards in the sun is already very difficult (global warming) and Livestock raising (hybrid) does not adapt to climate.

For more than three decades, the method of modern farming (*Green Revolution*) based on chemical products, has been in use. This has become common for mass production, worldwide. Surplus products from First World countries under the International Free Trade Agreement resulted in the Philippines becoming the dumping ground for surplus food and non-food products. Our local production is not valued and given importance. Furthermore, when the Rice Tarrification Law was enacted, there was an influx of imported goods.

The November 2020 Rice Cropping situation is quite remarkable. The Selling Price of the Palay harvest to National Food Authority (NFA) was P17.00/kg., strictly dry. Traders could buy it at P13.00 to 15.00 dry and P10.00 to 12.00 for low quality that may be wet and spotted. On the farmers’ side the easier option is to sell their Palay to the Traders because they are already at work in other fields after the harvest. Thus, they avoid other post-harvest expenses (winnowing, trucking, drying, re-sacking, winnowing again, and trucking again) they would incur if they considered selling to NFA. The expenses will be higher if the weather is bad with no drying facilities. No matter how much you think about it, our Farmers cannot get a just and compensating reward for their hard work, in view of their family profile of 4-8 children, no educational qualification, with loans at 5/6 interest, and the fact they do not own the land. The Pandemic Situation has imposed all kinds of restrictions that limit our farmers’ efforts to make some extra income. Even worse were they to be infected by the Covid-19 virus. Finally, we are seeing the destruction of rainforests, the pollution of the oceans with enormous amounts of plastic, diminishing biodiversity, soil erosion and the depletion of the soil from which all life derives its food, all happening at an accelerated pace.¹



*Sustainable living and Agriculture for
Indigenous People*

¹ Satish Kumar; editor emeritus of *Resurgence &*

Ecologist magazine and author of *Soil, Soul, Society*.

OUR REFLECTION (*DISCERN*)

Food Sovereignty is our fight for sustainable living. In order to ensure healthy food production, we need to establish farms that are not dependent on chemical products since we know the environmental/health hazards linked to this conventional way of farming. The *Farmers' Community Organizations* will play a significant role in continuous formation, non-formal learning, uplifting the morale of the farmers, as we, at the Center for the Poor, share with them our Core Values and Principles, such as:

- Love- Shared- Blessing Academy
- *Sapat na* (Enough) Principle
- Care for the Environment (*Laudato Si'*)
- Zero Waste or Best Green Practices and 9R's
- Back to Basic, Simple Life-Style
- Natural Sustainable Farming

To share the plight of the Poor challenges our very identity as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Our option for the Poor has shaken our own lifestyle. We have become one of them, smell like them, muddled and bruised like them. As we listen to their stories, visit their homes, eat at the same table, we learn so much from them. Some of them come from Rehab Centers, some are ex-Rebels while others have bad Records in the community. Those we are serving are the people who need to be Recognized by society, for they literally come from the fringes of society. They are “the Least, the Lost, and the Last” (3L).

By continuing our modern Life-Style with every “ism” of our time (Capitalism, Consumerism, Materialism, Individualism...) this humanity will soon collapse. As we are called to re-direct and shift our way of living from Ego-system (*awareness that cares about the well-being of oneself*) to Eco-system (*awareness that cares about the well-being of all, including oneself*).² Endless production, consumption and the pursuit of

² Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer: *Leading from emerging future – from Ego-System to Eco-System Economics*. Copyright @ 2013, Berrett-Koehler

profit in the name of economic growth, progress and development have become the most cherished goals of the modern economy. According to an ecological worldview, production and consumption as well as money and profit should be the means to an end. The end goal should be the well-being of people and the integrity of the Planet Earth. If production and consumption, money and economic growth damage nature and exploit people then such economic activities must be stopped at once.

In the economy of nature there is no waste. It is an ecological imperative that the production and consumption of goods and services produce no waste. Waste does violence to the ecological integrity of our Earth Home. Whatever we take from nature must go back to nature. What cannot be absorbed by nature should not be produced.



Pandemic Food Assistance

Linear versus Cyclical Economy:

Linear – we take from nature, use it and then throw it away with the consequence that it ends up in landfills, in rivers, the oceans and the atmosphere.

Cyclical – all goods and products must be recycled and returned to nature without damage or waste. *With ecological sensitivity we should know that if we pollute the air, we have to breathe it, if we pollute the water, we have to drink it and if we pollute the soil, we have to eat the food grown on all that polluted soil.*³

Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, C.A.

³ Satish Kumar; editor emeritus of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine and author of *Soil, Soul, Society*.

Can we still say that Mindanao is the food basket of the country? I don't think so. Let me take you to our Banana Plantation run by the Trans National Corporations (NTC's) in the country. Each part of the banana plant is infused with chemicals to maintain its "flawless export quality" otherwise the importing country may reject/return the bananas. In unsafe and Hazardous Working Conditions, workers complained of headaches, dizziness, tightening of chest, sore throat and stomach pains due to chemical exposure. The chemicals utilized vary from week to week so that insects do not develop immunity to them. Workers are exposed to highly toxic chemicals on a daily basis, yet they are not provided with proper, adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). Now, after 38 years of poisoning the soil and the waters, the *Panama Disease* of the bananas broke out. No matter how much the farmers tried to apply the strongest stronger chemicals, the more resistant the virus became, leaving hundreds of thousands of hectares barren.⁴

Anthropocentric Attitude: Human beings consider themselves to be separate from nature and even superior and above nature. We value nature only in terms of its usefulness to human beings. This arrogant attitude is the root cause of the present ecological crisis.⁵

OUR SOLIDARITY (ACT)

Post-Harvest Intervention

We used to help the farmers or organizations financially during the planting period. But now, we focus our intervention program on the Post-Harvest Period. The Center for the Poor is working closely with the Department of Agriculture (D.A.), other NGO's, individual farmers, fisher-folk, and Indigenous People, tribes/communities, for the following reasons:

- To preserve organic seeds not dependent on chemicals
- To organize Centers/Organizations for the Poor that focus on Agriculture Cooperatives and Sustainable Farming.
- To buy the Palay Products based on the NFA Price Standard, plus P2.00 for non-organic, and P3.00 for organic products
- To create more farms to grow the Raw Materials needed for organic fertilizers and food products like (*azolla/chinese water spinach/cohol*, and *maggots'* culture)

Promote Farm to Table Principle, not Farm to Market Road, to by-pass the traders and businessmen. The Center will serve as a bridge between the Farmers and the Consumers that maintains the original price of the products as we are a Non-Profit Organization. To think how to make a profit, Return of Investments (ROI), is everybody's mindset. This mentality permeates the system which Jesus radically opposed in the Gospel Stories of the hired workers in the vineyard (*Mt 20:1-16*) *Are you questioning my generosity?* (SELFISHNESS). Parable of the Talents (*Mt 25:14-30*). *You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I scattered no seed?* (GREED)

For very many years we failed to establish organic farmers for the following reasons:

- Farmers and Traders focused on a high price (*lahat gusto mag ganansia*) to the point that it was no longer affordable to the ordinary consumer. (*basta organic mahal dapat*)
- Organic growers do not receive support/subsidies in the post-harvest period.
- Farmers can supply the products, but the marketing is difficult because marketing is controlled by the business sector (traders).

The Intervention strategy of the Center for the Poor in the Post-Harvest Period is to: - buy

⁴ Imperialist Plunder of the Philippine Agriculture: *A research on the Expansion of Plantations through Agribusiness Venture Arrangement (AVAs) in Mindanao*. Copyright @ 2019, Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agricultura (UMA).

⁵ Satish Kumar; editor emeritus of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine and author of *Soil, Soul, Society*.

their products at a higher price than the NFA Price. Can we be sure that this will motivate Farmers to plant using Organic Methods?

On Dispersal Programs:

This time the program is planning to double the number of the 1st cycle, in the 2nd cycle. This program is well-supported by the Talacogon Municipal Veterinary Office and Department of Agriculture (D.A) Province.

Demo Farms will apply our Organic Fertilizers on Trial, if successful, at the next cropping:

-Del Monte Living Museum, -San Vicente Demo Farm 1 (1.2 ha.), -San Vicente Demo Farm 2 (3/4 ha.), -Zillovia Demo Farm 3 (.09 ha.), -La Suerte William Farm (1.8 ha), -Lingling Las Nieves Farm (10 ha.), -George Del Monte Farm (3 ha.)

Our Target is to produce Red Rice, Pink Rice, Black Rice and Adlay Rice.

One Stop Shop, Post-Harvest, Zero Waste Facilities

(We need Php 3.5 million to realize this project). The Post-Harvest Facilities are the following:

- Building Construction with Truck Service for howling farm products
- Solar Drier
- Mechanical Drier – Prototype model patterned on our Brick Cookstove using rice hull waste from the rice mill.
- Rice Mill — The D.A. will transport the machine from Tumuliktik to Del Monte.
- Feed Mill — using by-products from the rice mill (rice bran, corn bran, copra mill) and farm roughage
- Agri-Machine Shop for Farming Equipment.

Once this has been realized, it will answer the Post-Harvest Problem of the Farmers. This will address the scarcity of Agri-machinery like: mud-boat, turtle, and thresher. This One-Stop Shop Facility could become a buying station between farmers and traders, even NFA.

Food Processing Livelihood for women:

The Center is developing a capacity to train women as professional green chefs who respect the ingredients, and ensure zero-waste kitchen management. In the midst of the Pandemic, a livelihood was created for them such as, making sausages (*Longganisa*) and meat rolls (*Lumpia*) with 30% herbs and 70% meat. These are all by-products from our Pig Dispersal Project. We collect the fruit and vegetables from the farm and process them naturally and organically (Food Preservation) through fermentation, pickling and sweetening.

Enrolled UMAHANTA (our farm)

Training Program: We are using the 70-20-10 Learning Process for Sustainable Farming. 70% Actual – 20% Exposure – 10% Lecture/ Input and Processing, with a Values Program for personal growth, development and skills training. This is a 1-Year Program at Php1.5M budget for the daily wages of Ten Farmers. After the Program, we hope that the candidates will have a higher level of awareness in taking care of the environment, sustainable agriculture and acquired skills on Farm Management with the right attitude. This is an on-going program and we hope to have a 2nd batch after May 2021, if our budget permits.



The Nursery House prepares 100 seedling trees every month

Values Formation Program every Saturday at Del Monte Living Museum Farm:

This is open to all — Lay MSC Partners, Exposurists, Center for the Poor Program Proponents, Youth Scholars, UMAHANTA Members, Pig dispersal members, and Walk-in learners. We set a specific Topic, – Sharing of best green practices – Processing the experience – Planning and Evaluation of our Research and Development (R&D) at the Living Museum – on a weekly basis. We invite experts such as Agriculturists, Ecologists, Permaculturists, Garbologists, Veterinary Doctors, Environmentalists, to speak, and this program was strongly supported by D.A. and ATI who sometimes allocate a food budget for the participants.

BIOFEEDS PRODUCTION for (pigs, chickens, fish) 1 ton/day @ P20.00/kg., which the farmers could afford? After establishing the source of organic raw materials, we could produce a greater volume to supply other organic growers outside the Del Monte Living Museum Farm and with this:

- We could offer more pig-dispersal proponents a livelihood
- Establish our own livestock farm with native/organic chickens, ducks (*itikan*), egg-production and thus generate employment
- Create a livelihood for fisher-folk (Britania Surigao Sur) who could breed valued fish species such as: Pompano, Lapu-lapu, Tanigue, Blue Marlin, Hito, Tilapia, etc.
- Azolla Farm, Chinese water-spinach (*Kangkong*) Farm, Cohol Culture, Maggots Culture and other raw materials can be grown in the vast marshlands of Talacogon by empowering local communities to work on these projects.
- Producing heavy-duty machinery at the Center (meat grinder, hummer mill, shredder, pelletizer, dehydrators, proper handling and packaging).

- Continue our R and D for the Biofeeds by using farm roughage and market waste like fruit and vegetables.

In addition, our dream is that one day the Center for the Poor could supply farmers with Organic Fertilizers such as: Bokashi Juice, Foliar growth enhancer with insect repellent, Omega Greens, Lucky Japanese Soil Enhancer (antimolds and bacterium pathogens) and Bokashi Soil), soil treatment application. Going back to nature would literally heal our land by bringing back the abundance of microorganisms.

Pandemic Food Assistance Program:

Because of the Pandemic's negative effects, many in the rural areas are now jobless. If we do not intervene and address the basic needs of the people like food, our community will soon face more problems. On 15 March 2021, we launched the P10.00 worth of "Viands" (*P10.00 lang Ayos na! Sud-an na*). The Youth of Del Monte (*Sanguniang kabataan*, Parish Youth, Singles for Christ, Out of School Youth) were put in charge of the daily cooking of "viands" assisted by MSC Lay Partners. In this program we promote:

ZERO WASTE – Bring your own container
ZERO PACKAGING – No disposable plastic
ZERO PROFIT – Just sharing

By localizing our Daily Menu, gathering our raw materials from the local farmers, we gave special attention to "4P's" or poorest of the poor members, besides which the Center for the Poor allocates funds to this program instead of just handing out food packs to people.

Contact information

*Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
Center for the Poor – Philippines
(richforever55@gmail.com)*

Climate Change & Sustainability, What can be done?

Lessons from the corporate world



Ezrah Schraven is the global sustainability consultant for a company called FUGRO which is a geo-technical engineering firm. They map the surface of our planet and are the industry leaders in their field.

Introduction

My goal of this talk today is twofold:

- 1) to bring across what is at the heart of the matter, when we are discussing climate change,
- 2) to share with you a pragmatic / practical approach that can be used to implement action or support communities in making a change.

1. The heart of the matter #1

Everything discussed in this presentation relates to the global crisis of climate change and its impact. It is often quite difficult to imagine what the impact of a global crisis might be. When we talk about climate change, this can be a pretty abstract concept. It can be difficult to understand just how big and impactful this crisis is that is unfolding.



<https://facte.ru/nature/kak-obrazuetsya-tsunami>

In this photo you see a small wave, it represents Covid-19 and its impact. Everybody on this call has been affected by Covid-19.

Pandemics have often been discussed, but now that we are experiencing one, we come to find out what the meaning of a global pandemic truly is. But, behind the small wave you see a much, much larger wave coming towards us. This wave represents the size and impact of Climate Change. Climate change will have a profound impact on every living thing on this planet. It is much, much bigger than Covid-19. This is why you hear more and more people talk about it. Climate Change is the biggest environmental crisis this planet has seen in modern history. Climate change is happening because of the CO₂ that we emit into the air when we drive a car, fly, when we consume electricity or burn our stove. CO₂ is emitted into the air when products are produced, and goods are being transported. The impact will be more and more visible every year going forward, and science can give us insight in where this is going.⁶

Behind the climate change wave you see another swell emerging. One that represents the loss of biodiversity. When you hear about species disappearing, you are hearing about the biodiversity crisis. This is caused by human activities, climate change, pesticides, overfishing, etc. The impact of loss of biodiversity on the wellbeing of the planet and humankind is expected to be profound. To refer back to the last presentation by Rich Gomez; it is in diversity that you find sustainability.

To stop climate change, and the loss of biodiversity, our behavior and our way of life

⁶ For more information see IPCC (international Panel for Climate Change): <https://www.ipcc.ch>

need to change. Therefore, the key message of this presentation is: Earth is not here for us to consume. Nature is not a consumption product, we are an integral part of it. We can live on our planet and exist by the grace of a delicate balance. It is crucial that humankind comes to this understanding, so that we may change the way we treat our planet.

This can be challenging! You will find that often people seek to fulfill their short-term needs. Long term consequences often come second in decision making, especially if consequences are not immediate or direct (however gruesome these may be) An additional challenge is that the magnitude of the concept of climate change can be quite overwhelming, to the point where it leaves you feeling powerless. When you realize the impact it has, you simply don't know what you could possibly do to change it. We will talk more about that later.

In this presentation I will share with you some practical but crucial handles the business is using. Hopefully these same handles can provide insights or support to our audience today as well.

What can we do?

Climate change and the loss of biodiversity seem so big in impact that it is difficult to imagine how one person can make a change. It can be a little overwhelming. These steps will help you get a grip on what every person and community is doing, the role they play and how they can play their part in mitigating climate change.

- Awareness of climate change & environment
- Self-reflection (responsibility)
- Personal impact assessment (what is my impact)
- What can I do? (mitigation of your impact)
- Control & monitoring (double check whether your intervention is working, and improve where possible)
- Transparency & disclosure – because this creates accountability and credibility. You need both accountability and credibility so you can help others.

- Supportive engagement with stakeholders (No one has all the answers. Everyone is searching, go search together, help each other out)

These steps can be used by organisations, corporations, individuals, communities – to identify their part, their responsibility and to make a change.

Everybody has a part to play



<https://www.montessorivices.com/earth-puzzle>

Everybody on the planet has a part to play. Everybody carries responsibility. I will talk about corporations today, and how they are approaching the challenge of climate

change. But in this presentation you will come across governments, law makers, non-governmental organizations, science and scientists as well.

2. A bit of history

Climate Change is on the news a lot, and in conversation. It seems almost like a recent thing! But that is not the case. Climate Change has been ignored and neglected for far too long by the large audience. It shows you how LATE we are, in acting on this, how important it is that this is addressed.

1890s - Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius and the American scientist P. C. Chamberlain independently consider the problems that might be caused by CO₂ building up in the atmosphere. Both scientists realize that the burning of fossil fuels could lead to global warming, but neither suspects the process might already have begun.

1988 - The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) is set up. It is a scientific and intergovernmental body under the United Nations, providing the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge regarding climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.

1990 - The IPCC produces its first assessment report. In its first assessment report the IPCC concludes that humanity's emissions are adding to the atmosphere's natural component of greenhouse gases. It underlines the importance of climate change as a challenge requiring international cooperation to tackle its consequences. The report therefore plays a decisive role in paving the way for the creation of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC).
 2014 - The IPCC's fifth assessment report is released. The report provides an overview of the state of knowledge concerning the science of climate change. The report refers to the "clear and growing" human influence on the climate, warning that if left unchecked, climate change will increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impact on people and ecosystems.⁷



<https://www.offshorewind.biz/2020/12/08/fugro-hits-ijmuiden-ver-trifecta/>

3. Where are we now?

I will spend a little more time on these last few points. Because these points are directly resulting into changes that will impact people in your communities.

December 2015 - *Paris Agreement* is adopted: The *Paris Agreement* on fighting climate change is the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. The objective of the agreement is to maintain the increase in global temperatures well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, whilst

making efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

12 December 2019 - EU to become climate neutral by 2050: EU leaders agree to make the EU climate neutral by 2050 during a European Council meeting in Brussels.

7 October 2020 - *European Climate Law*: The European Parliament approves the Climate Law to make the EU and all member states climate neutral by 2050. It sets a more ambitious 2030 emissions reduction target to 60%.⁸ This means, that companies like the one I work for, have to become climate neutral by 2050 if they want to exist and do business in Europe. But this is also true for cities and countries. It means that we have to change the way we do business, deliver services, heat our buildings, the way we produce our food and transport ourselves.

4. Together towards a more sustainable future

For a business the first question is – ok we need to change. But what, and how? And how much? To figure what we needed to change, and how, and how much – we took the following steps:

1. The first step was awareness. Everyone in the organization (especially management) needs to be aware of Climate Change, on the cause of climate change, the impact it has and will have on the planet.
2. Once we are aware of Climate Change, we need to self-reflect and recognize that we have a responsibility, and therefore we have an active role to play.
3. In order to take responsibility for your part, you need to understand what your part, in this case your footprint, looks like. We assessed what our impact is. By for example measuring our CO2 footprint, but also the waste we generate, the plastics we use, our impact on biodiversity. We found out that 80% of our

⁷ Source: Interactive timeline: a guide to climate change negotiations | European Parliament (europa.eu); Shell and Exxon's secret 1980s climate change warnings | Climate change | *The Guardian*

⁸ Source: [Interactive timeline: a guide to climate change negotiations | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](https://www.npr.org/2021/04/22/988051091/biden-makes-new-pledge-for-u-s-greenhouse-gas-emissions-a-50-cut?t=1620053174749); <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/22/988051091/biden-makes-new-pledge-for-u-s-greenhouse-gas-emissions-a-50-cut?t=1620053174749>

CO2 emissions are generated by our vessel fleet.

4. Now that we know what our impact is, and which actions have the biggest footprint, we are able to make a plan to reduce that impact.

5. We set targets and we monitor whether our interventions and changes indeed reduce our footprint. And if not, we adjust them until they do.

6. We are transparent about the measurements, the numbers and disclose these. This creates accountability and credibility. AND very important: this transparency allows for other to help us, and it allows us to help others.

7. The last step, but not the least – is supportive engagement with stakeholders. Because no one on the planet has all the answers. We are all searching – and we need to hold each-others hand, and figure this out together.

These steps allowed us to measure. Measuring your impact is incredibly important, because it allows you to set targets and assess whether you are making improvements, and it allows you to help others. This year FUGRO has set itself a target to be Net Zero CO2 emissions for 2035. That means, that as a company we are putting everything in place to be fully functioning in 2035 whilst bringing down our CO2 emission as close to zero as possible. And we want to be transparent about our progress. Therefore FUGRO reports its CO2 emissions through a *Customer Data Platform (CDP)*.



<https://imgur.com/zifiR>

Pushing corporations

- As a corporation we receive questions from our clients, shareholders, financial investors, legislators and rating agencies.
- These questions trigger action: it triggers self-analysis, research about impact, mitigation and best practice.
- All these pushes motivate a corporation to answer these questions. And in the case of climate change, that means that many corporations may have to reinvent themselves.

These are for-profit businesses that analyze the sustainability performance of corporations. That means they access every bit of information they can find about a company (from the annual report, to news items and court files) – and use this information to make an assessment on two things: transparency and sustainability. They will check whether a company monitors its CO2 emissions, whether the measurements are externally audited, whether they are aware of their impact on biodiversity, what programs they have in place to safeguard human rights, whether there have been any controversies, court cases or news reports on ill behavior, etc.

The rating agencies then create a sustainability ranking and sell this data to financial investors, who rely on this data for their decision making. The profitability of the rating agencies is directly tied to the reliability of their data. Therefore the accuracy of the ranking is their product, and thoroughness / accuracy is their goal.

Every company on the stock market is rated by these benchmarks, whether they like it or not. The place they get on this ranking ultimately impacts their ability to do business and thus it impacts their profitability. Therefore the ranking agencies (unintentionally) motivate businesses to become more sustainable. If a business is proactive, it will pay attention to these rankings and use it as an assessment pointing out the areas in which they need to improve their performance.

A global structure is emerging

That sounds easier than it is! How is one supposed to figure out one's CO2 footprint or climate-change-risk-profile? And how is one supposed to know whether the changes implemented are making a difference?

There is help; a global structure is emerging. This structure is shaped by initiatives, which are created by, for example, the UN and Non-Governmental Organizations. These initiatives create definitions, structure, check and balances. These have become and are becoming a standard, safeguarding quality and accuracy of information. This system is all about transparency and accountability.

Companies actively have to approach these organisations to be rated and have their performance analysed or accredited. And although it is voluntary, more and more companies receive questions on their performance (by clients, for example), forcing them to go through and embrace this trajectory in order to stay in business!!

These organisations are strict, thorough and unforgiving. And that helps the corporations in their learning curve. It ensures high quality and accuracy of the data reported and disclosed. The result of engaging with these organisations is that your corporation becomes more transparent and that it understands its own weaknesses and strengths. Once you know your weaknesses and strengths you can improve. These initiatives like CDP, TCFD and SBTi therefore drive constructive improvement. A corporation, a city or government can approach these initiatives if they seek transparency & disclosure.

You can:

- Report your CO2 emissions through CDP, formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, is a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts. Over the past 20 years CDP has created a system that has resulted in unparalleled engagement on environmental issues worldwide.

- Have your targets approved by the SBTi, Science Based Target initiative. The SBTi is a partnership between CDP, the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The SBTi call to action is one of the We Mean Business Coalition commitments. Find out more on sciencebasedtargets.org

- Approach TCFD (Task Force on Climate Related Financial Disclosures) to proof your risk analysis, etc. TCFD is engaged in helping companies implement the recommendations and promoting advancements in the availability and quality of climate-related disclosure.

- Understand how you contribute to or impact sustainable development, by learning more about the sustainable development goals.⁹ Going through these initiatives is a lot of work for corporations. But ultimately it helps you fully understand your business and its impact, and it allows you to improve. It is quite eye-opening to go through these thorough processes.

How?

Corporations, for better or for worse, chase their goals. The main goal is usually profitability. Due to the initiatives mentioned in the previous two slides, profitability is becoming tied in more and more closely with sustainability.

Achieving profitability, for a company like the one I work for, thus means achieving sustainability. Sustainability is no longer optional, due to everything mentioned in slide 8, 10 and 11. Sustainability is quickly becoming fundamental for many businesses to be profitable.

Corporations need to be pragmatic and practical to succeed. The corporate world is challenged, along with everyone else, to tackle climate change and minimize their impact. These are the steps corporations take, to identify impact, make a plan to reduce impact and ensure result.

⁹ For more information: sdgs.un.org/goals

These same steps may prove useful to individuals, communities, organisations or corporations to make improvements.

5. The heart of the matter #2

That brings us back to the heart of the matter. And hopefully this message resonates with you more now than it did at the start of the presentation.

Planet earth is not here for us to consume. Nature is not a consumption product, we are an integral part of it, we can live on this planet by the grace of a delicate balance. Individuals seek to fulfill their needs, consequences often come second in their decision making, especially if consequences are not immediate or direct (however gruesome these may be)

Everybody has a part to play.

We've touched on corporations, on governments, lawmakers, NGO's, international organizations, science and scientists.

There is an important role for religion, for religious and spiritual leaders and public figures:

You inspire, you guide, you help and support communities and individuals.

You have a stage which allows you to encourage and support change.

You are in a very important position when it comes to fighting climate change.



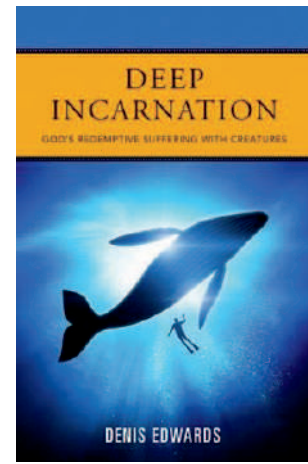
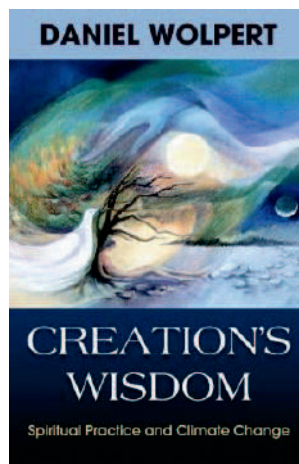
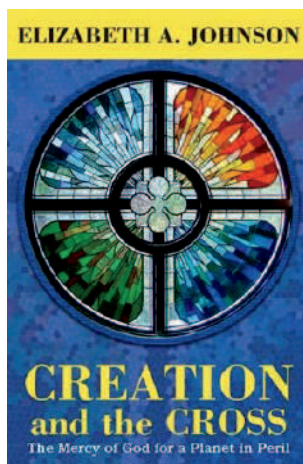
What can we do?

Hopefully the following points can be of use to you, or your community, the way it is to us in our path of change.

- Awareness of climate change & environment
- Self-reflection (responsibility)
- Personal impact assessment (what is my impact)
- What can I do? (mitigation of your impact)
- Control & monitoring (double check whether your intervention is working, and improve where possible)
- Transparency & disclosure – because this creates accountability and credibility. You need both accountability and credibility so you can help others.
- Supportive engagement with stakeholders (No one has all the answers. Everyone is searching, go search together, help each other out)

Climate change is too big for anyone to tackle on one's own. Industry, NGO's, IO's, religious leaders, and communities, all need to help each other.

We need to do this together.



(Books received from ORBIS BOOKS)

Christian Hope for Our Small Blue Planet

Introduction

What hope can we have for the future of our Small Blue Planet? This is the great question of our time. Politicians, scientists, thinkers, presenters, writers, dramatists... all give what answers they can, and we must study the findings of prophetic persons to learn how to manage our resources more effectively. Such contributors vindicate the hope in GM Hopkins' line, *'There lives the dearest freshness, deep-down things'*. Many, thank God, are donating their lives not just to conservation but to a reclaiming of the good and beautiful things we are losing. Their message is one of hope for our Small Blue Planet within a historical perspective.

Theologians also must make their contribution and offer a divine message of hope. They must dare to speak of God's intention for the world. The following interwoven reflections explore the reasons for hope drawn from the divine order of things. *'Without vision the people perish'* (Proverbs 29:18): the Christian tradition is the treasury of God's vision, and it can strengthen us and liberate our energies to protect our Common Home.

Where are WE?

But let's be honest! For a silent moment ask yourself: What is my vision for our small blue planet—my operative vision?...

Earth is some 4.6 billion years old. Astronomers predict it may last perhaps for another 4 billion years. So, it is now middle-aged, and is currently undergoing a mid-life crisis--which we humans have caused! As the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species becomes daily more real, climate grief and despair haunt many people. Some people speak of **'the funeral of the universe'**. We have not reached that point but the daily news-bulletins on the health of the planet make sober reading: while science is making spectacular

advances, global collaboration is still weak in following through because of vested interests in preserving the *status quo*, and time is not on our side.

Where are we in this unfolding scenario? Are we a little like the disciples at the Last Supper, eating, drinking and arguing, perhaps with a vague sense that all is not well but only dimly aware of what's around the corner?

Or as in Pope Francis' favorite parable, are we the Good Samaritan, moved by compassion for the 'half-dead' traveler—which is now Creation--and engaging all our energies and resources in restoring the stricken traveler to fullness of life?

An Image

I sometimes imagine all the earth's species gathered at a party around the Table of Creation, enjoying the glorious mystery of each other's existence. Suddenly our fellowship is shattered as a greedy hand swoops down and begins to destroy one species after another. See the fear and dismay of a small bird, or a humble snail, or a wild animal, or a rare flower, as it whispers to you, 'Can we depend on you to defend us?' Then I see the Spirit looking at me, waiting for my affirmative response.

This is what eco-conversion is about...

Whence Our Hope?

The Great Interventions of God (Latin *Magnalia Dei*) are the firm ground of 'the hope that is in us' (1Pt 3:15). Christian hope is realistic: it is our best gift to an anxious world. It is not wishful thinking or naive optimism: it is from God and focused on God, and is founded on the historical interventions of God in human history, as celebrated in the Hebrew Scriptures and encapsulated in the Exodus from Egypt. Our hope is divine energy which can sustain us even in the most unpromising situations.

Think of the Flood, the mythic representation of God's effort to cleanse the Earth of wrongdoing and sin: here we have the first and unparalleled Mass Extinction of Species! But God saves the day and the planet: he has Noah build the Ark and get living things on board, two of every species. Then God shuts the Ark safely in from the outside (Gen 7:16), and the rest is pre-history! Should Noah be our patron saint of Ecology?

Christian Hope has an indestructible quality that carries us beyond failure, frustration and dead ends. It is not to be used as a crutch to justify passivity but as an inspiration to do all we can to protect our planet, in the belief that God wants to guide our decision-making so that we may do what is wisest and most caring for the Planet. To repeat: Christian hope is our great gift to an anxious world.

Time Scales

To avoid confusion, we need to clarify time-issues when we speak of the future of our Planet, because 'the future' covers different time-periods.

1.A decade: This is the immediate future perspective. We have only this decade to reduce global warming dramatically.

2.This century: We are already 21 years into a century of ecological turmoil and suffering—being borne especially by the poorer peoples of the earth. The disasters outlined in *The Uninhabitable Earth* will play themselves out until and if global warming is brought under control.... In this century we must repair as far as possible what we have damaged; year on year we will be forced into a much simpler life-style. The 'good old days' of unlimited progress and resources will not return.

3.The Long-range Future: If we don't reach our targets for 50% reductions in emissions, the planet will steadily become less and less habitable over the long run. Some species may survive the heat for a long while, but not *homo sapiens*--or should we say, *Homo*

insanus? We humans can bear only a small temperature rise: try a real Indian summer! Is there anywhere to escape to? No. There is no Planet B. We will go extinct, and what is left of Nature will breathe a sigh of relief at our passing.

Imagine a point in the future in which an older planet says to planet Earth: 'You'll get over it. I had this problem myself. Those humans could never keep their house in order!'

4.The Finale: But even if in the distant future Earth becomes uninhabitable, God's closing words in *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson can still give us comfort:

'All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.
Rise, clasp My hand and come!'

In the Christian perspective the eschatological dimension (Greek *eschata* = end-things) runs parallel to our intra-worldly concerns. Salvation history is not simply linear, reaching its fulfilment only as time runs out. Rather it is here already, but not fully: there is the tension between the already and the not yet. Jesus asserts in Jn 6: '*Those who believe... have eternal life (v. 47) ... Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day (v. 54).*' The goals of salvation history are already being achieved: we are already in this time becoming '*the sons and daughters of God*' (Jn 1:12): this extraordinary leap forward by which we become sharers of the divine nature (as in the Offertory prayer) is intended to occur within the single lifespan of each one of us, so that by the hour of our death we are made over fully to God.



Keukenhof in The Netherlands

Putting this another way, the eschatological community of God is already gathering, and has been from our beginning. We can call it 'the Communion of saints'. We can call it the Cosmic Gathering, which increases year on year. Some 55m people die annually: and together with the untold number who have gone before them, they are with God, the 'God of the living, for to God all people are alive' (Lk 20:38; 1Cor 15:22). They are not in some mummified existence: 'The glory of God is the human person fully alive' as Irenaeus said in the second century CE, and that fullness of life is ours when--through death--we enter wholly into the divine dimension.

So, the 'eschatological community' is already being populated while human history runs its course. I hope this is reasonably clear. Human history as we know it in this world is not heading to a glorious Omega-point. The world is finite, and has a limited time-span. Sadly, with our connivance it is running down more quickly than it might otherwise have done. But God's enterprise is not lost: if we imagine a wheel of which the rim is human history, the spokes are the point in time when individual people step off the rim and are escorted to the 'Hub' where God is and where the Cosmic Party is already underway!

Grounds for Hope for Our Small Blue Planet

I offer *six points* for your reflection, which I hope may be pastorally helpful. You can identify more!

Firstly: The Spirit is Hard at Work!

The world is bathed in divine love: it has been so from the very beginning when the Spirit of love hovered over the deep, and it will be so when time as we know it comes to an end. Pope Francis expresses this fundamental truth when he writes: 'When everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved' (*Joy of the Gospel*, 2013, n.6). We are the focus of the love that grounds all reality. This love is always close and active: the three divine Persons are always intensely engaged in our

welfare. So a first reason for hope for our future is the Spirit-led change of heart being shown in the current 'ecological conversion' of so many persons. '*The Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings*' (G M Hopkins). Across the globe people of every nation are growing in awareness **that** Earth, so beautiful and fragile, is in crisis. Greta Thunberg has played a significant role in heightening this awareness among the young and the not-so-young; Pope Francis is alerting the world to care for Nature as generously as it is trying to care for us; US President Joe Biden accepts climate change as a primary challenge for his administration. The body of humankind, fractured by innumerable divisions, is beginning to coalesce around a common concern for our small blue planet. As a species among the other species on earth, we are becoming better in our relationships with one another through collaborating for our Common Home—this is already a great step forward in the healing of the planet.

The Spirit who presided at Creation is still hard at work! God has not despaired of Creation but has plans for it and for ourselves. '*I know the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope*' (Jeremiah 29:11). We can trust that God is totally committed to helping us now as we labour to protect our Common Home. Of all peoples, then, Christians have the least right to indulge in despair, because '*God, whose power is at work in us, is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine*' (Ephesians 3:20), and God promises to '*make all things new*' (Revelation 21:5). That we cannot imagine *how* this may be done should not lessen our trust that it *can be done*, by 'the Love who moves the sun and the other stars' (Dante: *Divine Comedy*, 33).

Secondly: The Divine Command to us is 'Go!'

Christian hope for the future of Earth is grounded in the goodness, power and wisdom of our creating and redeeming God as

revealed in the history of salvation, which includes of course the salvation of Creation! But God does not like to work alone! From the beginning God seeks out human collaboration. The simple divine command, **'Go!'** rings out across the scriptures when things are at their lowest, and when that command is obeyed divine power swings into action; the impossible happens and disaster is averted.

Examples

- God says to **Abram**: *'Go from your country and your kindred to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation'* (Gen 12:1-2). When Sarah laughs at the idea that in her old age she would have a son to beget a great nation, the response is, *'Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?'* (Gen 18:14). And behold, Abraham becomes 'father in faith' of all believers.
- Moses is told: *'Go and assemble the tribes of Israel and say to them: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey'* (Exodus 3:16-17). When Moses justifiably protests his unsuitability-- *'Who am I to go to Pharaoh?'*--God clarifies where the needed power lies: *'Who gives speech to mortals? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will teach you what you are to speak'* (4:13).
- Yet again, Jeremiah and Isaiah are both missioned through the divine command: **'Go'** (Isaiah 6:9; Jeremiah 2:2). And so repeatedly.
- In *Laudato Si* Pope Francis challenges all of us to make our own the crucified Christ's challenge to St Francis of Assisi in 1205: *'Francis, Go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling into disrepair'*.
- The Samaritan in Jesus' parable abandoned his own plans when he saw what had happened on the Jericho Road. He risked his life by stopping—perhaps the robbers were awaiting their next victim? To save the life of the wounded traveler he drew on all his resources; he gave his time and energy, his

wine and oil; he tore up some of his cloth, and improvised bandages for the wounds; he put the man on his own mount and himself walked beside it until he found the inn. He stayed the night, then paid the costs incurred there. As he departed, rather than washing his hands of the man, he kept him in his heart and returned to ensure that he was recovering enough to find his own way home. That unnamed Samaritan exemplifies what it means to be a member of God's workforce in the saving of the Wounded Traveler which is our Planet! The divine command rings out: **'Go and do likewise!'** (Lk 10:37).

The divine command addressed to us is, **'Go!'** With this tiny word God directs human history. Now it is our turn to listen for God's order to 'Go!' Our task is to be discerning communities, led by the Spirit, ready to 'Go' when God commands; we are to stay close to God, and to trust desperately. Such hope unlocks the door of divine possibility, and releases the energy and creativity required for our task.

If you ponder the unfolding story of our small blue planet since its beginning, you notice that each successive creative moment was unpredictable before it happened: it was orchestrated by the Author of reality who seems to enjoy the thrill of rescuing us from the cliff-edge. *'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. I am about to do a new thing'*. (Isaiah 43:19; 55:8). Now that we are in the Anthropocene age with all its ambiguity, we have an active role to play in the emerging of the next phase of the Planet's story. Our choices, when in tune with God's designs, will protect and restore life; otherwise they will bring disaster. We are called to discernment on a planetary level, leading to Spirit-filled action. The assurance of divine presence gives us no grounds for smug passivity but rather should inspire us to 'Go!'—to engage fully in our assigned tasks, even at great cost.

Thirdly: Our God is The God of Small Things

The next reason for Christian hope for the future of the Planet is this: while God is almighty and great, God is also the God of small things. We live small lives, and our efforts to protect our world may seem humble and futile— such as conserving water when washing our teeth, avoiding plastic, saving foxes, growing herbs in a window-box. But small though these gestures are, they are rich in God’s sight. Many gospel episodes reveal that Jesus has a keen eye for the value of small people and small things. He speaks approvingly of the tiny mustard seed, of the widow and her mite; he multiplies a mere five loaves and two fish for 5,000 people (Mark 4:31; 12:41-44; 8:1-9). He promises that the gift of ‘*a cup of water will not lose its reward*’ (Mk 9:41). He remarks that although five sparrows are sold for two pennies ‘*not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight*, and adds: ‘*even the hairs of your head are all counted*’ (Luke 12:7). At Cana dull water is turned into the best of wine (John 2:1-12); at the Last Supper the simplest forms of human nourishment, bread and wine, receive divine and eternal meaning as they make present to the world, across time and space, the person of the Lord (Luke 22: 19-20).

Little children are the privileged ones to whom the kingdom of God belongs (Mark 10:14). Women, who had a lowly role in Jewish society, are the first to be entrusted with the news of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus is drawn to the ‘nobodies’—to those without social standing or who were excluded from the community: lepers, tax collectors, the possessed, the cavalcade of cripples. Try listing those he met with, conversed with, healed, and notice how deeply he is attracted to the small people of the world whose only claim on his attention was their need.

Reading the Gospels from this vantage point grounds confident hope that even our tiny efforts to care for the neediness of our sick Planet carry a hidden value in the divine perspective. Our good deeds, no matter if they are as small as mustard seeds, blossom and go

with us into eternal life. ‘*Their good deeds go with them*’ (Rev 14:13). As St Paul says: ‘*Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time*’ (Gal 6:9). ‘*Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone: but if it dies it bears abundant fruit*’ (John 12:24).

The Story of *The Hazel Nut*

Julian of Norwich’s image of the hazel nut expresses well our hope for what is small: ‘*God showed me a little thing, the size of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand. I looked upon it and thought, “What may this be?” And I was answered, “It is all that is made.” I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for smallness. And I was answered, “It lasts, and ever shall, for God loves it. And so, have all things their beginning by the love of God”. In this little thing I saw three truths: the first is that God made it; the second that God loves it; and the third that God keeps it safe.*’

Elsewhere she is told: ‘You will see for yourself: every kind of thing shall be well. The blessed Trinity will make all things well that are not well’ (*Showings*, ch 32). When we contemplate Nature and the night sky we marvel at what God makes of the specks of stardust in which we began. Since God ‘*does not faint or grow weary*’ (Isaiah 40:28) we are given hope that the same divine creativity will ultimately make all things to be well.

Already we can see the immediate fruits of our little efforts for Creation: on the local level beauty is being restored even while devastation occurs elsewhere. These short-term gains are invaluable: they make for cleaner, greener, more beautiful surroundings, and these helps to transform us. Again, those who care for the Earth are themselves becoming better people--more altruistic, with simpler life-styles and a clearer sense of the beauty of things. They live by wonder and awe: they stumble on the truth that *Laudato Si* affirms: ‘There is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dew-drop, in a poor person’s face.’ (233). They become minor mystics!

Fourthly: The Divine is Present Within Creation

Over the last century we have come to know our planetary history for the first time. We know that we were present--in an embryonic way—from the first emergence of the universe, 13.7 billion years ago. So were all the living species that are celebrated in the first chapter of Genesis. We have a common story: we began together, though we emerged into Earth's history at widely differing times.

Christian theology sees this but infinitely more: hope for our Planet ultimately lies in the fact that Creation includes a divine component which is not subject to corruption.

I mean that Jesus too was present in an embryonic way in the emergence of the Cosmos; our family tree includes him as our brother. His Incarnation is rooted in the inmost fibers of Mother Earth, so that it is with him that we and all other species share a Common Home; we have the same address! He has pitched his tent among us; his genealogy is forever intertwined with ours. He and we and all

creation are interconnected forever. Theology speaks of Deep Incarnation to underline that Jesus was not just a heavenly visitor on a limited visa. *Laudato Si* affirms:

'He wishes to reach our intimate depths. He comes to us not from above but from within, that we might find him in this world of ours' (236).

The world, as the song has it, needs 'the Good News in the present tense!' That Good News is in fact a Divine Person, embedded now and forever in our history.

Scientists tell us that Jesus breathed the same molecules that we now breathe. He saw the

wonders of Nature as we do, and loved them in all their beauty and variety--seeds, flowers, fruits, birds, fish, trees, mountains, lakes, and harvests. *Laudato Si* tells us that the destiny of all Creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ who holds the creatures of this world to himself and is directing them towards fullness as their goal: they are already imbued with his radiant presence (96-100). When we speak of his *deep* Incarnation and *deep* Resurrection we mean that these divine actions extend to all

matter and ground our hope that in the long run, all Creation will be safely brought home. We are then not struggling alone in trying to protect what we love: we are working in companionship with the Creator. And Nature



*Dawn of a new creation
(from Facebook page of Loving Sister Earth)*

itself is on our side: we are not adrift, fighting a hopeless cause in cosmic isolation but rather immersed within a sea of creative energy. The boundless wisdom and dynamics within Nature are a primary resource. Nature, after all, has quite a head-start on us in repairing disasters, having already surmounted the massive challenges of five earlier mass extinctions of species!

Better than us, Nature knows what is needed to restore Earth's vitality.

A New Creation

The first Easter already proclaims the dawn of a new creation, which moves forward when a person takes Christ seriously: *'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new'* (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:17). Note here the stress on *'everything'*. Everything is made new because of our human solidarity with Jesus. Jesus is the first fruits and the rest of humankind is incorporated into him, *'in a bond so tight it*

can never be broken’, as the Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation puts it (see 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

We must allow our tired minds and imaginations to be caught by wonder and gratitude for all of this: it gives us new energy to face the daily struggle for the environment. For the Christian the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate motivator for our hope. N T Wright explains it well:

With Easter, God’s new creation is launched upon a surprised world, pointing ahead to the rebirth of the entire creation. Every act of love, every work of true creativity—doing justice, making peace, healing families, is an earthly event in a long history of things that implement Jesus’s own resurrection and anticipate the final new creation and act as signposts of hope (Surprised by Hope, 294-295).

We must abandon our small images of the divine. Our hope lies in the real God who leads from the front and is busy drawing all safely home. Jesus emphasizes the divine drawing when he says: *‘No one — and no thing — can come to me without the drawing of the Father’* (John 6:44, 55). It is because God is orchestrating all the dynamics of Creation that it can achieve its intended glorious destination.

Fifthly: God Makes the Barren Fruitful

Christian hope for the planet is underpinned by the fact that the divine covenant with creation is not time-limited but endures forever: *‘When the rainbow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my everlasting covenant with every living creature on the earth’* (Genesis 9:16). Sightings of rainbows are a hope-filled surprise. And as we have already said, the bible closes with the promise of nothing less than a new heaven and a new earth. *‘The one on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new”’* (Revelation 21:1, 5). Note the *present* tense here: we are being told that our sorely wounded world is *already*

being transformed; newness is not awaiting the end of history: the New Creation is already underway! *‘Blessed are the eyes that see it!’* (Matthew 13:16).

Each living thing carries the signature of the Spirit, and *‘the wind blows where it chooses’* (John 3:8). *‘When you send forth your Spirit, you renew the face of the earth’* (Psalm 104:30). Today’s earth is ravaged by strip-mining, exhausted earth, dumping and all sorts of pollution. But this is precisely where God intervenes: *‘The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly’* (Is 35:1-2).

In the unique historical moment of grace and challenge in which we live, we are daily discovering that what had seemed lost and beyond recovery can come back to life again. Threatened species are being rescued from extinction. The greening of deserts is underway; a great wall of trees is being planted across the Sahara.

We are rightly shocked by the barrenness created by dust-bowls, strip-mining, waste-dumping, droughts and fires, great floating plastic islands, the death of coral reefs: but barrenness is the workplace of God.

Fruitfulness

Earth itself was barren, *‘a formless void’* until transformed by God’s creative act (Gen 1:1); then God breathes on inert clay and the human species emerges with the Garden of Eden to live in. But things go wrong early on: the barrenness of the earth is ascribed to human infidelity: *‘Cursed is the ground because of you’* (Gn 4:17). The Flood would have returned Earth to barrenness but for the divinely-inspired building of the Ark.



Salvation history moves forward by such life-giving interventions of divine power. It is as if God enjoys the challenge of barrenness! It reveals our total dependence on God for the continuance of life, and also the kindness of God in rescuing us from impossible situations. Thus barrenness is transformed into fruitfulness in the womb of Sarah--mother of Isaac, from whom the Chosen People come-- also for Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth; Mary of Nazareth conceives her child by divine intervention. In Jesus' ministry the dead are raised, the sick are healed, water is turned into wine, bread and wine become the carriers of divine life; and most significantly, from the barrenness of death, on Calvary, the Hill of the Skull, comes eternal life for all.

The divine plan for Creation remains steady, and with God *'all things are possible'* (Mark 10:27 and elsewhere). This includes *'the universal restoration that God announced long ago through his prophets'* (Acts 3:21). In Genesis, God utters a word and the world is made; with a divine word the universe can be restored. Our God is a saving and restoring God, who has compassion on all things. God's creative love *'does not end'* (1 Corinthians 13:8).

God's interventions bring fruitfulness which transforms the most hopeless of human catastrophes. The Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, encompasses us. All divine interventions are creative: we are then justified in the hope that the ultimate future of Creation will be no less creative, surprising and life-giving.

The Eucharist

We can share the limitless hope of Bishop Desmond Tutu who reminds us that 'only God knows what's next!' But already the Eucharist gives us a broad hint of 'what is next', and helps us daily to renew our hope in the future of Creation. In the Eucharist the divinization of the cosmos is already ongoing in a hidden way (*Laudato Si* 236). The crumb of bread and the drop of wine used for consecration are connected to all the other elements of Creation, and just as the Incarnation of God touches all material

reality, so too the Resurrection embraces every particle of the cosmos. This is why theology speaks of Jesus' *deep Incarnation* and *deep Resurrection*, to hint at the pervasiveness of divinity in our world. We may legitimately add in *'deep Glorification'*. *'The Eucharist is an act of cosmic love; through it the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Even when celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world'* (236).

Hopkins' phrase, 'The world is *charged* with the grandeur of God' points up the great mystery: divinity is the dynamic that is pulsating unseen through the particles and the electro-magnetic fields that constitute our world. Thus, the final and definitive shaping of the cosmos is already in hand.

More than a half-century ago Vatican Two expressed this hope-filled message for humankind:

'We do not know the moment of the consummation of the earth and of humankind, nor the way the universe will be transformed. The form of this world is passing away and God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth whose happiness will surpass all the desires for peace which arise in human hearts. Then death will have been conquered, the daughters and sons of God will be raised in Christ, the works of charity will remain and all of creation will be set free. Here on earth the kingdom is mysteriously present: when the Lord comes it will enter into its perfection (The Church in the Modern World, 39).]

Sixthly: The Cosmic In-Gathering is Underway

'Gather up the fragments lest any be lost' (John 6:12). This was Jesus' command to the disciples after the feeding of the 5,000 in the desert, and they filled twelve baskets with the crumbs that lay around! We can relate this image to the Creation Story. We are dismayed about the future of Earth, which will eventually become a lifeless planet due to the heat generated by our exploding sun. But its

finiteness can free us to think ‘outside the box’ about future divine planning for creation. Can we allow ourselves to believe that while the glory of Creation, including ourselves, cannot be achieved intra-historically, it is already taking final form in the extra-historical or divine dimension? This brings us back to our earlier exploration of the interplay between world history and eschatological reality. The relentless tragedy of human death is already being transformed into joy in person after person: through the Resurrection those who have gone before us are experiencing the fullness of eternal life. Christian belief is that all that is dead is already being raised into the life of God: St Paul speaks of Jesus as the first-fruits of the resurrection, and asserts that the full harvest is already being gathered in. ‘*What is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable*’ (see 1 Corinthians 15: 20-58). But what in fact is being raised? Surely, we don’t rise as ghosts, disembodied? instead, like the risen Lord in the resurrection accounts, we become fully alive both in spirit and in transformed matter? Our glory and the glory of Creation merge. All the good we did on Earth ‘*will follow us into eternal life*’ (Revelation 14:13), and we will rise as our full selves, in our inimitability and uniqueness, with our particular styles, affections, relationships, emotions, thoughts, memories and experiences. These ‘fragments’ as they seem, are what make us unique images of God, and surely all that is love-tinged of them will accompany us into eternal life. ‘*Love does not come to an end*’ (1Cor 13:9).

Without blemish

What is not good will be cleansed and healed by the creative action of God: our ‘*spots and wrinkles*’ will be smoothed out ‘*so that we may be holy and without blemish*’ (Ephesians 5:27). God’s Project is the salvation of all humankind (Jn 12:32) and of all Creation (Rm 8:21), an audacious goal indeed and worthy of God. The plan of salvation is totally comprehensive: *everyone* and *everything* is within the divine consciousness: all being, every person, every sin, every death, every

tiny prayer and act of love. God, who is sheer joy, as St Thomas Aquinas says, takes everything seriously. Jesus’ task, for instance, is to ‘*take away the sin of the world*’ (Jn 1:29). Through his Resurrection ‘a universe cast down is renewed, and in his rising the life of all has risen’ (Easter Prefaces). ‘*Nothing, then, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*’ (Rom 8:1; 38-39). To quote CS Lewis: ‘Joy is the serious business of heaven’. May we not hope that those who have died have already undergone whatever remedial education in loving was needed, and that they are now endlessly deepening their love of one another, exploring joyfully the details of the weave of divine providence that has brought them together, and delighting in the generosity of the Author of eternal joy? Heavenly joy will not be a private or exclusive affair but communal and all-embracing, because we are all interconnected in the Risen Christ.

Come and Have Breakfast!

In the delightful post-Resurrection scene portrayed in John 21, after orchestrating the great catch of 153 fish, Jesus playfully tells his disciples, ‘*Bring what you have caught*’. Then they hear what I feel is the most endearing phrase in scripture: ‘*Come and have breakfast!*’ (John 21:9-12). We have so much to bring to the feast—every small detail of our crowded lives, the jottings of our secret scriptures. No fragment of our lives is lost: our labours with their hopes and catastrophes; our hidden fears and tears, our silent endurance and acceptance of the pain of life, our dreams and hopes; all are presented and lovingly acknowledged by God. The deaths of those we loved and of species that took millions of years to reach their present form, the passing of the natural beauty of this world, the demise of our Common Home--all such losses must rightly grieve us, but what is lost will be restored to us, bathed in glory--and we can include our pets too! We, who are children of this earth and sustained by our relationships with one another and with Creation, will know ‘*the riches of the glory of*

this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).

In one of his most moving poems, *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo*, Hopkins reminds us that every hair of our heads is numbered, and says that

...not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost. The thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care than we could have kept it’.

The Divine Storehouse of Memory

In the memory of God everything is eternally present. It is a storehouse, immensely rich with everything, great and small, that is good, loving and worthwhile in human experience and in creation. C S Lewis suggests that our enriched memory may have a central role in eternal joy, empowering us to re-create and share what we now think of as past and lost. All love and beauty, all the joys of life, will be refreshed and made new: the fields of our childhood--long ago built on--will be there in the fullness of their reality to enchant us. The theological ground for this is the fact that to God everything is present, and once our time boundaries melt away, what was past will be present again. In this perspective, everything worthwhile, beautiful and meaningful to us, everything that constitutes the richness of human life, is being transferred to the divine order of things even as our lives go by, and awaits our communal enjoyment; human history, Creation and we ourselves will glow with transfigured meaning.

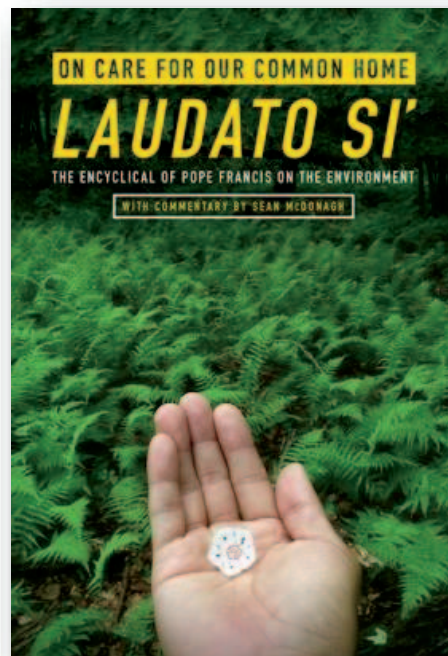
Escaping from Plato’s Cave

The allegory of the Cave was Plato’s attempt to convey the drama and tragedy of human existence. The prisoners in the dark cave can see only the fleeting shadows of things. We can feel like them: living in the shadow of the Paschal Mystery we find ourselves in the foreboding of Holy Thursday, in the agony of Good Friday, in the dark emptiness of Holy Saturday. But in Plato’s myth one prisoner escapes from the cave: he suddenly sees everything in its richness of colour, form and harmony. He goes back to tell the others, but the good news is too much for them.

St John Henry Newman must have pondered this myth, because to describe the meaning of death he had on his gravestone: ‘From shadows and images into the Truth’. For us, Easter Sunday is dawning: the tomb is empty; the Lord has risen, his Resurrection is transforming everything. All too rarely as of now do we catch glimpses of the glory of Easter Day, but the culminating episode in the endlessly amazing story of our small blue planet lies here, in ‘*the restoration of all things*’ (Acts 3:21). Then the Lord will survey all Creation, pronounce it ‘*very good*’ (Genesis 1:31) and say to us, ‘*Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*’ (Matthew 25:34).

‘The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God’ (LS 83). Such is our hope for our small blue planet!

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Amado L. Picardal, CSsR

Deep Relationality

Living in Communion

The original title of this talk is supposed to be “*Deep Relationality and a New Earth*” which was to be presented by Sr. Iliia Delio, OSF. Since she was not available at that time due to the pandemic, I was asked to be her substitute. I accepted it because I was told to just focus on my own experience related to ecological spirituality.

I decided to retain the first part of the title: “deep relationality” and add “living in communion” – my own understanding of what relationality connotes. My presentation will focus on the spirituality of communion – the basis for ecological spirituality - which I have tried to live in my own life. This presentation has two parts.

1. The theological perspective: Universal Communion as promoted in *Laudato Si’*
2. My experience of living in communion

A. Universal Communion: *Laudato Si’* Perspective

Everything is interconnected. Everything is interrelated. This applies from sub-atomic level up to the entire cosmos including the biological, the eco-system and society. We all live within a web of relationships. The indigenous peoples, the mystics and scientists know this. This is the what Pope Francis echoes in *Laudato Si’*. This is at the heart of integral ecology. What is the theological basis for this? It is the theology of universal communion. According to Pope Francis: “Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself” (LS 66). In other words, human beings are created for communion, with God, with one another and with the rest of creation/earth:

“As part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.” (89)

This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility that it entails. (90)

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.” (91)

“When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one.” (92)

The capacity for communion with others is based on the teaching that “every man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:26) which shows the immense dignity of each person, capable of self-knowledge, self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons.” (CCC 357, LS 65).

What communion exactly means is not fully explicated in the document. So as an excursus let us briefly explore its meaning. The Latin equivalent is *communio* which is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia* which connotes having something in common, being connected by a common bond, union, solidarity, fellowship, kinship, fraternity, community, partnership, sharing, participation. Among Greeks, it is often associated with friendship: “friends are of one heart and mind and they share everything in common” (Nicomachean Ethics, Acts of the Apostles).

From an ecclesiological perspective, communion emerged as the earliest model of the Church (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35) – fellowship of believers, communion of faith, table-fellowship, communion of goods. This was later eclipsed by the institutional model of the Church although its spirit was preserved in religious life through the centuries. This was retrieved in Vatican II especially in *Lumen Gentium* which became the dominant ecclesiology connected with the People of God. “the Church is a people made one by the unity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.” Ecclesial communion is, therefore, the reflection of Trinitarian communion. Theologians would later emphasize communion in Trinitarian discourse - perichoretic communion of the Three Divine Persons (Leonardo Boff).

In the document on ecumenism – *Ut Unum Sint* – the restoration of full communion is the goal of ecumenical dialogue. In *Vita Consecrata*, St. John Paul II applied communion as a perspective for understanding consecrated life. In *Familiaris Consortio*, he also views its realization in the family which is the domestic church.

The theme of communion has often been limited to ecclesiology. What is significant in *Laudato Si'* is that Pope Francis views communion from a universal perspective - universal communion – which includes communion with God, among all human beings and with all creation. This was the vision of St. Francis of Assisi. The ultimate foundation of this vision of interrelatedness of all things is the Triune God who creates all things: “The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships.” (240). This understanding that all creation reflects God’s triune and relational nature gives rise to a way of perceiving the world that is attentive to interconnection.

From this perspective, sin is regarded as the rupture of the three-fold communion which God has intended from the beginning:

“These three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This

rupture is sin... The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted the mandate to “have dominion” over the earth. As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17-19). (The harmony which St. Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture). Sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable and attacks of nature.” (66)



(St. Mary's University at Bayongbong Nueva Vizcaya, RP)

From the theology of universal communion flows the vision of *integral ecology* which has *three levels* of application:

1. *An understanding that interconnection is the essence of reality*
2. *As a way of seeing that can perceive interconnections among humans and the rest of creation*
3. *As a moral principle for acting in harmony with them.*

Integral ecology is the foundation of Pope Francis’ analysis of the ecological crises we

face and the basis for his proposals about how to respond to it.

Pope Francis proposes a Christian Spirituality that embraces “a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.” (LS 222) This spirituality is accompanied by ecological conversion which includes “a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion.” (LS 220). This means a lifestyle that includes living in communion with one another and with creation:

“Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together in communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous... This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a “universal fraternity.” (LS 228)

Living in communion with one another which includes collaboration and community action can become an intense spiritual experience:

“By organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment. Around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges... These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.” (LS 232)

Living in communion with God, with other human beings and with the rest of creation is a manifestation of human growth, maturity and sanctification. This is associated with spirituality – a spirituality of communion:

“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationship, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with

others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (240)

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis draws our attention to our communion with one another that is associated with fraternity and social friendship. He emphasizes that it is love that impels all to universal communion:

“Love also impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging.” (FT 95)

B. Living in Communion: Personal Experience

Throughout my life, especially the last four decades, I have been living the spirituality of communion – communion with others, with nature and with God. My understanding and lived-experience of ecological spirituality is an integral part of this three-fold communion.

Communion with others: Experience of Fraternity and Social Friendship

My first experience of communion has been within the family – with my parents, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. Through the years we have managed to maintain close relationships, mutual sharing and support for one another.

For over forty years as a Redemptorist, I have experienced communion within my religious congregation and the communities that I was assigned to. We live together, we eat together, we pray together and we carry out our missionary and apostolic work as a community. We practice communion of goods – we share our resources and gifts. We hold everything in common. We regard each other as brothers – confreres – and strive to live gospel friendship. We care for one

another, we support each other. I experience this sense of belonging and communion not only in the local Redemptorist community but in our province and other communities where I have been to – in the Manila, the US, Brazil and here in Rome.

As an apostolic missionary community dedicated to preaching the Gospel to the poor, closeness and friendship with those we work with and to those whom we are sent is an integral dimension of our life and mission. Even as a seminarian, part of my formation was to work and live among the poor in urban and rural areas. After ordination I was a member of the Redemptorist mission team, engaged in evangelization and formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities in remote rural areas and city parishes all over Mindanao. It was during these times that I experienced close relationship and friendship with the members of the mission team – religious and lay missionaries, and also among the people we lived and work with – especially the poor. When I was assigned in Davao after finishing my graduate studies in Berkeley and Rome, I was not only involved in teaching but also in pastoral ministry – as parish vicar and later as parish administrator. During weekends I was involved in evangelization and formation of BECs within our parish together with my theology students and pastoral workers. I was close to our parishioners and promoted communion among them.

I was also involved in interreligious dialogue and engaged in a dialogue of life and faith with Muslim leaders. I developed friendship among them and their families as we worked together for justice, peace and harmony. Being a member of the Imam, Priests and Pastors Forum, I also had interaction with Protestant ministers and collaborated with them. Thus, my experience of communion continued to expand beyond the borders of the Church.

During my sixteen years in Davao, I was also involved in human rights advocacy as a spokesperson of the Coalition Against Summary execution that documented and denounced extrajudicial killings carried out by Mayor Duterte's death squad. I developed

friendship with my fellow human rights activists and also some of the families of the victims of the killings. I also worked closely with the then archbishop and fellow priests in opposing these killings and in assisting the Commission of Human Rights and the Human Rights Watch.

After my assignment in Davao, I worked as executive secretary of the Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. I continued to promote communion among BECs all over the country while collaborating with diocesan BEC promoters throughout the Philippines. I also continued collaborating with human rights activists opposing extrajudicial killings all over the country. Because of this I was on the hit list of the president's death squad.

Through the years, I also experienced deep friendship with lay people and religious outside my community and my ministry.

Communion with Nature

I feel most alive in the midst of nature – when I am in communion with nature. It is very difficult for me to live in the city amidst tall buildings, working in an office, sitting all day behind a desk in front of a computer which I find boring and depressing. I love climbing mountains, and walking through the forest and the fields. Gazing at the ocean from the beach, and swimming in the sea and river is very relaxing and mystifying. And so is diving underwater and communing with the fish in the colorful coral reefs.

There is a place that I consider my sacred space – Busay. It is on top of a mountain overlooking the city of Cebu, with a forest at the back. Since I was a newly-ordained priest in 1981 and through the past forty years this is where I usually spend time as a hermit – one month each year and five months during my two sabbatical years. In 1989 I built a bamboo hermitage where I could stay for several months since I was asked to go for graduate studies. This was destroyed by a typhoon when I was in Berkeley. So, when I came back later, I just stayed in a room at our rest-house which I converted as my hermitage. This is

where I lived intermittently in solitude, silence and reflection. This is where I have written my books, articles and poems. This is where I used to train for the marathons and my long-distance advocacies. I always feel recharged living here. After staying here, I find myself energized and ready to resume my missionary and pastoral work. This has kept me from burning out throughout these years. I promised myself that this is where I will spend the remaining years of my life. In April 2018, after almost four decades in active ministry, I started living as a full-time hermit and began constructing a stone hermitage but this was cut short when I was sent on exile due to the assassination attempt against me by a death squad sent by the angry despot. I hope to go back there someday soon and resume my eremitical life.



(St. Mary's University at Bayongbong Nueva Vizcaya, RP)

Looking back at those years, I realize that my love for the environment made me aware of the ecological destruction that was happening around me. Rivers were turning brown or drying up. The forests were disappearing. Even the colorful coral reefs that I used to see while scuba diving was turning white or were bleaching. The climate was changing. I wrote this poem over thirty years ago:

Ecological Haikus

*The sowing of seeds
on a parched and barren land,
a harvest of tears.*

*High yield variety,
fertilizers and pesticides,
requiem for the soil.*

*Gone are the forests,
so are their inhabitants,
soon all of us too.*

*The springs have dried up,
the rivers look like highways,
and soon the desert.*

*A darkening sky
over a barren landscape,
and soon the deluge.*

*The human design:
to construct a paradise
earth must be destroyed.*

I first became concerned about the environment when our mission team was assigned in San Fernando, Bukidnon in 1987. It was there that I heard the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Instead of simply evangelizing the Basic Ecclesial Communities, we made them aware of the ecological crisis and helped mobilize them against the logging companies. We were able to pressure the President of the Philippines – Corazon Aquino - to stop logging in the whole province. Eventually, logging was banned in the entire country. I wrote a poem that tells the story of the nonviolent struggle to protect the forest:

The Epic of San Fernando

We are poor peasants, living in small Christian communities in a remote valley of San Fernando, Bukidnon.

We have lived amidst violence -- the violence of poverty, of a guerrilla war, of the destruction of our environment, and the violence of the military. But we have walked the way of peace -- the way of the cross, and have experienced its liberating power. This is our story.

*There was a time when the mountains were green
and the river was blue.
The heavy rains did not flood our farms. Nor did
the long hot summer parch the land.
That was before the logging companies came.
They were owned by the politicians and protected
by soldiers.
We watched helplessly as the trucks passed by
carrying away the logs to be shipped to foreign
lands.
We signed petitions asking the government
to stop the loggers from turning our land into a
desert and our river into a highway.
But we never got any response.*

*Then the Redemptorist Mission Team came.
Priests, brothers and lay missionaries.
They lived among us and worked with us to build
Christian communities.
In our nipa huts late at night, and in our bamboo
chapels on Sundays we came together to listen to
the Word and to listen to each other's words.
We realized that to be true Christians it was not
enough to worship and to read the Bible.
We have to care for others and care for the earth.
We have to defend the forest -- which is our home,
the home of our neighbors -- Lumads and
Subanon, the home of the birds, the animals and
the wild plants.
We heard that the guerrillas -- who called
themselves the people's army wanted to help us
with their guns.
But we preferred to struggle in our own way -- the
way of the cross.
We were prepared to give up our life
but we would never take the life of another.
The day came when we gathered on the road
where the logging trucks passed.
There were several hundred of us -- men, women,
children and old people.
We barricaded the road with our bodies
and the logging trucks could no longer pass.*



Redemptorist Mission Team

*It was like a fiesta. We sang and danced,
we shared our food with one another and with the
loggers who were stranded.
It was a real communion. The priests, the
brothers, sisters and lay missionaries were with
us.
Even the Bishop came one night to pray with us.
They listened to us when we shared with them our
stories and our reflections on the Word of God
and on the unfolding event.
It was our turn to proclaim and give witness to the
Gospel.*

*Those who did not join us taunted us. They said
that we will never succeed.
We were poor, powerless and few and we were up
against rich businessmen and powerful politicians
who were protected by the military
and who could bribe the corrupt judges.*

*On the thirteenth day in the barricade while
celebrating the Eucharist with our parish priest
a truckload of constabulary soldiers came with
truncheons and shields.
They were ordered by a judge to disperse us. They
beat us without mercy.
They did not spare the old people and the
pregnant women.
They even beat the statue of the Sacred Heart of
Jesus.
We did not resist them. We turned the other cheek.
While they kept on beating us, we sang the "Our
Father" with tears in our eyes.
When they brought our parish priest to the camp
we also went with him.
We told the soldiers that if they will imprison him
they will also have to imprison all of us. They
finally told all of us to go home with our priest.
We went back to the side of the road that we used
to barricade and watched helplessly as the
logging trucks passed by.*

*We prayed and cried. We were defeated. It was
our Good Friday.
The sky darkened and the heavens wept with us
unceasingly.
It rained day and night for a couple of weeks.
And the river rose and the overflowing waters
dashed against the bridge
where all the logging trucks pass. And the bridge
collapsed.
And the road leading up to the logging camp was
blocked by a landslide.
The logging operations were stopped. Nature
continued the barricade for us.*

When we gathered the following night to pray on the side of the road where the logging trucks used to pass we all praised and thanked God who never abandoned us.

Meanwhile, the newspapers, the TV and radio began to report our story. Suddenly the conscience of many all over the country was awakened. They realized that our problem was also their problem. Many began to show their support. And there were even others in different parts of the country who followed our example. Our voice was beginning to be heard and finally, the President of the Philippines ordered a stop to the logging operations in San Fernando.

When we heard the good news our tears of sorrow became tears of joy. Our suffering had not been in vain. We thanked God by celebrating the Eucharist and by having an instant fiesta. It was our Easter Sunday. A few months later, a pastoral letter of the Bishops' Conference was read in all the Catholic churches and chapels all over the archipelago. It spoke about the ecological crisis in our country. And it mentioned the struggle of the people of San Fernando as a sign of hope and as an example for all. We could not believe that we in our insignificance and powerlessness can make a difference. Our story and our struggle should have ended then. But it did not. One year later we discovered that while the logging had stopped in San Fernando it continued in the neighboring mountains. We realized that even if it happened in other places we would be affected because we were all connected.

And so, we found ourselves once again in the barricade far away from home -- in the provincial capital. This time we were more numerous because the people from the neighboring areas joined us. We wanted the logging to be stopped in the entire province of Bukidnon. At first, we pitched our tents outside the office of the Department of Natural Resources. They just ignored us. And on the fifth day we transferred to the checkpoint in the national highway where all the logging trucks stop for inspection.

We took over the place and set up a human barricade. And all the logging trucks could no longer get through. The soldiers came and they could not disperse us.

Once again, the newspapers, radio and TV reported our story. Finally, the Secretary of the Department of Energy and Natural Resources heeded our request for a dialogue. He came riding on a helicopter to meet with us. After listening to us he granted most of our demands. He told us the logging in the neighboring mountains and towns would be stopped. He asked us to help in the greening of the brown mountains, and to help guard the forest. We went home rejoicing and thanking God once again for not abandoning us. The Eucharist became a victory celebration.

Now the logging companies have disappeared from San Fernando and from the neighboring mountains of Bukidnon. The trees that we have planted are growing. When our children grow up they will see green mountains and they can swim and fish in the blue river without fear. The heavy rains will not flood their farms. Nor the long hot summers parch the land. They will remember us for what we did for them. And they will remember the wonderful things God has done for us.

Since my experience in San Fernando Bukidnon, I have become committed to the care for our common home. I helped promote reforestation programs and organic farming/sustainable agriculture in the Basic Ecclesial Communities. When I was in Davao, I supported the campaign against aerial spraying of banana plantations. I also supported the campaign against the construction of coal-fired powerplant. I protested against mining. I combined my love for biking and running with my advocacies. In 2006 I biked for life and peace around Mindanao (2,000 km), in 2008 around the Philippines (2008). In 2010, I run-walked for Peace and the Environment across Mindanao (400 km) and across the Philippines in 2011 (2,000 km). I also did a climate ride from

Manila to Mindanao in 2014 (1,600 km) and visited the areas hit by the super-typhoons (e.g. Tacloban which was hit by typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan). I invited local bikers or runners to join me for a few hours. I integrated my environmental advocacy with my peace and human rights advocacy. In the parishes where I stayed for the night, I usually celebrated the Eucharist and preached about the Gospel of life, peace and creation – urging people to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Most of these events were often magnified through social media and the mass media.

Biking, running and walking have become part of my day-to-day life. I do this not just for my advocacies, but also for health, adventure and to reduce my carbon footprint. I do not own a car and avoid traveling on fossil-fuelled mode of transportation as much as possible. I avoid the use of plastic. I practice waste segregation. I also thrive on one-meal a day (intermittent fasting) and a primarily plant-based diet although I still eat fish and eggs. I am aware that meat-consumption is one of biggest contributor to global warming. All these are concrete expression of my efforts to green living.

Communion with God

To be in direct communion with God is very difficult especially if you are not a mystic. How can I relate deeply and intimately with someone that I cannot see, touch or hear? It is God's distance or absence that I usually feel. I have to make a leap of faith. Of course, I believe the Triune God is present in the sacraments – especially the Holy Eucharist. I believe that God speaks to me through the Sacred Scriptures.

There are rare moments while praying and meditating that I can feel the Divine Presence. However, it is not inside the church or chapel that I have sensed deeply God's presence. It is usually in my loving encounter with people and my friendship and collaboration with them that I feel this presence. In struggling with others for peace, justice and the environment I feel God's presence recalling the words of Pope Francis: "These

community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences." (LS 232)." It is the care that I receive and give that God's presence becomes evident. It is the faith of those around me that strengthens my faith. To be in intimate communion with others is to be in communion with God. Communion with God is often mediated through other persons.

Most of my peak moments or religious experience have often been on top of the mountain, in the middle of the forest or while gazing at the moon and the stars. This is one of the reasons why I regularly go up to my sacred space on top of the mountain surrounded by trees and spend time as a hermit. This why I have gone up Mt. Apo, the highest mountain in the Philippines, seven times. There is something sacred about the mountain: the silence, the feeling of being alone with nature -- the trees, the flowers, the wind, the elements. All these contribute to a sense of awe, a sense of awareness and closeness with the great Someone. I believe the mountain has a very important function in my life. It is the place of encounter with God and the self, the place to look at reality from a vantage point and to understand more fully the meaning and direction of my life.

Closeness with nature is indeed closeness with God. This is also the reason why I walked 800 km on the Camino de Santiago twice – the first time barefoot in 2010 and the second time on a pair of sandals in 2016. I have felt the Divine presence as I crossed the Pyrenees, walked across the desert-like Meseta and the forests in Galicia. It was on that forest when I could no longer walk due to shin-splint that I experienced a healing miracle. Here's an entry from my pilgrim diary:

"I was all alone. The pain became so unbearable that I stopped to rest and cried out to God to relieve me of the pain. In the middle of the forest, all alone by myself, as I prayed for healing, a cold energy flowed through my legs from the ground and the pain suddenly disappeared. I heard a silent voice within my mind, chiding me: "Do you still doubt?" I sensed the intimate presence of Someone, whose presence I have always longed to

feel. Tears flowed on my cheeks as I was filled with so much awe and reverence. All I could say was: "I believe... thank you."

So, I continued my barefoot walk on the sacred path, feeling close to the earth, the forest, to the millions of pilgrims who have trod this path before me and to the Creator. The agony was gone ... followed by the ecstasy. Although, I was alone, I felt I was never alone. I savoured the feeling."

I also felt the presence of the Divine while looking at the sky at night on the Camino. I wrote this brief entry in my pilgrim diary:

"I stayed up late last night, sitting in the veranda and gazing at the moon and the night-sky until midnight. I was filled with so much awe as I felt the intimate presence of Someone. My eyes were misty and tears flowed."

In the summer of 2020, while walking a thousand kilometers on the Via Francigena from the Grand St. Bernard Pass at the Swiss Alps to Rome, I wrote this entry in my pilgrim diary after walking down the mountain and going through a forest trail:

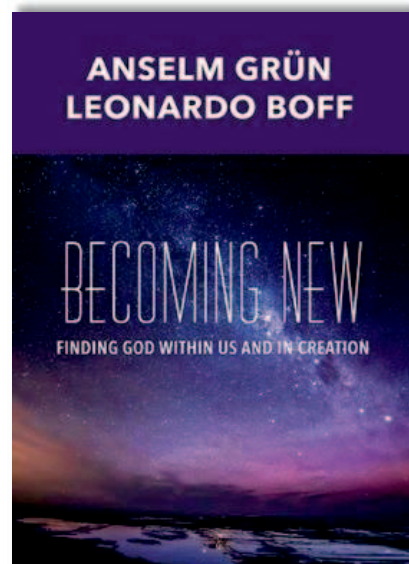
"Since today was supposed to be an easy and short day, I decided to start walking at 6:30 in the morning. It was cold, windy and foggy. As I made my descent and the sun came out, the cold and fog were gone. What a glorious sight before me - a panoramic view of the mountains and hills. Filled with awe, I broke into song: "Though the mountains may fall and the hills turn to dust yet the love of the Lord will stand!" Much later as I was walking in a mini-forest trail I had an overwhelming feeling which made my eyes misty. It came from the awareness that I was walking amidst the divine presence. Creation - the trees, flowers, the hills, the mountains and the ground I was walking on proclaim the unseen presence of the loving creator who walks with me. I am reminded that the sacred is present not only at the end of my journey - the destination. I encounter the sacred along the way - in the beauty of creation, in people and deep within myself. The path I am walking which was trod by pilgrims through the centuries is a sacred path."

Closeness to nature makes me feel the Divine presence. An encounter with nature is an

encounter with God because God is somehow present in all things. Along the way, during my pilgrim journey, walking long-distances across the Camino de Santiago, the Via Francigena and across the Philippines, I sensed the Divine presence amidst nature and in my encounter with fellow pilgrims. In living as a hermit on top of the mountain and near a forest, I also experience a sense of the sacred. This does not mean living in total isolation as I still remain a member of the local Redemptorist community and come down once a month to join community recollections and festive celebrations. Close friends and family members sometime pay me a visit.

Thus, as far as I am concerned, communion with God is often mediated by my communion with others and with nature. This is what it means to live in communion. This is what deep relationality means for me. Communion sums up the spirituality of my life. A spirituality of communion is at the basis for ecological spirituality.

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Sowing Seeds for the Future

The *JPIC Commission of USG-UISG* promotes and supports the integration of Justice, Peace & integrity of Creation (JPIC) in the life of the members of the *Union of Superior Generals* (USG) and the *International Union of Superior Generals* (UISG). It is responsible for animating the men and women religious in JPIC, according to the evangelical counsels, through experience, social analysis, spiritual reflection and action.

The commission serves individual member Congregations, respecting their own charism, to support greater awareness, and effective action in JPIC matters.

The JPIC Secretariat is accountable for coordinating, animating, and facilitating the mission of the Commission through networking, grassroots organizations, and local/international advocates; providing informed suggestions and reflections; and accompanying JPIC Promoters in their ministry. The focus of

our efforts has been the English and the Spanish and Portuguese promoters. When possible, we add French and Italian. Two executive co-secretaries, a man and a woman religious, manage the Secretariat.

When we share the identity of who we are in the JPIC Secretariat, we use the definition "*JPIC is the conscious prayer and sacred action to transform the world in the spirit of the Gospel through lives of justice, peace and care for the integrity of creation.*" Our role as JPIC Promoters is to respond to the call of Pope Francis, not only listen to the poor and vulnerable, but to support their voice and actively advocate with them for their needs, and to help coordinate and magnify their

voices. We are also called to a ministry of mercy as we advocate for human rights for all persons, and for the rights of the precious and unique creatures of the diverse biomes of our sacred planet Earth.

A life based in prayer nourishes a sacred presence, for we are called to transformation, to move beyond ourselves in light of the Gospel. The life-giving source of prayer needs to be continuously evident in our actions. The importance of a life imbued with the loving presence of Christ is foremost in our awareness. Such a consciousness can be affirmative or invites change. The relationship with Christ is essentially comforting and emanates an irrefutable hope. From this basis, we have the strength to create

new ways of being and the compassion to comfort the fragile world.

To illustrate our journey of sowing seeds for the future, let us begin with the project *Sowing Hope for the Planet*, which seeks to raise

awareness about the urgency of the ecological crisis, to partner with others and to be engaged in planning a response. Much of our efforts going forward is being integrated in this framework. By analogy we see the life of the seed as representative of our journey.

Sowing Hope for the Planet was initiated to offer religious and their connections opportunities to actualize *Laudato Si'* by calling on purposeful action. It offers the opportunity to participate in change and to establish a new and more just integral ecology. In the title of the project, the term "sowing" comes from the well-known biblical parable of the mustard seed from Matthew 13:3-9. Like Christ, we are the sower who



spreads seeds of hope and love. And also, like Christ, we are the seeds being sown, so that we may flower in diverse soils.

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen.
(Luke 8:5-15)

The small and humble seed of the mustard plant can grow into a vigorous tree that becomes an integral member of its ecosystem. Its seeds are some of the smallest of the ancient crops grown in the time of Jesus, but it was grown in every garden. It produces oxygen, absorbs carbon dioxide and helps regulate the water cycle. It provides shelter and nourishment to other creatures. It has also been an important agricultural crop for millennia, providing both food and medicine to people, especially the impoverished, since mustard is easy and inexpensive to grow. The simple mustard plant shows great things can grow from the smallest of beginnings.

We have a task to sow seeds of hope. In the modern world, we are challenged by distractions and misinformation. Our stories are taken out of context and cease to have true meaning. It is imperative that we discern what is true from what is fearfully imagined. We must be honest with ourselves and with others, so the seeds of inspiration will have the best soil to flourish.

In the right soil, the tiny mustard seed grows into a tree, but mustard is a resilient plant which can flourish in a variety of poor soils and once established, it is hard to eradicate. Just like the mustard, the ideas of *Laudato Si'* must be scattered everywhere. Education and inspiration are of paramount importance, we can spread these critical ideas so that they

might flower in the hearts, minds and souls of as many people as possible. For these great trees to grow, as many people as possible must be made aware of the dire problems we and our Sister, Mother Earth are facing. For real change to occur, all people must be involved, rich and poor, north and south, young and old. And once these ideas are spread and take root, it will be difficult to suppress as people become aware that a better way is possible and achievable.

For this reason, it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others.
(FT 196)

Some seeds may be welcomed but not given much thought and so in a short time nothing more happens. Other seeds can be choked by so many cares in the world that they do not receive the light to grow into a viable way of life. But the tiny seeds of the mustard are numerous, and a few seeds open to the movement of the spirit will become fruitful and bear an abundance of receptivity.

In the dynamics of history, and in the diversity of ethnic groups, societies and cultures, we see the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another". (2014 World Day of Peace; as quoted in FT 96)

The mustard also teaches us that diversity can arise from potential. The mustard is the ancestor to many modern plants that provide nourishment to many peoples - broccoli and bok choy are both descendants of the humble mustard. This plant is an inspiration to us as we follow the ideals of *Laudato Si'* which can bear new fruit to meet the challenges we face. As we take this message to heart, to be sowers of hope, we know that we face the same challenges within ourselves as are projected onto others. If we are to become sowers of hope, we must believe in what we are doing and demonstrate actions that say that we are certainly trustworthy.

The great tree shelters all people and creatures of our precious planet. Like a tree, the Church can shelter and provide education, spreading these vital ideas. The Mother Earth is also a great tree that sustains and supports the diverse biomes and unique biodiversity of this world. The tree which supports us must also be tended and protected.

“The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but once it has grown, it is the greatest of plants”
(Mt 13:31-32; as quoted in LS 97)



<https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/>

We continue our growth stimulated with the partnerships with the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development* and the *Global Catholic Climate Movement*. In our response to the call from Pope Francis to live the reality of *Laudato Si'* we realize: *"Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan."* (LS 164). This way of engaging *Laudato Si'* unifies and develops work of the JPIC Secretariat. With the special observance of the anniversary year of *Laudato Si'*, this work has been accentuated and intensified.

“Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation.” (LS 235)

We continue to be inspired by the *Vision Statement of UISG* which moves us forward in a spirit of transformation with these words change the world.

Vision Statement of UISG

*We commit ourselves to both personal
And communal conversion and
We wish to move forward together
In an orchestrated and coordinated response
In listening to the cry of the Earth
And the cry of the Poor
As we go forth as instruments of hope
In the heart of the world.*

This statement was accepted by acclamation at the 2019 UISG Plenary Session. In February 2021 the Executive Council of USG expressed its support for the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* (LSAP) and encouraged all USG member congregations to join forces in a coordinated manner to face this important challenge. The members were also encouraged to coordinate their congregational efforts with *Sowing Hope for the Planet*. It is important to see how working together creates an important dynamic for what we are doing. This serves as a guiding way for our movement with the LSAP.

The work of the *Sowing Hope for the Planet* has developed into this platform and provides the strategic planning for the realization of *Laudato Si'*. *Sowing Hope for the Planet* is a means of coordination both groups.

The *Laudato Si' Action Platform* provides a framework for responding to the urgency of the ecological crisis, enables like-minded partnerships and provides critical planning. We are in the process of creating a tipping point for positive change to the system. We need to be able to do this together.

The overall framework of our work with the LSAP is intended to affirm what has already been done by many congregations and to be flexible. It is in 3 parts: public commitment, making the transition to integral ecology and journeying together.

Congregations are encouraged to develop their commitments based on their charisms and to think in terms of their transition to an integral ecology within 7 years. They are asked to raise their prophetic voice and communicate the commitment to the public and be accountable to the public with regular

reports. Along the way, they are encouraged to find ways to celebrate.

In making the transition to integral ecology they assess their situation in relation to the *Laudato Si'* Goals. With an integrated approach we are attending to the goals of *Laudato Si'*, which are contributing to the critical mass necessary to make a difference. The heart of the LSAP is the seven goals of cry of the Earth, cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of sustainable lifestyles, ecological spirituality, ecological education, and community engagement and participatory action. All are interconnected and integral to a sustainable ecology. Members are asked to embed the plan for transition into a community project cycle. Yearly evaluations of the journey will keep track of the progress against set indicators. These goals are steps to help create a just, sustainable and possible future, for all who share this planet, our Sister, Mother Earth.

Finally, the journeying together includes advocacy in global campaigns for integral ecology. Participants are encouraged to join the efforts with a Constellation and to link to the LSAP as well as partner with other communities as in a North / South collaboration.

JPIC Secretariat Services

This frame of reference of the LSAP and the *Pastoral Plan* provides the JPIC approach to involvement with the many issues to which we devote our cause. Since everything is interconnected, it is important to strengthen these efforts and not fragment or isolate our experiences.

We take inspiration from Micah 6:8 “to live justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God” in how we live our evangelical counsels. Through poverty we live justly consuming only what is necessary and seek to share the benefits of our resources with everyone, through chastity we find ways to reach out to those in need of love, especially the marginalized and in obedience we walk humbly, listening to the voice of our God.

The engagement in JPIC concerns is characterized by SEE, JUDGE and ACT, an

established methodology used in promoting JPIC efforts. As Christians we realize that, we are *to see with the eyes of Christ, to judge with his compassionate heart, and to act with the transforming strength of this relationship.*

With this method in mind, the function of the JPIC Secretariat is to analyze issues and challenges confronting the world, provide resources and materials on critical subjects and create opportunities for formation and advocacy. Another important function is to provide a platform for religious congregations and their connections with laypeople to promote dialogue and solidarity.

Promoting the ideas of *Laudato Si'* facilitates sharing among the generalates and aids and support for their mutual projects. Networking is an important aspect of our work as we create space for religious organizations, non-governmental organizations and other groups to come together. We also support advocacy and corporate action by the USG/UISG and individual member institutions.

Last December, The JPIC Formation Workshop was presented with over 150 committed and enthusiastic participants who engaged in the five-day workshop "*Engaging Laudato Si'*". The workshop featured the work of 22 presenters. Each day featured discussion themes such as integral ecology, religious life, ministry, encounter and dialogue. The methodology of See (Assess) - Judge (Discern) - Act (Transform) was woven throughout. Catholic social teachings were highlighted in *Laudato Si'*, *Fratelli Tutti* and other church documents. The important work with the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development* and the *United Nations* was also interconnected. The participants were challenged with developing an action plan. The plans were shared in a webinar on March 10 which was open for others to gain valuable insights. The upcoming December 2021 will continue online and focus on *Laudato Si'* and the 50th anniversary of the synodal document *Justice in the World*.

We have begun a series related to nonviolence. The recent one, *Building Bridges & Reconciliation Workshop* involved participants who have taken the call from

Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* to engage in dialogue and reconciliation. “*As religious leaders, we are called to be true ‘people of dialogue’, to cooperate in building peace not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators.*” (FT 284). This series was developed from the insights and experiences of JPIC Promoters in response to their reflective reading of the encyclical. The series addressed main themes regarding encounter and dialogue in Catholic educational institutions, creative initiatives, nonviolent conflict resolutions, families, communities, and men-women collaborative relationships. This was a collaboration with the *Catholic Nonviolence Initiative*, a project of *Pax Christi International*.

Through social media with various of our programs, we have worked towards a balance of sharing the work of the religious in various countries, in diverse ministries, and in different stages of developments. We included information about major events, international experiences such as the *Conference of the Partners (COP)*, *Synod on the Amazon*, and *World Earth Day*. Honoring the guidance from *Laudato Si’*, the process was recognizing the work of the religious, “*to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.*” (LS 210)

The initiative of *Sowing Hope for the Planet* has led to the development of an interactive project to help our religious to be engaged in different experiences around the globe and so to determine what is possible for them to do. For example, with “*Realizing the Vision of Laudato Si’*” we visited the UISG Middle East Constellation which featured recent developments from Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Iraq with an inspiring and informative presentation of their congregation’s actions in Lebanon. They have been active in many projects including education, reforestation and agriculture, aiding the poor and promoting the ideas of *Laudato Si’*. The webinar concluded with a beautiful video sung by local children. It was truly amazing and inspiring to see the seeds of hope sown in that country, especially in light of the tragedy in Beirut. It was beautiful to witness the vital

signs of life in this country of rich heritage. The videos of the event is available on the [Planet Hope YouTube Channel](#).

Another webinar, “*Do Something*” October 22, 2020, acknowledged that the ecological crisis was a moral crisis. Various congregations shared their efforts to organize their work with their congregations building on the need to address consumerism and offer educational opportunities that made a difference in our care of the planet.

In other ways, an event for the Africa West C7 Constellation was well received, especially for the Francophone members who have been requesting more materials. An engaging presentation was given which described their work to create networks in the field of education, orphanages, boarding schools and health. For the education network they offered a training session for educators on nonviolence and an action on the environment in 2019 in Abidjan.

In another collaborative session, sisters from France presented their Congregations commitment to *Laudato Si’* ideals by socially responsible investing, ecological initiatives such as a gardening projects to grow vegetables, yogurt, raising ecological awareness in schools to reduce waste, support climate activism, cleaning plastic garbage from the environment and recycling.

A Worldwide Prayer and Sacred Action event that involve constellations from Africa South, Asia Pacific, South Asia, Rome, Africa West, Brazil, Mexico and the USA. With the Season of Creation theme “*The Jubilee for the Earth*” we prayerfully visited eight of our constellations and affirmed the sacred actions taking place in these countries. Entering into their reality, we listened to the cries of Earth and the poor. Opportunities were given for the participants to send personal prayers and bless each constellation. Many experiences were shared in different contexts: migration, importance of clean and healthy environments and ways to minimize pollution, and the vulnerable being trafficked. We also saw the efforts of each constellation

struggling to maintain the unique beauty of each area.

Due to our fruitfulness—the experience and growth of this project *Sowing Hope for the Planet* — we have made several contributions in the development of the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* of the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development*. In this way, we continue to raise our prophetic voice in the church and the world. Many men and women religious are already making an impact with this is a platform opportunity to systematize and organize our efforts. The process of our involvement respects different starting points, various situations, and the unique charisms and methodologies of the congregations. In fact, the way the congregations may organize themselves and develop their commitment to integral ecology may be very diverse.

We have been active members of the *Laudato Si' Steering Board* and of the *Integral Ecology Task Force* of the *COVID Commission*. We have made important contributions to significant areas of discussion “Diagnosis of the Roots of the Crisis of Ecology”, “Ecological Conversion in Action”, “The two Pillars of Education and Spirituality Influence Finance”, “Integral Ecology & the Voices of the Vulnerable”, “Integral Ecology and Mining”, and “Plastic Waste and COVID”. Catechetical Contributions related to solidarity and the common destination of goods. The March paper considered bio-diversity.

There are JPIC Promoter working groups such as the African Working Group which hosted a webinar to raise awareness of the importance of advocacy work in Africa. The webinar in English with French translation was very well attended by JPIC coordinators in Rome and in Africa. AEFJN is a faith based international network dedicated to economic justice between the European Union and Africa South of Sahara through advocacy. Many religious congregations are members of AEFJN and they network through their communities and join with other civil society groups to advocate for a respectful compassionate world. The network also lobbies decision makers at the national level,

helping Africans be the main advocates for economic justice.

Another promoter session discussed the practical use of the Pastoral Cycle. The purpose was to focus on social analysis of the misuse of plastics, using the methodology: See (Assess), Judge (Discern), Act (Transformation). The participants were engaged in a step-by-step guide that explains both the transformative dynamics involved and the practical tools of facilitation. This included pastoral guidance for social transformation working with grassroots groups and communities.

Other sessions have focused on the reflections of the Vatican documents for *World Day of Peace, Refugees and Migrants, Fratelli Tutti* and *Laudato Si'*.

The JPIC Commission supports two websites, jpicroma.org - sowinghopefortheplanet.org, which provide many resources for JPIC promoters, religious and laypersons. The JPIC Roma website is in English and Spanish. JPIC Roma publishes a News brief which provides more in-depth reflection and analysis of timely events and includes some practical tools for JPIC Promoters to use for their own presentations.

The *Sowing Hope for the Planet* website provides current events and news for advocates, along with resources that may be posted by participants who have contributed much of their work to realizing *Laudato Si'* goals. The website is posted in English, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and German. Resource areas include *Laudato Si' Action Plans*, Season of Creation, water, refugees & migration, the Amazon and sustainability among many others. The website also features a map tool of the Constellations, their responses to the Plenary on the needs of their countries and the commitments they have made to address those needs. *Sowing Hope for the Planet* also hosts a regular Newsletter with updates with what is happening in advocacy regarding Rome and the world. Additionally, we have a YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/c/PlanetHope>, which provides access to recorded webinars and resource videos and a

Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/sowinghopefortheplanet/> which provides a public space for outreach and networking.

The JPIC Secretariat has begun to use an educational platform for hosting its interactive sessions for its courses: the JPIC Formation Workshop, Building Bridges and Reconciliation and the Laudato Si' for Promoters. This provides more privacy for materials and participants who join our programs and help us to connect to one another. Connections and dialogue are facilitated in the Discussion section, where experiences and contact information can be shared in such a way as to invite conversation and facilitate the exchange of ideas and information. The platform also offers us a dedicated way to organize our resources in an easily accessible format. Resources can include written documents as well as videos. We can also offer resources in multiple languages to continue our commitment to inclusivity. This new platform is an exciting opportunity to share access to important and relevant information. It allows us to schedule and organize programs and meetings as needed to further develop resources. We can provide a space for participants to network, share, dialogue and form communities around their mutual ideas.

Efforts for the Future

In working towards the future, we attend to the pastoral plan of Pope Francis, established by *four principles* in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

1. **“time is greater than space”**,
2. **“unity prevails over conflict”**,
3. **“reality is more important than ideas”**,
4. **“the whole is better than the part”**.

In the first principle of "time is greater than space" we state that continuity is built into our experiences and that we have the intention of ongoing growth and development. By bringing together persons who share our common vision for the well-being of all creation, we can strive to find ways to responsibly promote a new reality.

In the second, "Unity prevails over conflict", we feel that by grounding our strengths for social concerns and our caring religious

traditions with expert analysis, we can unify our efforts to work together for the good of all humanity. It encourages us to look for ways to broaden our concerns and seek areas for interconnection.

With "reality is more important than ideas", we share our journeys with people who suffer deprivation of basic human rights—food, water, health, work, and the destruction of our planet—we are carefully addressing these experiences so that we can determine ways we can make a difference in our world. We explore in a deeper way the root causes of the pain. We ask difficult questions from a broader and more comprehensive perspective, not only why are people poor, but why are people rich? As religious, we can ask these questions with our members.

"The whole is better than the part" shows that in this process, we do not want to leave anyone behind in our work. Thus, the multicultural experience highlights the gifts shared by many countries. We are building a sustainable road map, honoring clear commitments and plans to develop an integrated and sustainable ecology. These support us with hope as we respond to Pope Francis's words:

“What we need, then is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events, without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity.” (E.G. 223)
“So, we move forward together in solidarity with one another because we are all in this common home, our precious Sister, Mother Earth. We are sharing the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time, important and needed. We are being called to row together, comforting each other in this voyage we take together.” (*Urbi et Orbi* Blessing April 3, 2020).

Sowing Hope for the Planet is an urgent call for a new integral ecology that demands a deep response. We will continue with our plans to actualize the *Laudato Si Platform* in the lives of religious congregations. The series on nonviolence will also look at ways to promote peace.

As a leader in the Religious Sector of the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* our plans are to actualize, coordinate and collaborate with our religious and other partners as we respond:

1. The Cry of the Earth: by a greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality, efforts to protect and promote biodiversity, guaranteeing access to clean water for all, etc..
2. The Cry of the Poor: by defending of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk through slavery, etc..
3. Ecological Economics: by supporting sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, and by divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, but by investing in renewable energy, etc..
4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles: through sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoiding single-use plastic, adopting a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoiding polluting modes of transportation, etc..
5. Ecological Education: through re-thinking and re-designing educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, and by promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education etc..
6. Ecological Spirituality: by recovering a religious vision on God's Creation, encouraging greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, and promoting creation-centered liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation, etc..
7. Emphasis on Community involvement and participatory action: to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promoting advocacy and people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness in local territory and neighborhood ecosystems).

We will continue on the LSSB and the Integral Ecology Task for the COVID Commission to help prepare a future with the realism that only the Gospel can give. This is an opportunity to be with a professional, compassionate, committed leadership from around the globe.

Like the sower from the parable, we are spreading the seeds of the ideas and concepts of *Laudato Si'*. We continue to carry forward all of the opportunities to promote the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* which includes commitment to an ecological sustainable lifestyle.

We are also the mustard seed, that will grow into a diverse and strong network of life that will provide support and sustenance to the vulnerable. It has become our duty to grow and spread these seeds so that they may flower in the hearts and minds of as many people as possible. The identity of *the JPIC Office* is rooted in conscious prayer and sacred action. The planet has suffered from misuse and mismanagement and it will require the spirit of the Gospel to heal. It calls to us to live lives that honor and care for the integrity of all creation, especially the vulnerable whose voices may not be heard. As we follow Pope Francis, we must join their active advocacy in establishing basic, inalienable, human rights for every person. This justice must also extend to the precious biomes and our irreplaceable mother, the Earth. A prayer-based life, with its sacrifices and strengths, is uniquely positioned to be a pillar of strength in this struggle. The presence of Christ will sustain us as we create new and more just ways of being and seeking positive, constructive change to heal and comfort our suffering world. Like the sower, we will spread the seeds of a future based upon love and justice. Like the humble mustard seeds, we must grow into vigorous networks that protect and nurture the vulnerable. We must show by example that a positive, equitable and sustainable world is possible and attainable, if only we all work together.

Summary of the Seminar

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ, in his opening address said, “Once again SEDOS is happy to dedicate time to prayer and reflection on the issue of taking care of the Creation and the attention needed to heal to the ecological wounds...” The Seminar on Living Green Mission organized by SEDOS, with very valuable speakers, awakened our spirit and mind, convinced us to take care of our one and only One Planet-Mother Earth with all it’s being with praise, gratitude, care, work, justice, humility, and respect.

The Opening Prayer, the Opening Address and the Opening Speech on the *Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si’*, placed us in the context of the Seminar ‘Living Green Mission’. Indeed, we feel enriched and illumined by the hope-giving eco-spiritual reflections, sustainable living and agriculture, training rural communities, our Church’s ongoing efforts in the aftermath of the Synod, and the initiative of JPIC committee on Sowing Seeds for the Future. Daily short meaningful prayers presented an atmosphere of openness to the day’s topics. Above all, a call to personal and communal ecological conversion, a call to take the lead in the carbon accountability, a call to Living in Communion, inspired us and made us determined to join “Living Green Mission in the Spirit of Laudato Si’” as the mandate of our present time.



Opening Session

Fr. Joshtram Kureethadam, SDB, from the Dicastery for Human Development, Rome, in his opening speech on *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si’* helped us capture the spirit of Laudate Si as the Mission awaiting us today. He took Saint Francis’ anecdote where he was missioned by the Lord to “go and repair my house which is falling into ruin (1205-Assisi) with “Care for our common home” as the mission given by the Lord to Pope Francis for our present time. Pope Francis calls all people to care for our common home before it is too late. He explained in a nutshell, using the ‘see, judge, and act’ methodology. The first three commandments are summarized in seeing – listen to the cry of the earth, listen to the cry of the poor and rediscovering the Gospel of creation. Fr. Joshtram stressed that the core message of *Laudato Si’* is: “*Creation is, indeed the very first epiphany of God, and caring for our common home is our original vocation and is the first commandment to humanity, our ‘Job description’!*”

Jane Mellett’s talk “*The call to ecological conversion*” enriched us with her climate pilgrimage experiences and the heart touching story of her friend Joanna Sustento who is an example of real people behind the crisis. Jane’s reflections on the environmental crisis was a call to each of us to a profound interior conversion. We must see with the eyes of Christ those on the frontlines of this crisis, victims of climate disasters, displacement due to sea-level rise, drought, etc. She reminded us of Pope Francis’ question, which stirs hearts and minds:

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”

Education Aspect

Fr. Petero Matairatu, SM presented *'The Practices and Principles of Tutu Rural Training Centre'* in Fiji. He shared with us their enormous efforts, to bring up the young people to be self-employed farmers with dignity. They train young farmers, single women, farming couples to practice traditional farming, constructing their own houses, to build up their own livelihood through various village courses and to give rural adult non-formal education. It was amazing to see their growing self-confidence and their joy at harvesting the fruits of their labor through applying what they have learned. The commendable work of Fr. Petero and his co-brothers are an inspiration.

Second session was on *"Loving Sister Earth"*. Fr. Brian Grogan, SJ, led us into deeply reflect on Ecological Mourning and our response. It is an invitation, as Fr. Brian said, to explore together the dimensions of Ecological Mourning to integrate it into Living Green Mission. On a daily basis, the media presents the disasters. Disasters can lead to a great outpouring of creative energy, but also to anxiety, desolation, depression, paralysis and fatalism. He asked us: *Does the spirituality of Finding God in All Things include Finding God in Ecological disaster? If yes, how do we find God in them?*

Fr. Brian gave some historical examples of the failure to mourn. Firstly, we must allow the disturbing reality of ecological disaster to enter our soul deeply. Secondly, with a deeper realization of what is wrong, we can cultivate a deeper love of Creation. Loving and mourning go hand in hand. Redemptive mourning arises only when we realize that in the ravaging of Nature, part of our very being is lost, because we are part of Nature. This ecological mourning must be honest: 'We have sinned!' And we place each disaster trustingly in the Father's hands and to intercede to change human hearts, to make good what is not good, and to bring about the universal restoration that is promised (*Acts*

3:21). Indeed, the silent reflection helped us to be in touch with the core of our being.



Sr. Helen Grealy shared their *'Loving Sister Earth Movement'* of Ireland. 'Loving Sister Earth' is their humble attempt to live 'green mission'. Their aim is to foster a movement of prayer and care for our Common Home to be rooted in our own sacred ground and carried by our people. A deep prayer involves entering the transformative inner journey and bringing about harmony between body, mind, feelings, and spirit.

The more inner harmony we experience, the more we can contribute to the harmony of our world. It may encourage people to explore the native wisdom in our own area more fully and learn how that can contribute to our green mission of today. Our relationship with God and each other will be a pulsating powerful energy of pure love being poured out on our bio-diverse universe. Sr. Helen shared with us some beautiful Irish prayers on nature.

Day 3: Sustainability Aspect.

Prof. Yvan Brakel explained the effort the engineering faculty of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, is making to take the lead in carbon accountability and sustainability. He described through examples, how a sustainable infrastructure can play an essential role in offering vital services to communities being improved of their quality in the protection of environment. Infrastructures are urgent. Climate change is destroying the life of the planet. This situation cannot improve unless the world realizes and achieves the climate objectives. The infrastructure plays a vital role by providing

services; firstly, as guardians of the modern development.

The presentation with videos helped us to see how bamboos can be used in place of cement constructing bridges or other constructions. Prof. Yvan emphasized that deteriorated or destroyed materials can be recycled instead of buying new things, especially in the constructing a house.

Fr. Richie Gomez, MSC, presented on Ecological living and agriculture for indigenous peoples. Fr. Gomez used the methodology of “SEE – DISCERN – ACT” for our better hermeneutical understanding and a more balanced interpretation. Fr. Gomez presented; “We are in One Boat of globalization. We have no choice but to continue our journey being in the boat of capitalistic, consumeristic, commercialistic, materialistic and profit-driven community”. The adverse impact of climate change on the farmers has already effected their day-to-day hardship. For more than three decades, we use the method of modern farming (*Green Revolution*) which is based on chemical products. This became conventional for massive production, worldwide. Surplus products from First World countries under International Free Trade Agreement resulted in the Philippines becoming the dumping ground of surplus food and non-food products. Endless production, consumption, and the pursuit of profit, in the name of economic growth, progress and development have become the most cherished goals of the modern economy. But the end goal should be the well-being of people and the integrity of the Planet Earth. Local production should be appreciated and given importance. If production and consumption, money, and economic growth damage nature and exploit people then such economic activities must be stopped at once. Fr. Richie gave a clear recent picture of rice harvest situation in the Philippines.

Fr. Gomez shared the inspiring and impressive core values and principles for the well-being of farming communities:

- Love- Shared- Blessing Academy
- *Sapat na* (Enough) Principle
- Care for the Environment (*Laudato Si'*)
- Zero Waste or Best Green Practices and 9R's
- Back to Basic, Simple Life-Style
- Natural Sustainable Farming

As an action, The *Center for the Poor* is working closely with the Department of Agriculture, other NGO's, individual farmers, fisher folks, and Indigenous People tribes/communities, in order to preserve organic seeds not dependent on chemicals.

Ezrah Schraven closed the day with her encouraging sharing on the lessons we can learn from the corporate world regarding the importance of taking care of our “ecological footprint”. As missionaries we too should take care of the Creation, not because we have to, but because the People of God are in dire need and because it is not right to spoil this beautiful world by our unlimited desires.

Day 4: Spirituality Aspect

We had a deeply inspiring reflection on “*What hope for a small blue planet*” by Fr. Brian Grogan, SJ, and the profound personal experiences of Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, on “*Deep Relationality: Living in Communion*” with God, self, and one another.

Father Brian led us through reflections exploring the six reasons for hope drawn from the divine order of things. He pointed out that God is a God of Life, and His glory is the human person fully alive. The main reason for hope for our future is the Spirit-led change of heart being shown in the current ‘ecological conversion’ of so many people. The richness of the Christian tradition must strengthen our hope and liberate our energies to protect our Common Home. Because Christian hope is not wishful thinking or naïve optimism: it comes from God and is focused on God and it is founded on God's interventions in human history. God is Almighty and great, but God is also God the God of small things. We live

small lives and our efforts to protect our world may seem small and futile — such as conserving water when washing, avoiding plastic, saving foxes, growing herbs in a window-box. Small though these gestures may be, they are rich in God’s sight.

Another reason for hope for our planet is the divine command: ‘Go! The simple divine command, ‘Go!’ rings out across the Scriptures when things are at their lowest, and when that command is obeyed divine power swings into action. In the course of time, when our time boundaries melt away, what was past will be present again, including every detail of Nature. In this perspective, everything worthwhile, beautiful and meaningful, everything that constitutes the richness of human life, is being transferred to the divine order of things even as our lives go by and will be for our communal enjoyment, human history, Creation, and we ourselves will glow with transfigured meaning.

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, led us into ‘*Deep Relationality: Living in Communion*’. His presentation focused on the spirituality of communion, in the light of the *Laudato Si*. He shared his experience of ecological spirituality as a three-fold communion: Communion with others, with nature and with God. He emphasized that everything is interconnected, interrelated, and that all live within a web of relationships as Pope Francis echoes in *Laudato Si*, “*Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself*” (n. 66) as the heart of integral ecology. His experience reflected his closeness to the Divine amidst natural wonders during his pilgrim with fellow pilgrims.

He also explained another aspect with regard to the rupture of the three-fold communion. These three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.... The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the

place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted the mandate to “have dominion” over the earth. As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen).

Day 5: Closing session

Sr. Sheila Kinsey, from the JPIC desk of UISG/USG, shared on ‘*Sowing Seeds for the Planet*’. In the first part of her presentation, she introduced the main role of the JPIC. It is to transform the world in the spirit of the Gospel; to promote justice and care for the integrity of creation; to listen to the poor and vulnerable, and support their voice, and advocate for human rights for all persons, and the importance of a life imbued with the loving presence of Christ. Our relationship with Christ can be the source of creating new ways of being compassionate to comfort our fragile world.

Sowing seeds for the future: Sr. Sheila referred the biblical parable of the mustard seed in Matthew 13:3-8. The tiny mustard seed shows that great things grow from the smallest of beginnings. Just like the mustard seed, the ideas of *Laudato Si* must be scattered everywhere so that they might flower in the hearts, minds, and souls of as many people as possible. The USG/UISG members are also encouraged to coordinate their congregational efforts with Sowing Hope for the Planet. The *Laudato Si* Action Platform provides a framework for responding to the urgency of the ecological crisis, enables like-minded partnerships and provides critical planning. She also shared the JPIC Agenda and future plans.

As the closing speech for the Seminar, Fr. Augusto Zampini Davies from the *Dicastery for Human Development*, Rome, spoke of the Church’s new pathways for integral ecology in the aftermath of the *Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region*. Fr. Augusto explained the Social, Cultural, Ecological, and Ecclesial dreams for the Amazon Region. It is however also applicable to where we live. Fr. Augusto outlined an action plan to realize these four

dreams by implementing the methodology of ‘Listen, Connect and Inspire’. He explained a complex and interconnected ecological, economic, political, and social crisis and that these crises are an opportunity for people to create something new. He called for a prophetic voice, alternative models of development to make changes. The Church too builds up new structures for new paths for evangelization, implementation from dream to reality and walking together for a better world.

LEARNING FROM THE SEMINAR...

Creation is God’s first and primordial revelation. The very first manifestation of God. God has a purpose for creation. God gave us only one blue planet as our home. And we share this home with other people and the rest of creation. Everything is interconnected, interrelated and inter dependent. This applies from the sub-atomic level up to the entire cosmos including the biological, the eco-system and society. We all live within a web of relationship with all of LIFE!

The Seminar was a profound call to a personal, communal and on-going ecological conversion. Creation today is crying out as never before, labouring to be set free (*Romans* Ch. 8). All nations and peoples need an ecological conversion if we are to be honest guardians of this wonderful planet. We can change the course of history by adopting a radical new way of living with Creation to sustain and preserve its resources for future generations.

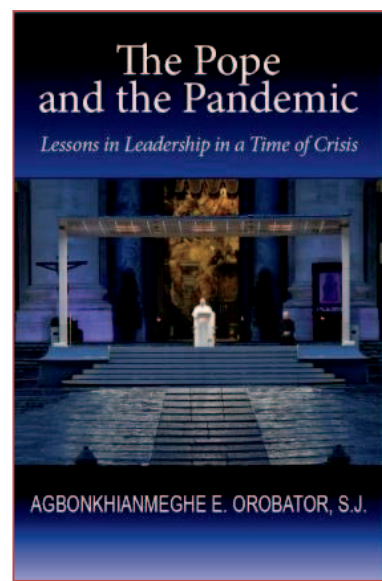
In the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis says, “*a whole new way of living opens as a consequence of a personal and passionate relationship with Jesus. We get the grace to transcend ourselves*”. (LS, 217)

We get new strength to care for others and for creation. We can live with a new horizon, embracing Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom of God, of a renewed and transformed world and ecosystem where we are all brothers and sisters, each responsible for the other.

In this vital time of our world’s history, we are called to take responsibility as God’s people, and contribute to change this situation: doing small things such as recycle trash, saving energy and water, buy eco-friendly products, buying what is really needed, planting trees, learning about the ecological issues, support pro-ecological agenda, etc. Let us hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, rediscover the Gospel of Creation. Let us practice the Ten Green Commandments of *Laudato Si’*. Let us join our hearts and minds to make God’s dream for our common home a reality.

We thank SEDOS, Fr. Peter Baekelmans, CICM, and his team and all those who were part of organizing this important Seminar. With over a 165 participants there is hope that together we can make a difference wherever we are present, and help people to become aware of the infinite beauty of God’s creation. As Pope Francis reminds us, “*All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.*” (LS n. 14).

As agents of hope, let us dare to take our responsibility as true stewards of God’s Creation!



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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

SEDOS AUTUMN SEMINAR 2021

SEDOS MISSION SYMPOSIUM



(Picture taken by
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Common Trends in Mission

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11 – 15 October 2021

(every day from 1.00 pm to 4.30 pm, with over 20 speakers)

ONLINE FROM ROME

(detailed program will follow)

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Intro: H. Em. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle

1. Evangelization and Mission:

Introduction by Fr. Michael McCabe, SMA

1. The *what* of mission: **Fr. Jose Palakeel, MST**
2. The *why* of mission: **Sr. Rekha Chennattu, RA**
3. Theology of Mission Today: **Fr. Stefan Bevans, SVD**
4. Mission appeal by Pope Francis: **Fr. Paul Béré, SJ**
5. Role of Missionary Religious Institutes: **Fr. Aloysius Pieris, SJ**

2. Ways in doing Mission:

Introduction by Sr. Evelyn Monteiro, SCC (to be confirmed)

1. The *how* of mission: **Fr. Pudota Rayappa John, SJ**
2. The *when* of mission: **Fr. Alfred Maravilla, SDB**
3. The *who* of mission: **Sr. Maria Teresa Ratti, CMS, and others**
4. The *where* of mission: **Fr. Anthony Akinwale, OP**

3. Common Trends in Mission:

Introduction by Fr. Bryan Lobo, SJ

1. Interreligious Dialogue:
 - Interreligious dialogue: **Sr. Maria De Giorgi, MMX**
 - Islam: **Fr. John Mallare, CICM**
 - Eastern Religions: **Fr. Gerard Hall, SM**
 - Indigenous Religions: **Sr. Robyn Reynolds, OLSH**
 - African Traditional Religions: **Fr. Bede Ukwuiji, CSSp**
2. Ecumenism: **Sr. Marie-Hélène Robert, OLA**
3. Justice and Peace
 - Mission with migrants: **Sr. Vijili Dali, DMI**
 - Mission among the Poor: **Sr. Licia Mazzia or Sr. Marvi Delrivo, SFP**
 - Reconciliation: **Sr. Anne Béatrice Faye, CIC**
 - Mission and Women: **Sr. Mary Barron, OLA**
 - Building peace: **Fr. James Kroeger, MM**
4. Integrity of Creation: **Sr. Ilia Delio (to be confirmed)**
5. Inter-culturality: **Fr. Tim Norton, SVD**
6. Media and Mission: **Sr. Monique Tabareh, RGS**
7. Mission as Healing: **Sr. Agnes Lanfermann, MMS**
8. Education: **Sr. Antonetta Pereira, FMM**
9. Secularization: **Fr. Daniel Huang, SJ**
10. Missionary Parishes: **Fr. Lazar Tanuzraj Stanislaus, SVD**
11. Lay in Mission: **Mr. Oliver Aquilina, SDC**
12. Youth in Mission: **Br. Nestor Anaya, FSC**

Green Jesus



Painting by Students of St. Mary's University at Bayongbong,
Nueva Vizcaya, The Philippines (CICM)