

First Part:

A General Introduction to *Laudato Si* for the Eco-Assumption

In 2012, as two of the fundamental options for the six years to come, the General Chapter of the Religious of the Assumption chose the double question of Ecology and Migration. In order to emphasize this stress on ecological and climatic dangers, we decided to put together a communal document which would help us to become more aware and at the same time energise us to make right choices for ourselves and for our communities in all our missions. At the CGP in February 2014 (meeting of the provincials) it was decided to give the task of preparing an outline for this document to the International JPIC Secretariat¹ : the objective was not to produce a single document which would have been the result of a reflection written up by a small team. Rather, it would bring together contributions from all four corners of the world, showing a variety of points of view and styles. The present document is the fruit of this effort: it is a collection of fifty contributions from Assumption Sisters, laity, and religious close to our communities, originally written in English, French or Spanish, and then translated into

¹ The International JPIC secretariat brings together the Little Sisters of the Assumption who created the secretariat in the first place, the Religious of the Assumption who have been part of it since 2008 and since 2014, the Augustinians of the Assumption. It was the RA part of the team who were given the task of co-ordinating the document: this consists of Sr Jessica Gatty, Sr Ana Senties, Sr Belen Miguel Frias and Sr Cecile Renouard accompanied by Sr Marie-Eugenia Ramirez from the General Council.

the other languages. As it is, it is a wonderful realisation of our communal effort! We travel from the Biblical world to the roots of Hindu thought, from educative experiences carried out in Mexico to advocacy for disinvestment from fossil fuels in Europe and the USA, from the dangers of desertification in Africa to the peace between Christians and Muslims in harmony with the cosmos in the Philippines.

We did not envisage that our document would be published more or less at the same moment as the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* ! It is a huge opportunity for all Christians and everyone on this planet today to take advantage of this text which invites us to commit ourselves personally and as communities to a path of ecological conversion. In the circumstances, we might ask ourselves whether our document is unnecessary when compared with this great, vigorous and demanding text which is so full of hope and which concludes with points for meditation, prayer and action. The aim of this introduction is to encourage a taste for reading *Laudato Si* together with *Towards an Eco Assumption*! In these first pages we suggest certain themes present in the encyclical and show how the different parts of our document resonate and are clarified by it; it also helps us at the same time to concretise and contextualise the Pope's propositions by giving them an Assumption educational colouring.

A few words about *Laudato Si*

The encyclical *Laudato Si* is presented by Pope Francis as a text addressed to all human beings without exception: he invites each person to delve into spiritual resources in order to respond to the challenges facing our common home. Scriptural references and the Christian tradition are particularly important in the Introduction, in Chapter 2, 'The Gospel of Creation', and in Chapter 6, 'Ecological Education and Spirituality'. All the way through the document the words chosen by Francis show a desire to

be understood by people of other faiths: so, for example, it is more a question of noble, generous actions springing from concern for the dignity of human beings rather than ‘holiness.’ The Pope mentions other religious traditions in a general way (especially in Chapter 5, ‘Lines of approach and action’); this opens the door to a comparative study of human traditions and their relationship with nature and the cosmos. In this respect, references in our document to Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Amerindian traditions, and eco-spiritualities are well in accord with the dynamic of communion to which the Pope is inviting us.

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Everything is connected: this expression is repeated many times in *Laudato Si*: far from being masters and possessors of nature, human beings are invited to situate themselves at the service of the garden of Creation. The Pope defends an anthropology and ontology of relationship, based on God as Trinity (240). He criticises ‘despotic’ (68) or ‘deviant’ (69) anthropocentrism which leads us to believe that our technological competence gives us limitless power over the future of the world. He clearly affirms “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” (83) much more strongly than in any of his predecessors in their encyclicals. We are invited to enter a relationship of dependence with the God who created us with the whole of creation, in love (77). In this way we become co-creators for this world in mutation, animated by the same movement of self-emptying as our Creator, who limits Himself to enable humanity to complete His work under the creative inspiration of the Holy Spirit (78). We are called to work in imitation of God’s restraint and be animated by wise prudence (124).

THE BROAD VIEW

The Pope denounces abuses of scientific technology and the death-dealing acquisitiveness exercised by human beings over nature and other human beings, as well as the illusionary financial and economic models which do

such damage to persons and eco-systems. He recognises that our rapaciousness in the world stunts us and does not help a true social development. We are obsessed with our technological accomplishments instead of being concerned with the purpose of our actions. “We have too many means and only a few insubstantial ends” (203). The Pope underlines the need for a creativity which honours human grandeur and dignity (192). This would mean the elaboration of new economic models for sustainability and solidarity, and a refusal of superficial initiatives and those fine words of the business community about their social and environmental responsibilities (194). This presupposes a struggle against material inequalities which cause us so much “indignation” and push us to act: for we are accomplices, at least those of us from the rich and polluting countries which monopolise the riches which should be given back to others (95). So we are called to promote another model, not of growth and excessive consumption and production but of diminution in the rich parts of the world, in order to allow all the poorest, both in the South and the North, to have access to basic goods (193). The Pope does not name capitalism explicitly, but he points out its failures by very firmly denouncing the impasses of our short term, predatory, deregulated and financialized systems.

LESS IS MORE

We are called to a deep conversion, because we need to break away from our habits of consumption, the “culture of waste” (123) which is so negligent and careless of nature and its creatures. He asks us to promote an “integral ecology” (Chapter 3) which is at one and the same time social and environmental, a culture rooted in the everyday, at the service of justice and the common good. A shared integral ecological vision could mobilise our collective energies at different levels, and make it happen: Francis invites us to place ourselves on the side of the voiceless, to denounce the propensity of the media and the powerful to ignore the situations lived by the most destitute (49); he invites us to support local initiatives, those which enable the poorer neighbourhoods of big cities to

become places of communitarian salvation (149): he encourages popular movements and civil society in its entirety to ‘put pressure’ on governments and those in charge of the economy (179,181,206) to go beyond the single concern for short term private interests, to develop institutions where a place is given to “great ends, values, and a genuine and profound humanism to serve as the basis of a noble and generous society” (181). Research into new lifestyles would involve recovering a sense of celebration, Sunday rest, contemplation, gratuity, relearning slower rhythms and a joyful sobriety (222).

Towards an Eco-Assumption

In its small way the present document would like to witness to our consciousness of all this in Assumption Together, and our capacity to support each other and encourage one another on the way to an integral ecology.

Following this general introduction the document is made up of three main parts. An analysis of ecological challenges (Part II) is made in three ways: first by a reading of the history of the universe linking scientific discourse with the discourse of faith, then by an analysis of the roots of the actual crisis and finally by a description of certain of its consequences, notably migration, using examples coming from different geographic zones.

Part III consists of a theological framework in two main sections: first we explore several great Biblical and Christian theological landmarks, using the resources of dogmatic theology, as well as the social teaching of the Catholic Church and the spiritual tradition of the Assumption. Following this there are some reflections on the ways in which different religious and spiritual traditions approach ecological questions.

Part IV consists of presenting springboards for action; in particular that of education. The educational thought of the Assumption integrates

reflection and formation on the high ecological stakes involved, whether it be by presenting initiatives carried out in a neighbourhood in Mexico or in a high school in the Rwandan countryside. Following this material, we touch on the participation of Sisters and the laity in advocacy and citizens movements with an international dimension (objecting to the arms trade or the massive grants made to the fossil fuel industries) as well as at the local level (denouncing industrial pollution, for instance). Finally, there are certain concrete proposals to do with lifestyle, a life lived closer to nature and a taking of more responsibility. These cover a large range and include the collective management of waste in Ecuador, a community garden in the USA. They also direct attention to our use of new technologies and other everyday choices.

This document shows how acute and immense the problems are and how profound the necessary transformations need to be. It aims to give us that spiritual attitude as described by the Pope at the beginning of his encyclical: “to dare to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it” (19). Far from crushing us under the weight of the task needing to be done, many of the texts bring a note of joyful hope, as Francis invites us: “Let us sing as we go! May our struggles and concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope” (244).

Second Part:

Diagnosis

This first part of the document presents a diagnosis of the breadth and seriousness of the ecological and climatic challenges, of their causes and their consequences for all the societies of the planet. It provides analyses drawn from the natural sciences, philosophy and the social sciences. Certain texts also make reference to theological and spiritual reflections, but these will be more fully discussed in the later parts. Likewise, where certain paths leading to the transformation of our society are presented, the detailed means of changing our life styles will be described in the last part of the document.

All the texts in this part focus on the importance of the changes which are taking place and on human responsibility in relation to these changes, and on the catastrophic consequences for future generations if we do not profoundly change our models of development. At the same time they bring to light the complexity of current events, which cannot be attributed to a single cause, or to a single category of actors, but are the result of inter-dependent factors: for example, the pollution in the Niger Delta, the industrial oil - producing zone in Nigeria, is the result of the decades-long criminal negligence of the oil companies and of the government, as well as of sabotage by those who are denied a share in the wealth that the oil industry brings. To transform this situation - in this case, as in many others - there has to be joint action between the government, the private sector, and civil society. The question is how to bring about these changes in a non-violent manner, and what strategies can be used.

The first text, by Sr. Jessica, on the story of the universe, is a vast fresco of Teilhardien inspiration, which shows how scientific evolution can be understood as the expression of the love of the Creator for his Creation, culminating in the gift of Christ, in the Incarnation of the Word in the history of humanity and of the cosmos. This huge tableau makes evident that human beings have a special place in Creation and leads to the analysis, by Sr. Cécile, of human responsibility in relation to contemporary ecological and climatic changes. The scientific community are agreed on the anthropic origin of climate change. Human beings are putting nature under pressure in two ways, by the increase of the population of the planet and especially by the increase of energy use per inhabitant, which causes the emission of greenhouse gases which in turn cause climate change. The international community has set itself the aim of halving these emissions by 2050 compared with 1990 levels, so as to limit by two degrees the increase in the temperature of the planet at the end of the 21st century. Unfortunately, so far, we have not done enough to reach this objective. To reach this limit there has to be a complete re-thinking of the capitalist model of development which depends on economic growth, which will involve a transformation of our means of production, of our consumption, of how we travel and of our housing, etc. It is therefore clear that a solution to the problem cannot be achieved merely by technical analysis; managerial and political decisions must arise out of anthropological and ethical considerations, which must be studied in depth.

The ecological challenges are not limited to climate change. Four scenarios are presented: the first, by Sr. Irène-Cécile, emphasizes the current threats to biodiversity and shows how the construction of the electricity power plant fuelled by coal from Kauswagan in the Philippines, is damaging the local eco-system. Michel Nyamba presents the challenges arising out of desertification and deforestation in West Africa. Sr. Laure studies what is done with waste in France and dwells on the challenge of embedding recycling and reuse of waste into the economy. Hervé Lado

and Sr. Cécile illustrate the "curse of natural resources" which exists in many countries, by the case of the oil companies in Nigeria.

Finally, Amparo Marroquin from El Salvador describes the way in which migration is linked to ecology, when people are displaced because of climatic events and ecological disasters, and also when countries have increased populations because of the various migratory movements.

2.a The Story of the Universe. A Long Love Story ²

"It was love's intent from the very beginning'", Duns Scotus

Jessica Gatty, r.a.

This matters because our understanding of reality is changing. The static, mechanistic model of the universe associated with Newtonian physics with its Aristotelian categories has dissolved into open systems³, holons⁴ and an interconnected flowing web of information, where particles and waves are interchangeable, and mass and energy are forms of the same thing.

At the infinitesimal level according to quantum physics what seemed solid matter turns out to have indeterminacy built in, probabilities, and is more a continuum of events rather than an enduring essence, and an

² This is another way of saying 'It was love's intent from the very beginning'. Duns Scotus 3 L. von Bertalanffy (Allgemeine Systemlehre (1950), General System Theory, 1968) first proposed in a tool for transdisciplinary communication and search for 'universal principles applying to systems in general... irrespective whether they are of a physical, biological or sociological nature'.

⁴ A. Koestler (*The Ghost in the Machine*, 1967): This was where the term 'holon' was first introduced as part of the body/mind debate; a holon is at once a whole and a part.

entanglement of subatomic particles relating at a speed faster than light where the observer will influence what is taking place physically.

Existence, it seems, is inherently relational. The universe is expanding in space-time, there is an evolution in all things, a dance balancing law and chaos, implying change and transformation, a creativity suffusing the universe. There is increasingly a bridge between the insights of the mystics and the long and painstaking work of scientists.

It matters; theology needs to be in dialogue with this new and unimaginably mysterious reality and all the wonders of contemporary cosmology - if we are truly to love our times this dialogue is key. It matters as we are facing the enormity of ecological crisis as well as the crises of poverty and war and what does contemporary Christology have to say?⁵ Creation is good and creation is endangered. A new consciousness helped by this dialogue and contact with other religions may encourage us to explore this new reality and give us a renewed and dynamic vision for the future.⁶

Here is a sketch of the story, largely agreed on by scientists today.

THE SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW

First there was the primordial flaring forth, the Big Bang, as it is inelegantly called, about 13.7 billion years ago, seemingly out of nothing.⁷ It has been

⁵ “*The privatized, individualised Christ... might as well be a museum piece.*” Raymond Panikkar. Quoted by Ilio Delio, ‘Christ in Evolution’ 180, Orbis. Theology has developed in dialogue with the present day context in many ways such as Afro and Asian theology, feminist theology and liberation theology, less so with cosmology – see *Quest for the Living God*, by Elizabeth Johnson, Bloomsbury, 2007.

⁶ The drama of this change and the meeting of the religions is of such importance that it has been termed by Ewert Cousins, as the second axial period. An article: *The World Religions: Facing Modernity Together* by Ewert Cousins can be found at http://globlethic.org/Center/ewert_an.htm

⁷ The rift between science and Catholicism has been rather exaggerated. It was Fr G. Lemaitre, a Belgian priest, who was the first to propose the beginning of the universe as a ‘cosmic egg’ and an ‘expanding universe’. Pope Francis recently addressed the Pontifical Academy of Scientists saying ‘*the Church has no problems with evolution and the Big Bang*’

described as an unrepeatably explained by no known laws of physics or anything else, generating matter and energy: after the initial rapid inflation the universe started expanding to staggering and inconceivable distances across intergalactic space. In the ensuing cosmogenesis there was the creation of elements, matter-energy was “lumpy”, so atoms formed with a nucleus of protons and neutrons ringed by a circle of electrons.

There was clumping and complexification, hydrogen atoms swirled together drawn by gravity creating balls of gas, nuclear explosions and finally forming stars; stars swarmed together forming galaxies: spiral, elliptical and other strange shapes. It is estimated that there are between 50 and 100 billion galaxies each with up to 100 billion stars. Within the stars were forged the elements of carbon, oxygen, iron, sulphur and nitrogen. As the stars (super novae) died forming black holes, they threw the heavy elements into space, dispersing them throughout the universe. New stars are being born to this day, the process continues. Planets began to form round the stars drawn by gravity and the moons around the planets were created from the star dust and swirling gases. Out of the minerals and gases in the earth came single-celled living organisms.

The strangeness of the story is full of providential coincidences. There was a remarkable fine tuning in the electric charge and violence of the Big Bang, favouring continued existence and ultimately the emergence of life. If the universe had expanded a trillionth of a trillionth faster or slower it would either have made it impossible for matter to clump together or if slower, it would have fallen in on itself. There was fine tuning in the mass of an electron and the force of gravity. Again, if the earth had been closer to the sun, it could well have got locked in so that only one side of the planet saw the sun.

theory of the origins of the universe. I am happy to express my profound esteem and my warm encouragement to carry forward scientific progress.’ Oct. 2014.

An orderliness in the universe as found in a crystal structure can be detected as well as random complexity. Within the emerging universe there seems to be a pattern of creativity, crisis and renewal, a beauty and differentiation and emerging self-organisation; and eventually we can discern within all the increasing complexity and diversity the development of consciousness and communion. In us, human beings, we see the universe becoming conscious of itself.⁸

In 1968, we saw for the first time the blue marble hung in space - the earth, our planet home, the right distance from the sun, complete with water and atmosphere. After 10 billion years of cosmic development, life was born on earth from the matrix of the cosmos itself with the same basic material that was formed in galactic events. Life, a dynamic flexible, state of matter, had a zest to explore, to self-organise into more and more complex structures and a marvellous capacity to evolve. Molecules organised themselves to form single cells, then cells with nuclei, then into multicellular organisms; molecules developed able to carry information.

Then a huge step forward was made when a bacteria, eukaryotes, discovered how to trap sunlight to create energy for itself with water and carbon and give off oxygen as a by-product. A fragile but unstoppable process was underway, the evolution of life forms in more and more complex organisations, 'in endless forms most beautiful', with many marvels and surprises along the way within the evolutionary process.⁹

ALL LIFE FORMS ONE COMMUNITY

Humanity, the growing point of evolution from the point of view of the consciousness inherent in matter from the beginning, is part of the web of

⁸ 'The universe is seeded with promise and pregnant with surprise.' – E. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world.' Wisdom 11:24 and 'For You love all things that exist'. Wisdom 12:1

⁹ Competition is undoubtedly part of the process of natural selection in biological evolution but the part played by co-operation in evolution is even more basic, as Lynn Margulis has shown – her idea was first proposed with her book –*The Origin of Eukarotic Cells*' in 1970.

life. We continue to need trees to give off oxygen, we are dependent creatures, we are finite and we are part of the environment out of which we emerged. We clearly belong to the kinship group of hugely diverse members with mutual relationships which are enormously rich and complex. Composed of star dust we form part of a seamless community of creation and can humbly acknowledge all the creativity of so many creatures that has led up to our existence over billions of years. If we are tempted to get above ourselves we can remember the 'otherness', the wonder of the cosmos with its myriad forms and experiments, we can remember how our brains have self-organised themselves into millions of neurons firing electric charges at one another giving us information with no central command system, we can remember Job: 'where were you when I laid the earth's foundations.....?'¹⁰. We can respond with humility and joy.¹¹

The story is unfinished, St Paul recognised this when he spoke of "all creation groaning in travail..."¹² The timescale is something like this¹³: if we think of the first flaring forth as January 1st, by late September there would be the first stirrings of life, by December the sequences of species would be emerging such as worms, fish, land plants, insects, amphibians, trees, dinosaurs, mammals, birds and flowers; only at the last minute before midnight would hominoids appear; then us, persons in the image of God, searching for purpose and meaning¹⁴.... and then?

¹⁰ Job 38:4-7

¹¹ 'Humbled and delighted by the life around us we can grow to know ourselves as members of a community of creation and step up to protect our kin.' E. Johnson, *Ibid*.
'Then I heard all the living things in creation, everything that lives in the air, on the ground and under the ground, and in the sea crying "To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honour, glory and power. For ever and ever."' Revelation 5:13.

¹² Romans 8:22

¹³ From Sagan, Carl: *Dragons of Eden: Speculations of the Evolution of Human Intelligence*, Random House Publishing, 2012.,

¹⁴ V. E. Frankl, *Man's search for Meaning*, 1959.

In the process matter transcends itself, gains freedom and being, sacrifice is present from the beginning from the moment of God's self-emptying into the "other", yet God holds all things in being. Wisdom is at play.¹⁵

The Holy Spirit hovered over the beginning, empowering creation, giving Life. The Incarnation, according to Bonaventure, was not an afterthought of God.¹⁶ The Trinity expresses trinity in creation and creation in turn expresses the Creator. God completes what God initiates in creation and crowns it with eternal significance in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ; from within the evolutionary process "the earth buds forth a Saviour".¹⁷ Christ's redemptive work overcomes sin and death and does it in a way that brings God's creative action in the universe to completion. Incarnation and creation are inextricably linked in the communion of Trinitarian love.¹⁸

THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRIST IS THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY

When the fullness of time had come, Jesus was born into the community of Israel; his life expressed the unconditional and overflowing love of God even to death of the Cross. "When the vessel of His body was shattered, Christ was poured out over the cosmos. He became in His very humanity what he had always been in His dignity, the innermost centre of creation".¹⁹ This was the beginning of the new creation.²⁰ The process of incarnation is not yet finished, the fullness of Christ is all humanity and

¹⁵ Proverbs 8::22 -31 'The Lord created me when his purpose first unfolded before the oldest of his works...'

¹⁶ The Franciscan tradition of cosmic theology continued in the work of Duns Scotus, is very much with us today in the work of Ilia Delio OFM who builds on the insights of Teilhard de Chardin.

¹⁷ From the Advent Liturgy – Isaiah 48:5

¹⁸ Colossians 1: 15 -17 'He is the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of all creation for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, everything visible and everything invisible... '

¹⁹ K. Rahner, *On the theology of Death*, 1961.

²⁰ Philippians 2: 6 -11

creation bonded in a union of love, Christ is the goal of an evolutionary universe and of human life in evolution.²¹

The self-giving of Jesus culminated in the resurrection, the promise of God was fulfilled and involved the whole embodied person, the Risen Christ. It is a promise too for the whole of the material universe.²² The resurrection was a transforming event - changing reality forever; involving the whole of creation, heralding “the glorification and divinisation of the whole of reality”.²³ Love and suffering are intertwined as isolated existence is relinquished for greater union. Reality is cruciform. We journey towards a wholeness.

Saint Marie Eugénie chose the mystery of the Incarnation for the new and fragile congregation. In the incarnation we can see God’s purpose of love from the very beginning, the delight in His creatures held in their deepest being and existence by Him and gradually brought back to unity with Him to share in the transfigured life in the Spirit. And ultimately, in the Life and Love of the Trinity, a Trinity of persons, being in relationship, communion and unity in diversity, that relationality which epitomises the connectedness of all that exists in the universe.

There is purpose in this long journey for “All is from Jesus Christ, all belongs to Jesus Christ and all must be for Jesus Christ”.²⁴ Despite the prevailing dualism of her time, Marie Eugénie was able to say, “The earth is the place for the glory of God”.

21 Raymond Panikkar is also adamant that this Christophany should replace tribal Christology. ‘Christ is our destiny. Without Christ creation finds neither purpose nor fulfilment...’ all must be united and included, hence the importance of interreligious dialogue and the work of Justice, peace and care of creation. Tribal Christianity excludes others. Tribal Christianity can be compared with the idea of church as ‘a visible sacrament of unity for all’, or ‘a most sure seed of unity’. *Lumen Gentium*. Ch.2..Vatican 11.

22 The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin can as I see it, be interpreted as underlining this promise -

23 K. Rahner. *Theological Investigations Vol. 4: 129*, London, Baltimore & New York, 1961 – 1992.

24 Rule of Life, Introduction

We say in the *Rule of Life* about the Eucharist: “Rooted in earthly realities we offer these to the Father so that by His Incarnate Son the whole of creation may be consecrated and transfigured, fulfilling its true vocation”.²⁵ It does matter. The neoliberal idea of a human tends to draw a picture of a being of nothing but greed and self-interest. The journey of evolution can seem meaningless and without purpose beyond the economic growth so inimical to the finite limits of our only planet; we see ourselves “mastering nature” which is somehow outside of us humans. We become attached to our technologies to the extent of artificial intelligence, intelligence divorced from emotion and sensory information. By our extractive industries and unregulated capitalism we are destroying our planet home and taking with us myriads of species.

We are working towards the divinisation of the whole cosmos.²⁶ “The risen Christ is the inner power of the evolutionary universe that impels us forward into a greater unity in love despite the forces of separation... the hope of a new creation lies within us”²⁷ The shift in our understanding of incarnation can help us renew a vision of world peace, compassion for all, and environmental awareness, working for these has enduring significance. To quote Elizabeth A. Johnson, “a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe all together filled with the glory of God; such is the vision that must guide us at this critical time of earth’s distress....” It is a long love story, but “Love is His meaning.”²⁸

Bibliography

- Berry, Thomas, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, Bell Tower, 1999.

²⁵ *Rule of Life*, 65

²⁶ Irenaus, Maximus the Confessor et al.

²⁷ I. Delio, *Christ in Evolution*, Orbis Books, 2008, p. 137.

²⁸ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Chapter 86, (c.1396), Penguin Classics.

- Bourgeault, Cynthia, *The Wisdom Jesus. Transforming Heart and Mind a new perspective of Christ and His Message*, Shambala, 2008.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia, *Wonder and Wisdom: Conversations in Science, Spirituality and Theology*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006.
- Delio, Ilia ofm, *Christ in Evolution*, Orbis, 2008.
- Delio, Ilia ofm, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love*, Orbis, 2013.
- Edwards, Denis, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, Orbis, 2006.
- Johnson, Elisabeth, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Swimme, Brian & Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: a celebration of the unfolding of the cosmos*, HarperCollins, 1992.
- Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *The Divine Milieu*, Collins, 1960.
- Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Collins, 1959.
-

2b. Human responsibility in relation to climate and ecological change

Cecile Renouard, r.a.

*The anthropogenic origin of climate change*²⁹

Over very long periods of time the climate obeys multiple parameters. But over the past few decades climate warming has been due mainly to changes in atmospheric composition due to the increase in human-made gases (the greenhouse effect)³⁰; other factors in this period (volcanic

²⁹ Data provided by Alain Grandjean, engineer and economist, Chairman of the Committee of Experts for the French National Debate on the ecological transition in 2012-2013, in 2015 President of the French Commission for proposing innovative financing of energy transition in countries in development as preparation for the international climate conference in Paris, known as COP21.

³⁰ The IPCC (intergovernmental panel of experts on climate change) researches in considerable depth and disseminates its findings through a publication about every five years. (1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2013-2014). The last was written by 831 experts (the top specialists in their discipline) and which benefitted from the work of hundreds of thousands of contributors and reviewers, from over 100 countries, and spent tens of

activity, aerosol emissions, solar cycle, "natural" climate change) play a secondary role.³¹

Atmospheric levels of the main greenhouse gases (GHGs): carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) have all increased since 1750 due to human activities³², reaching unprecedented levels over the last 800,000 years. The concentration of carbon dioxide has increased 40% since pre-industrial times. This increase is explained first of all by the use of fossil fuels, and secondly by the balance of emissions from changes in land use. The ocean has absorbed about 30% of anthropogenic (human-made) carbon dioxide emissions which has led to an acidification of the waters.³³

Global warming relies mainly on greenhouse gas emissions, which are currently increasing. If we continue with this level of growth climate models show that the average rising temperatures will be between 3.7°C and 4.8°C by 2100 (and will continue to rise).³⁴ We know now that the temperature difference between an ice age and an interglacial period – such as the one we lived about 12,000 years ago - is 5°C.

thousands on screened studies. Such means to test a hypothesis were never previously implemented in such depth in all the history of science.

The IPCC conclusions are shared almost unanimously by the scientific communities concerned. Since 2001, many national academies of science made statements (sometimes joint) affirming the reality of human-induced global warming and urging nations to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. Several studies analysing the content of scientific articles on climate show that almost all articles that take a position on the causes of global warming support the scientific consensus that global warming is due to human activity.

³¹ The total anthropogenic radiative forcing (a measure of the impact of certain factors affecting the climate on the energy balance of the coupled system Earth / atmosphere) in 2011 compared with 1750 is 2.29 [1.13 to 3.33] W m⁻². The radiative forcing due to changes in concentration of these gases is 2.83 [2.26 to 3.40] Wm⁻².

³² In 2011, the respective concentrations of these greenhouse gases were 391 ppm, ppb and 324 ppb in 1803, and exceeded pre-industrial levels of around 40%, 150% and 20%.

³³ The ocean acidification is quantified by the decrease in pH. The pH of seawater has fallen by 0.1 since the beginning of the industrial age, an increase of 26% of the hydrogen ion concentration. The effects of this acidification on marine ecosystems are serious in themselves.

³⁴ See <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

The potential rise in temperature is considerable; an era of climate change would be realised in a century (as compared, of course, with millennia). The impacts of these changes are the subject of extensive studies. We already know that they are tragic for the southern countries (increasing aridity and desertification in already dry areas, disrupting livelihoods (food and drinking water supply, risking the collapse of marine eco-systems, coastal areas, food insecurity, climate migration).

In developed countries the impacts are also dire (a summer in 2050 will be on average like the summer of 2003 with its heatwave in western Europe with all the risks of mortality and morbidity, especially for urban populations); this would require us to undertake very large adaptations, especially of homes, industrial facilities and infrastructure located near seas and oceans. These impacts combined with current sources of injustice and harshness of life, would be experienced by billions of people.

Change our development model

We have lived for a long time with the idea that the development of peoples depends on economic growth. Yet this, calculated by the GDP (gross domestic product), is contributing to the increase in energy consumption. This has now hit its limits: it is neither possible to extend this across the population of the planet, nor is it viable. The question is this: can we promote prosperity without growth and if so how?

Current projections show that the problems will get worse: according to estimates by the IEA (International Energy Agency) between 2002 and 2012 worldwide energy consumption increased by 30% and between 2012 and 2035 it will increase by 41%, while the world population will increase by 43% by 2100. We are therefore witnessing an increase of energy consumption which is twice as fast as the increase in world population; and 81% of the energy mix of the planet will probably still be fossil fuels in 2035.

But from 1970 to 2011, 500 GT (gigatonnes) of CO₂ were emitted, while in order to hope to limit the rise in average temperature to 2 degrees on a global scale by the end of the century, the total amount emitted until 2050 should be limited to 800 GT: so we would remain within the limits only if 300 GT were to be emitted during the next 40 years. Mission impossible?

Let us look at both the structural causes of the present ecological changes and possible springboards for action (these will also be developed in the rest of the document, especially in terms of the spiritual and educational resources at our disposal).

1 - STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

A - Our business model is unsustainable.

Capitalism is defined as a practice - the unlimited exploitation of natural resources, including fossil fuels – coupled with a rhetoric (propounded by many economists) that consists of attributing the accumulation of capital to the role of the engine of growth, and hence to economic prosperity. This practice is unsustainable and such rhetoric is erroneous.

An inherently predatory capitalism

Indeed, liberal capitalism is commonly defined as a mode of organisation of production and trade that is based on private ownership of the means of production and gives the freedom for trade exchanges to achieve a reputed optimal allocation of goods produced and services provided. It is characterised by the separation between owners of capital and the labour force, and the systematic search for capital accumulation from the beginning. In this, liberal capitalism may also differ from state capitalism as practiced in mainland China, whereas a liberal economy (i.e. where exchanges are regulated by market relations) could, for example, be populated by co-operatives. This "model" has perverse effects both socially and environmentally: socially a sociological analysis highlights how, in the absence of social claims, the primacy of profit maximisation facilitates the circumvention of employee rights.

In the neo-liberal version of contemporary capitalism, financialised and deregulated as it is, profit maximisation is reduced to short-term maximisation of dividends for shareholders; this creates a split in remuneration between senior management (whose interests are aligned with those of shareholders) and the rest of the employees.

Ecologically speaking, until recently, defenders and detractors of capitalism have largely ignored the relationship of economic activity to nature and passed over in silence the fact that the productivist/consumerist capitalist model is completely dependent on the increasing use of natural resources - especially energy and particularly fossil fuels. The work of the economist and Jesuit, Gaël Giraud, for example, indicates that growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in most OECD countries for the last half a century is highly dependent on the increase in energy consumption per capita. As the analysis of the political thinker André Gorz (1992) maintains, the dissociation between the workers and actual production contributes to this neglect of nature, and leads to a logic of predation and wastage. Instead of being subordinate to sustainable development, growth becomes an end in itself by being disconnected from the conditions which would allow for the renewal of the sources of the production process, whether these be human beings or other living beings, ecosystems or natural resources.

Contradictions of neoclassical economic theory

Moreover, economic theory about the "invisible hand" of the full and perfect market that effectively allocates resources, risks and capital, are now invalidated both theoretically (notably by Australian economist Steve Keen, 2001) as well as practically. Yet neoclassical economic theory continues to be taught - even though the countries that have defended a deregulated financial capitalism are also those that impose tariffs on certain products and allow their companies to play on transfer pricing involving intra-firm trade in goods and services (material and immaterial)

outside the market (Giraud and Renouard 2012): knowing that these exchanges concern 60% of world trade, we see how the "free market" is a fiction that masks the power relations both between States and between states and companies (Susan Strange, 1996). In this context, regulation is necessary in order to focus investment choices and production based on the general interest, and to harmonise the rules and fight against social dumping, both fiscal and environmental: on the other hand the absence of regulation means the exploitation of resources and an inefficient allocation of capital towards domains incompatible with the fight against climate change, such as the exploitation of fossil fuels.

B - Continuing to pollute in order to assure the development of the poorest, south and north?

A major difficulty in countering current trends is related to the economic and financial crisis in the North, the very high unemployment rate (in 2014, 50% of young people in Spain and Greece) and the increase in real poverty, while populations in Southern countries continue their process of development and continue to experience hunger, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, electricity and transport, etc.

International negotiations are aimed at finding solutions to halve emissions by 2050 compared with 1990. The blockages are of several types: countries of the West that were the most polluting feel that as they were not aware of the damage happening to the climate they cannot be held accountable before the time when scientific knowledge gave sufficiently reliable elements to create an agreed diagnosis. The *polluter pays principle* is still challenged and debated. Furthermore, an additional difficulty concerns the different natures of emissions, depending on whether they come from poor or wealthy countries. This distinguishes luxury emissions from livelihood issues (Henry Shue, 1993), those emissions that allow the poorest to survive or those which increase the comfort of the rich. For example, a smaller reduction of GHGs should be

given to an agricultural sector which is a strong methane emitter. Finally, if we reason from the perspective of human rights, for today and tomorrow, most of the arguments of philosophers interested in the ethical climate debate lead to the same conclusion: the rich should pay, not only rich countries but also the richest of all countries (Gardiner et al. 2010).

Note that the stakes are particularly high with regard to the positions of the US and China: the two countries in 2010 represented 41% of global emissions (although the US has emitted 30% of cumulative emissions between 1900 and 2004, while China has issued 9%). Emissions per capita per year are 17t in 2013 for an American and 7.5t for a Chinese (equivalent to those of a European). A Chinese scientist Hu Angang, argues that the wealthy class Chinese people should contribute to financing the fight against global warming.

C - Structural problems (greed, consumption, selfishness) as drivers of growing inequalities

Short term consumerist logic is based on the feeding of a lifestyle incompatible with the requirements of any other growth models. This lifestyle is not very self-critical as it is based on the feeling that the consumer is innocent, it is legitimised by the desire for access for all, or at least for a greater number, and a minimum threshold of well-being - so standards are increasingly raised, as access to health conditions, education, infrastructure, electricity and running water, mobility et al are improved. In a world of finite resources and subjected to climate threat, the business models of the multinationals in multiple sectors show themselves as deadly: what about the continued investor support for the extraction of fossil fuels when we know we should leave 80% of the reserves of the planet in the ground in order to limit the increase in temperature across the planet by 2100 to two degrees? What about planned and built-in obsolescence by manufacturers - in the field of electrical equipment the lifetime of objects has been decreased from 30 to

50% in the space of 10 years? what about the average purchase per capita in the United States of 70 garments and 7 pairs of shoes a year so as to live according to the current and ever-changing fashion trends promoted as *what to wear to be cool* (Schor, 2010)? Yet offers proposed by companies and orchestrated by multinationals able to spend huge budgets for advertising and marketing to influence consumer choice, do not take into account environmental impacts and constraints. Advantages acquired by an ultra-rich minority behind negotiation barriers, are considerable. In this respect, we can speak of structural evils related to selfish behaviour which are endemic within the system.

D - The win-win concept as a dead end

Utilitarian thinking has had a strong impact on how Western capitalism understands itself: this is the idea that the success of all comes through the success of a few, or through the sacrifice of a legitimate minority - even a majority - in the name of a higher average benefit. This thesis admirably expressed by Mandeville in the 18th century (1723), and adopted by utilitarianism in its dominant version, has now resulted in the success of theories called "trickle down" by which inequality is necessary for growth (the enrichment of the richest allows for the poorest to be less poor).

Taken to its conclusion, and linked to the constraints of energy and nature, this logic is to legitimise the elimination of part of humanity either in the short or long-term, because it results in the improvement in the average wealth produced for all those who survive. This reasoning is doubly reprehensible: in terms of moral universalism, since it does not give the same moral value to each and every human life on the planet, and because it legitimises a deadly exploitation of planetary resources; this same view, as with all utilitarian thinking, runs the risk of leading to global collapse the cost of which will be borne by everyone.

Nevertheless, managerial thinking is permeated with this utilitarian reasoning equating the search for individual betterment to a contribution to the collective interest; it affects the way of thinking about the social contract, i.e. the way society makes possible the living together according to shared principles and aims. In fact, thinkers about the social contract reason from a closed political community and encourage a conception of this contract as “cooperation for mutual benefit”.

This conception does not take into account those who are not as free and rational as they are (especially the disabled), and those who have no voice, future generations, the people outside the political community, other forms of life and the entire cosmos (Nussbaum, 2006). It emphasises individual rights and freedoms in a way which may not sufficiently consider the good of the human community or even creation in its totality.

2 – SPRINGBOARDS

A - A transformation of our economic models

Innovative structures that are invented here and there (the circular economy, functional economy, communal economy) cannot afford to take ecological challenges seriously if they are not accompanied by an effective renunciation of unlimited exploitation of resources (beyond talk of “*green washing*”). In order for such a renunciation to be effective it needs to be imposed by law, forcing companies to abandon the goal of maximising short-term profit.

Consideration of common goods

A number of players in industry have said that the social and solidarity-based economy has been at the heart of their concerns and ecological constraint and their research activities are consistent with the challenges of ecological transition: promoting organic and fair trade, revising the supply chain in order to ensure social and environmental traceability, developing local agricultural and handicraft production, etc. These initiatives are reinforced by the emergence of business models allowing

capitalist enterprises of all sizes which enable a reduction in fossil fuel consumption and a greater control in the use of natural resources; for example, the circular economy which aims at multiplying virtuous circles encouraging the recovery and recycling of waste for further use, or an economy of functionality replacing that of buying goods (often used for only a short time and then disposed of) - by renting a service, or a collaborative economy which favours cooperation between those involved who were previously in competition with each other.

Communal management experiences studied by Elinor Ostrom (2010) demonstrate the ability of certain populations to organise the rules of living together that preserve the common good. These models show how far it is possible to go in the “greening” of an economy. Their efficiency enables a drastic reduction target of emissions of greenhouse gases and their strict management of minerals in process of depletion requires the fight against the rebound effect to be taken seriously - - this is when an increase in production and consumption goes parallel with improved energy efficiency. The challenge, therefore, remains the transition towards an ethos of greater sobriety linked to a non-productive economic model.

B - International cooperation orientated towards sustainable and equitable development

One of the blind spots of the discussions around the fight against climate change, in international fora, is the disconnection between greenhouse gas reduction goals and thinking about energy access as a key element in development for the poorest. The equation is simple: is it not those who most pollute and continue to pollute to achieve a consumerist lifestyle and the rich in general, north and south, who need to bear the brunt of enabling others to develop?

According to the analyses of Youba Sokona (2014), Malian engineer and member of the IPCC:

Development in Africa will be an illusion as the level of energy consumption will remain insufficient to meet the most basic requirements for the survival of the majority of its populations. It is remarkable that the energy consumption of 20 million New York State residents is higher than that of Africa as a whole. That is, nearly a billion people. Far be it from me to think that the level of the average energy consumption for Africans should reach the level of the residents of Manhattan.

In effect, the prospect of a situation in which 9 billion people have the level of energy consumption presently in OECD countries is quite simply not feasible in the actual conditions of our planet. Such a prospect would be likely to require an economic capacity 15 times higher than the current economy by 2050, and 40 times by the end of the century. This brings me to an important observation and recommendation. The conclusion is clear: no way can the world carrying capacity manage this; and the recommendation is not easy to accept: the energy consumption levels of developed countries must fall to make room for the necessary increase needed for those countries that need to develop to improve the vital conditions of existence of their populations.

This is to ensure that our common future is built on solid foundations, on ethics, equity, justice and solidarity, and avoiding the cannibalisation of the planet and its natural resources.

C - An education towards models other than that of consumerism

There are two courses for our democracies: the first is to rethink our political institutions so as to have a broader political representation: this would be in order to contribute to discussions in local and national public spaces, it would involve both citizens and experts, and deliver political

decisions sensitive to long term needs. The second course concerns the integration of environmental constraints in a way that would revise our habits and lifestyles and put foremost the quality of social bonds; this would mean educational measures that would need to be implemented in schools, colleges and universities, in continuing education and in every organisation. This work from top to bottom on our collective agencies invites us to use all our creative, symbolic and ethical resources - an actual, motivating and transforming utopia making another life possible at the heart of our fragile communal home.

D - Our spiritual resources at the service of the new collective agencies

The necessary changes outlined above will require a profound transformation in our ways of thinking about how we consume, how we move, and how we live our spare time as well as our professional choices; they are linked to a certain idea of what the good life is and how it can be combined with social and ecological improvement.³⁵ For this, we are called to mobilise spiritual resources, to return to the deep sources within us, ones that can quench our thirst and enlighten us in an alternative way. The Spanish theologian working in El Salvador, Jon Sobrino, S.J., spoke of the "structures of grace" being stronger than the structures of sin. This is probably the key issue from the Gospel in public debate and in our personal and community commitments: it awakens us to listen to the Spirit who is another source of power, a dynamism of deliverance which urges us towards life in all its fullness.

Bibliography

- S.M Gardiner, S. Caney, D. Jamieson and H. Shue, *Climate Ethics, Essential Readings*, Oxford UP, 2010.

³⁵ Cecile Renouard, *Ethique et Entreprise*, Editions de l'Atelier, 2013.

- G. Giraud and C. Renouard (ed.), *20 Propositions pour réformer le capitalisme*, Paris, Champs-Flammarion, 2012.
- Gorz, "Political ecology between expertocracy and restraint" *Actuel Marx*, 2nd half of 1992, No. 12, Reprinted in "Ecologica" Galileo, 2008.
- Keen S, *Debunking economics. The naked emperor of the social sciences*, Pluto Press Australia, 2001
- Mandeville, *Research on the nature of society*, General Books publication date: 2009 Original publication date: 1725 Original Publisher: Printed for J. Tonson
- Mr. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, nationality, species membership*, Harvard University Press, 2006.
- E. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Renouard C., *Ethique et entreprise*, Ivry, Editions de l'Atelier, 2015.
- J. Schor, *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*, 2010.
- H. Shue, "subsistence emissions and luxury emissions" ("Subsistence Emissions and luxury emissions", *Law and Policy*, 15 (1), 1993, p.51-59) in Bourg D. and A. Fragnière (dir .) *The ecological thinking. An anthology*, Paris, PUF, 2014, p.773-784.
- Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776 London Methuen & Co Ltd.
- Sokona Y., September 12, 2014, speech at the conference "Achieving social justice in the era of the energy transition?" Centre Sèvres, Paris.
- S. Strange, *The retreat of the state. The distribution of power in the world economy*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

2.c. An endangered planet: different case studies

2.c.1 BIODIVERSITY IN DANGER: The case of the Kauswagan coal power plantel

Irene Cecile Torres, r.a.

As you begin to read this article, I would like to engage your senses. IMAGINE BIODIVERSITY. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? Imagine the taste. If you touch it, how is it like?

Houghton Mifflin defines biodiversity as the variability among living organisms on the earth, including the variability within and between species and within and between ecosystems.

Look at these images:



www.visithyd.com



www.eugenegoesthailand.com



www.nhm.ac.uk

Biodiversity describes the nature of everything in this created world. Uniqueness, variety, and diversity converge in the species of plants, animals, microorganisms, and in the different ecosystems on the planet.

In her article, “Why Is Biodiversity Important? Who Cares?” (*Global Issues*, 19 Jan. 2014) Anup Shah shares that biodiversity boosts ecosystem productivity where each species, no matter how small, all have an important role to play. She writes that biodiversity provides a number of free natural services for everyone, like ecosystem services (such as, protection of water resources, nutrient storage and recycling, contribution to climate stability, etc.); biological resources (such as food, medicinal resources, wood products, etc.); and social benefits (such as recreation and tourism, cultural values, etc).

Ecological balance and biodiversity are crucial for all of earth. All sources of life and the interrelatedness, interconnectedness, and interdependence of these are vital.

From the industrial revolution up to the present day technology and lifestyle, the use of the sources of life is faster than its replenishment. We have applied the mindset of extraction and consumption and call it development and progress. Global warming and climate change are the consequences of our actions and behaviors.

1. **Biodiversity** in danger worldwide. National Geographic Channel and Jacaranda 94.2 posted a list of ten (10) places on earth with the most biodiversity that are most threatened.

#1: Atlantic Forest – Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina

Originally this biodiversity hotspot extended over 1.2 million km², but sugar and coffee plantations have ravaged the forest, leaving less than 0.1 million km². The hotspot is home to 8 000 endemic plant species and almost 950 birds. The Black-faced Lion Tamarin is just one of the 25 critically endangered species in the forest.

#2: Cape Floral Region – South Africa

Located in the Western Cape, this hotspot has the world's highest concentration of different plant species per square kilometer – even higher than the Amazon. Of the 9 000 different plant species, about 6 210 are endemic, and 1 435 have been identified as threatened. The Cape Floral Region is also home to the geometric tortoise and the Cape sugar-bird.

#3: Cerrado – Brazil

The Cerrado is the largest woodland savannah in South America, supporting 4 400 endemic plant species and 10 threatened endemic bird species. The giant anteater, giant armadillo and jaguar are amongst the larger mammals found in this hotspot. The Cerrado has shrunk in size from over 2 million km² to less than 450 000 km² due to the clearing of land for grazing and growing crops for animal feed.

#4: Coastal Forests – Eastern Africa

This hotspot consists of a long, narrow corridor along the eastern coast of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. It is home to the Tana River red colobus and the Tana River mangabey, two critically endangered primates. The coastal forests are threatened by rampant agricultural expansion.

#5: Himalaya – Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China

The Himalaya hotspot extends over 185 427 km² of mountains, alpine meadows, alluvial grasslands and subtropical broadleaf forests. Though the area originally was almost four times larger, significant populations of tigers, wild water buffalo, elephants and vultures still survive here.

#6: Indo-Burma – Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, India, China

Located in tropical Asia, this hotspot is the site of 7 000 endemic plant species, as well as many threatened endemic birds (10 species), mammals (25 species) and amphibians (35 species). Over 2.2 million km² of the

original habitat has already been lost. Yet new species are still being discovered today, such as the large-antlered muntjac and the Annamite striped rabbit. Indo-Burma also hosts an incredible array of freshwater turtle species

#7: Madrean Pine-Oak Woodlands, Mexico

This hotspot is a mountainous area that originally extended 461 265 km² across Mexico and part of southern USA. Excessive logging has seen the woodlands diminish to a fifth of their size. Almost 4 000 endemic plant species can be found here, and the hotspot is famous for the millions of monarch butterflies that migrate through the region.

#8: Mesoamerica – Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama

The Mesoamerican forests are both sub-tropical and tropical ecosystems known for spectacular numbers of endemic species of birds, amphibians and mammals, as well as an astonishing 17 000 plant species. The forests are the native home of the quetzal and howler monkey. Originally extending over 1 million km², the hotspot has fallen to about 226 000 km² in size.

#9: Polynesia-Micronesia, Southern Pacific Ocean

Covering an area the size of Switzerland, the Polynesia-Micronesia hotspot includes coral atolls, coastal wetlands, tropical rainforests and savannas. It is described by Conservation International as “the epicentre of the current global extinction crisis”, with 25 bird species extinct in 200 years due to overhunting and invasive species, and a further 90 endemic bird species threatened.

#10: Philippines, Pacific Ocean

One of the places richest in biodiversity is the Philippines hotspot, which includes over 7 100 islands in the Pacific. The hotspot is

home to 6 000 endemic plant species and a multitude of bird species, such as the Cebu flowerpecker and the Philippine eagle.

Por: Natalie Mayer

Our General Chapter Documents 2012 invite us to respond to concerns about ecology and migration as our way of loving our times. The goal is to develop a culture of peace, justice, care of creation, and solidarity in all that we do. To commit ourselves to ecological and social justice is a great challenge.

2 - The case of the Kauswagan Coal Power Plant

Our community in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, Philippines is home to Muslims and Christians. Since the foundation of the community in 1980 the Sisters and the people have experienced several violent events. Thus, the mission is to build a Peace Sanctuary. This year, a major concern is not only about building peace among humans, but the challenge of Ecological Peace.

In Barangay Libertad and Barangay Tacub, Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, a 4 x 135MW NET Kauswagan Power Project is being undertaken by GN Power Ltd. Co. The Assumption Sisters in Mindanao, other religious congregations, the school community of St. Vincent's Academy, the parish priest and parishioners have had sessions and meetings about the Coal Power Plant that will be constructed. The most recent was January 24, 2015, when the official from the Mayor's Office presented about the project. Economic and political systems are really so intertwined with JPCCS issues. How can you "fight" for the protection of biodiversity in the coastal area where the plant will be constructed if:

- The land has been converted into an industrial zone.
- The promise is to have an increase in tax revenues from Php. 5,000,000.00 per year to an additional of Php. 100,000,000.00.

- Housing for the residents in the area was provided where they will not be flooded during rainy seasons.
- Employment possibilities for the people will be provided.
- Other privileges and benefits will be given to the local government?

The struggle to respond to concrete present economic needs versus the ecological destruction that will impact the present and the generations to come is indeed a hard battle. People have diverse ways of reading situations and realities. Definitions of the “good life” are influenced by one’s perspectives and values.

The local government officer also shared about the compliance of the company with respect to environmental requirements. These were granted approval by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. He also assured us about the monitoring that the local government will do.

It is important to note that there is no such thing as clean coal. I hope that the environmental impacts of climate change, toxic emissions, acid rain, and the impacts on people’s health of Coal-fired Power Plant will outweigh the “promise” of economic gains for the people of Lanao del Norte.

What if the ecosystems in the area where the coal power plant will be constructed were consulted? Imagine what their decision will be.

A few months ago, I reflected about life near the sea (Kauswagan), and life on the mountains (Kibangay, Lantapan, Bukidnon). I observed that the people near the sea have more food to eat day by day compared with the people on the mountains. Each day, the sea gives fish, shells, and other food from the waters, while on the mountain, it takes time to harvest what you planted.

I wonder how it will be 5, 10, 15, 20.... years after the operation of the Coal-Fired Power Plant?

I wonder if the economy derived from the sea that feeds the people day by day is recognized as the most valuable revenue that is distributed and shared with the people of Lanao del Norte.

Respect for life and recognition of all varieties of life should be considered in any economic and political decisions we make. We are responsible for the consequences of our actions today to those who will come after us. May people all over the world listen to diverse perspectives, interconnect variety, and flow with life and biodiversity.

“Let us not be afraid when we are different. Let us be watchful when we become indifferent to differences.” Let us continue to dialogue for justice, peace, care for creation, and solidarity.

2.c.2 Desertification: the African case

Michel Nyamba

The definition of desertification, as designated internationally and first outlined in chapter 12 of Agenda 21 (adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio (1992)), then in Article 1 of the UN convention, is as follows:

“The term ‘desertification’ means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas as a result of various factors, among them climatic variation and human activity”.

In 2010, more than 2 billion people live in deserts and drylands, most of them in developing countries.

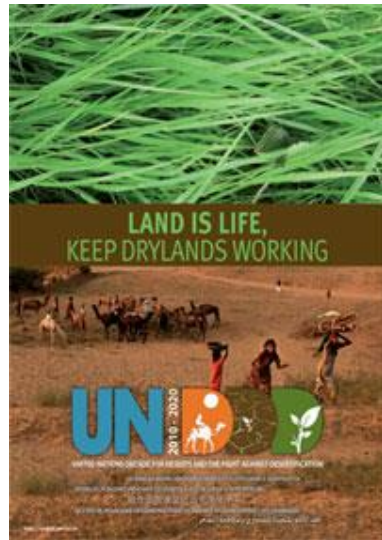
1. THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

This phenomenon affects every continent. We are currently witnessing the desertification of a quarter of the land worldwide. 12 million hectares (almost 30 million acres) of land, an area equivalent to the country of Benin, are lost each year. The land lost could produce 20 million tonnes of

cereals annually. US \$42 billion of revenue are lost each year as a result of desertification and land degradation.³⁶

Desertification and poverty

Modern man's focus is firmly on the environment in terms of socio-economic structure. Nowadays desertification is seen to be one of the principal causes of human malaise in their environment. Even though it is a natural phenomenon, humanity's share of responsibility for desertification is undeniable. Indeed, it is true that our way of life since the era of technical and scientific advances is not conducive to support of our ecosystem. All over the world, humanity is preoccupied by desertification because our very existence depends on it, short and long term.



In Brazil, for example, the production of coffee has dropped around 30% in the major producing region, with the consequent economic difficulties for producers, as can be imagined. In sub-Saharan Africa, the daily life of the inhabitants of several countries such as Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, is punctuated with the results of desertification.

In these countries, despite developments in agriculture, non-timber forest products (wild fruits, honey, mushrooms, edible leaves, gum Arabic...) have always played an important part in the economy.

Migration forced by desertification

³⁶ Source : UNDDD 2010-2020: Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

Internal migration happens in almost all African countries, and the effects of desertification are well known. Demographic pressure, sometimes unexpected, in our East African countries, is often due to the forced migration of populations adversely affected by desertification in their region of origin and is certainly not supportive of the ecosystem.

Various conflicts have arisen between indigenous populations and migrants, especially when the latter find themselves, as animal farmers, in dispute over the indigenous people's agricultural land. In our countries, several situations arise every year between migrant herdsman and indigenous agriculturists. If such a situation can arise within a country, what can we do about international migration, because unfortunately people, under great duress, are forced to cross national borders to settle in a foreign country in search of better living conditions?

2. REFORESTATION, A LOCAL AND A GLOBAL ISSUE

Measures to maintain useful species are an integral part of forest management from now on, even if the desert is increasing in scale annually. Despite over-development, which is grabbing large areas of land, and its corollary of forest clearance, the people are clearly aware of the pressing need to protect their environment. That is the reason for the numerous reforestation campaigns, the maintenance of village copses, and the outright ban on cutting particular plant species identified as totems by one village clan or another. The devastating consequences of desertification are still visible, and the people often suffer the effects imposed on them with a kind of fatalism.

Thanks to the great cultural diversity that we see in the world, every people has its own particular relationship with its environment which is engaged in multiple ways (farming operations, collection of woody species for various purposes...) and the appropriate methods to act against deforestation are varied. Thus, in Burkina Faso, 'low tech' techniques (*simple, cheap, produced in the rural area*) have been implemented in the battle against desertification.

This relies on three basic elements:

- *Cordons pierreux* – stone barriers. These low stone walls run for thousands of kilometres, stopping violent floods in rainy periods and retaining the water to form ponds. This deposits silt and nutrients are then returned into the soil. They were first introduced in the 1970s.
- *Demi-Lunes* – half-moons. Networks of semi-circular dips (4 metres in diameter) in which seeds are sowed, and which retain the rain.
- *Zais* - traditional tree-planting pits. These are holes (20cm deep) which the farmer fills with earth and compost made up of straw, ashes, animal droppings and water. These holes absorb humidity in the event of water run-off and encourage tree growth.

These techniques have had a significant impact. According to the French daily paper *Libération* on September 16th, 2008: ³⁷ “These simple techniques have enabled the rehabilitation of around 10% of the cultivated land in Burkina Faso, more than 300,000 hectares, according to INERA” (Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research).

The need for stronger international coordination

The realisation that desertification is a long-term threat to humanity’s very existence is evident, as witnessed by the multiple public awareness campaigns, implemented by governments as well as various international environmental organisations. Unfortunately, all of that is still not enough. It is becoming more and more imperative that the many different players in the fight against this scourge work together in synergy. It is still possible to save what is vital to our worldwide community, despite the immeasurable damage already done. We owe this to the Master of

³⁷ Source <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Désertification>

Creation, who graciously gave us this environment, and to ourselves, because of what we need to achieve in our communities, but most of all to the many future generations who just need to live in a healthy place!

Bibliography

- Atlas du Burkina, Jeune Afrique 2005 edition
- Report from the InterState Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) presented on Burkina Faso television
- UNDDD 2010-2020: Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification
http://www.un.org/fr/events/desertification_decade/value.shtml
- Report of the inter-State committee on the struggle against desertification in the Sahel (presented on Burkina Faso television)
UNDDD 2010-2020 : the United Nations decade for deserts and the struggle against desertification,
http://www.un.org/fr/events/desertification_decade/value.shtml

2. c.3 Waste: Towards a circular economy?

Laure Homberg, r. a.

What goes out in our dustbins, from our homes, businesses, factories, is no longer considered useful to us as consumers or producers. Yet a great deal of this 'waste' can be viewed in fact as resources which, if they are sorted and recycled, can help reduce the amount of raw materials, such as metals, oil, or wood, used in the manufacture of plastics or paper and cardboard, or even save the energy to process these products and thus limit the amount of greenhouse gas produced. In short, reducing our waste has a direct impact on sustainable development, in many different ways.

1. HOW MUCH WASTE DO WE PRODUCE?

In order to deal with waste better, our companies undertake to sort and recycle it. There are two major categories that co-exist; waste resulting from economic activity (building, service industry, manufacturing, and treatment of waste by sanitation and pollution control) and household and similar waste (DMA) which includes domestic but also small business and public sector scrap.

In France, the second category is estimated at an average 452 kilos per year per person, between our dustbins (household rubbish) and tip deliveries. Adding the two main categories (DMA and economic activity waste) together, it comes to 5.5 tonnes (1 tonne =1,000 kg) per year per person.³⁸ As a comparison, here are some statistics.³⁹

Países	Bolivia	Ivory Coast	Spain	Japan	Kenya	Madagascar	USA
DMA/ an/hab	179 kg	176 Kg	464 kg	365 kg	110 kg	127 kg	734 kg

2. WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS WASTE?

There are several alternatives. In the worst case, it is not collected and ends up 'in the wild' where it pollutes soil and water and poisons flora, fauna and then the humans at the top of the food chain.

Some of it is washed away in running water into the seas and oceans at a rate of dozens of tonnes per second. Pulled along by surface marine currents, it accumulates across wide areas, oceanic gyres, where it forms a

³⁸ <http://ademe-et-vous.ademe.fr/le-magazine-n-80-dossier-contexte> and <http://www.ademe.fr/chiffres-cles-dechets-edition-2014>

³⁹ Statistics from the website <http://www.atlas.d-waste.com/>

virtual 7th continent⁴⁰ of plastic debris.⁴¹ Very slowly it fragments, breaks down and enters into the marine ecosystem. It can also forms islets that foster the growth of bacteria and microbes with the ability to spread rapidly.

Some countries do not have the necessary infrastructure (roads, recycling centres, reprocessing plants...) to collect the waste that is produced nationally.

When waste (DMA) is collected, if it is sorted and recycled, it has a value and can be valorised - both the materials (recycling and recuperation of materials: metal, wood, cardboard, composting, making solid recovered fuel (SRF), in-fill) and the energy produced (incineration of non-dangerous waste used for district heating, for example). In France 31% of waste from public collection services is not currently valorised (30% is stored, i.e. buried in old quarries or accumulated in mounds on which trees are planted, and 1% is incinerated with no energy recovery). It is as if we emptied our dustbins into a hole one day out of three... Incinerators are not the answer: even if they allow the reduction of volume of waste, combustion produces amongst other things carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases, and other gases and fumes that must be filtered since they are toxic, as well as ashes, which must also be monitored.

This first category of waste is linked to our pattern of consumption of material goods. Our electrical needs are also the source of gas and solid discharges which have both a current and immediate impact, causing an immediate rise in the rates of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane) as well as a lasting presence, on a very long timescale (radioactive waste).

⁴⁰ See website <http://www.septiemecontinent.com/> 'Plastic continents' exist in the five great ocean basins. For example, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the North Pacific, with a surface area estimated to be six times that of France. The heaviest plastics sink to the ocean bed. Laboratory tests estimate the degradation rates as 1 to 5 years for a nylon thread, 1 to 20 years for a thin plastic wrapper, 450 years or more for a plastic bottle...

⁴¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/s/dwmuwuw30xjederd/journal.pone.0111913-global%20estimation.pdf> in English

3. NUCLEAR WASTE - THE HIDDEN WASTE OUR ELECTRICITY HABIT PRODUCES

From country to country, electrical energy is produced to some degree by nuclear plants⁴² which convert radioactive energy from enriched uranium fuel rods. Although some of the spent fuel undergoes 'reprocessing' after its time in the reactor, the recycling rate is only 3.9%. The rest amounts to radioactive waste, which we do not know how to deal with apart from burying it in a terrain that is stable and impermeable, in storage areas that have to be 500 metres deep for the most noxious waste.

Not all the chemical elements contained in this waste are equally dangerous. Those which are medium or high-level⁴³ have a life span ranging from 30 years to several thousand years. A radioactive sample becomes harmless after a period equal to 20 times its lifespan, which would be $20 \times 432 = 864$ years for americium 241, or 480,000 years for plutonium 239, components of used MOX (Mixed Oxide) fuel⁴⁴. If we compare the lengths of time this toxicity lasts, americium buried in the 12th century would finally be innocuous, but as for the plutonium 239, it would have to have been buried by Tautavel Man⁴⁵, who had not yet discovered fire... And science still does not know how to prevent radioactivity.

⁴² In Europe, 50% of electrical energy produced is of nuclear origin. In France it is 80%

⁴³ The activity of a radioactive element is expressed by the number of radioactive nuclei to decay per second, i.e. the quantity of particles emitted. These particles have mutagenic effects, which can cause cancers and sterility in human beings who are exposed to them

⁴⁴ MOX is the combustible fuel created by the reprocessing of uranium fuel rods used in reactors, used at a level of 30-50% in certain reactors. 'In terms of waste, MOX emits more radioactivity, produces more different isotopes and heat, and its thermal conductivity deteriorates more and more of its 'combustion' time in the reactor than the classic fuel.

Cooling used MOX takes about 10 times longer (50 years instead of 5 to 8 years)

If it was wanted to bury these used fuels, the cooling period necessary would be 60 to 100 years'

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combustible_MOX

⁴⁵ Tautavel Man appeared 450,000 years ago. Neanderthal Man and Homo Sapiens only appeared 1,000 years ago.

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/tautavel/fr/chrono.htm>

It must be appreciated that even if the production of nuclear generated electricity leaves a smaller carbon footprint on the environment, it also produces other dangerous and very long term waste.

4. WHAT GOOD PRACTICES ARE THERE?

This last aspect of waste is directly related to our electrical use - putting out the lights in a room, turning off equipment rather than leaving it on standby, choosing to buy energy efficient equipment with a class A energy rating, are gestures of solidarity, of the 'taking care' of the planet today and for future generations.

What is more, if we do not want to continue burying and stockpiling so much detritus, we have to adopt another way of life, and generate less waste, without expecting the law or science and technology to come up with all the answers.

For example, to reduce domestic waste, which is the most immediate way we can help, good practices are widely applicable. Recycling of paper, some food containers, repairing rather than buying new things, buying equipment, materials, clothes (habits) that are more long-lasting and repairable, composting food waste, sorting everything that goes out of our homes – all of this will facilitate the circular economy.

The idea of the circular economy is to take out as little, or use as few resources, as possible thanks to eco-design (the way the product is manufactured which limits its ecological footprint and it is easily repaired, dismantled, recycled, at the lowest environmental cost), by using the product for the longest possible time (which means promoting leasing, renting or borrowing rather than buying), re-using things, recycling final waste. This type of economy reduces production activity but creates local services (repair, rental, second-hand sales, sorting and collecting, recycling). Unfortunately, development, such as the widespread use of

throwaway products, and the reduced quality of furniture or clothes, makes recycling them more complicated.

The consumer habits currently preponderant in some countries, particularly European ones, result in a very significant environmental footprint. Ignoring the multiple values of an object, or a material, leads us to think of it as waste when it could still have a 'second life'; it could be integrated in a new economic chain, taking account of the limited resources which humanity must manage, protecting the ecosystem which is essential for life, supporting local businesses which is beneficial for employment and social cohesion.

In emerging countries, waste management is carried out while taking account of the people who live on it, the 'rag pickers'. Society will flourish from this new respect for their brothers and sisters, and for everything that is given to them, no longer sustaining this 'waste culture' which allows us to throw away, or exclude anything that is no longer considered useful, people or things...⁴⁶ Let us be mindful, and open our eyes to the value of everyone around us!



“We’re not just simple dustmen.’ ‘We’re the first links in a new energy chain.’

⁴⁶ Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* n°53

2. c.4. Exploitation of Natural Resources: the Case of Oil in Nigeria

Cecile Renouard, r.a. y Hervé Lado

INTRODUCTION: OIL OR SOCIAL LINK?

THE RESOURCE CURSE IN NIGERIA

Oil, blessing or curse? The case of Nigeria illustrates the challenges faced by countries rich in natural resources, in a context of globalized economies, to achieve sustainable development. The country is the fifth largest exporter of crude oil in 2010, yet life expectancy at birth is 52 years, 50% of women and 28% of men are literate and 70% of the population lives below the poverty line.⁴⁷

The Nigerian history shows the link between socio-economic issues and local and global ecological issues: oil production was implemented by the economic, financial and political elites of Western multi-nationals and the Nigerian state. The denial of people's local rights was accompanied by an abandonment of agricultural resources and an unparalleled level of pollution across the planet.

Oil production has not been a source of development for the vast part of the population and has created abysmal inequalities within the country, contributing to a sharp deterioration of the social fabric. In addition, Climate expert estimates maintain that we should extract only a fifth of global fossil reserves to avoid causing an increase in temperature of over two degrees by the end of the century. With this dual finding, one might infer that it would be better, especially for Nigeria as indeed for the rest of the world, that the country ceases to use all its reserves. This is also the

⁴⁷ Source: CIA World Factbook, accessed 24 December 2014.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

proposal made by the NGO Friends of the Earth (FoE) in 2009.⁴⁸ However, Nigeria holds 2.2% of global crude oil reserves and 2.7% of gas reserves.⁴⁹ Given the economic interests and complex power relations involved, what are the ways of minimising damage and contributing to the development of the inhabitants, both for today and tomorrow?

1. NIGERIAN CONTEXT

The country was formed by progressive consolidation of micro-nations and independent territories under British colonial rule (1861 to 1960) until the establishment of Nigeria in 1914. Independence took place on 1 January 1960 following several elections. As an independent country, Nigeria has three main regions: the north mainly populated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group (Muslims), the west with the Yoruba (Christian and Muslim) and east with the Igbo, Ijaw and many other ethnic groups (predominantly Christian). Today, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has 36 Federal states. The Niger Delta is the oil region in the south, composed of 9 states. Out of all African countries, Nigeria has the largest population (177 million in 2014). A first coup took place in 1966, followed by the Biafra Civil War from 1967 to 1970 (which caused 2 million deaths) and a dozen other coups, up until 1999 with the coming to power of Olusegun Obasanjo who initiated the democratic era.

From agriculture to oil

Agriculture represented 56% of GDP between 1945 and 1960 and includes three agricultural products (palm oil, groundnut and cotton) with 60% of exports. The launch of oil production by Shell took place in 1958. Shell enabled oil production to increase from 46 000 barrels per day in 1961 to 600,000 barrels per day in 1967, an increase of 13 times in six years. Oil

⁴⁸ http://www.oilwatch.org/doc/paises/nigeria/building_a_post_petroleum_nigeria.pdf, accessed December 24, 2014.

⁴⁹ according to 2013 figures from the "BP Statistical review 2014" (Statistical Analysis published by the company BP).

revenues were up more than 76% on average per year between 1958 and 1974.

2. DAMAGE CAUSED BY OIL ACTIVITY

Damages caused by oil exploitation are of different natures:

An environmental disaster

The massive and continuous flaring of gas on oil facilities is a huge source of pollution: 75% of the gas that comes out during the oil extraction is "flared" (burned) in the open air. The volume of gas burned in Nigeria has remained constant in the 1990s, around 17 billion m³ per year, representing up to 1/6th of the world total. Onshore oil spills and offshore oil spills are numerous, and are rarely challenged by the state and businesses, unlike the revolt by the local population who are most affected (e.g., the Ogoni People) in the late 1980s.

An economic plan: the 'resource curse' or Dutch disease

We are witnessing a destruction of business, agricultural and industrial jobs because of the Dutch disease (hypertrophy or increase in business related to the oil sector), and the establishment of pensions for workers who are employed for weeding and guarding oil installations.

There continues to be a strong wage inequality between employees of oil companies and employees of their subcontractors on the one hand, and on the other, the oil sector and other sectors. Oil facilities are powerful fortresses where the standard of living is unusually high. A young expatriate engineer can earn up to 20 000 USD per month. Few jobs are created locally by the oil industry: oil companies directly employ 30,000 people because business is highly capitalized and technology-intensive.

Social as pathologies

Criminal networks thrive from oil trafficking. There are massive movements of oil on oil pipelines. Client demand and corruption between oil companies and political elites, both economic and traditional are endemic evils. Local elites are the main contractors of oil companies and priority is placed on members of their client-led networks where there are many job opportunities. The diversion of public funds from oil by ultra-corrupt governments is huge and impossible to challenge at the local level.

Many young girls engage in sex from an early age resulting in unwanted pregnancies. Prostitution of girls is accompanied by less education as their time spent servicing clients detracts from school attendance and homework. Disaffected youth are involved in sectarian activities such as 'cult groups'. These groups and competing fraternities in which young people pledge allegiance to their mentors and are promised protection and other social benefits enable their mentors to mobilise them for criminal activities. They collect rent and commit street crimes yet are sponsored by the elite, economic, political and traditional community leaders.

Deteriorating social fabric

Surveys conducted between 2004 and 2013 in villages in the Niger Delta affected by the oil industry indicate a deterioration of relations not only between areas benefiting from the oil extraction and other areas (abandoned by the government) but also within families and villages. The influence of oil and lack of trust created by the corrupt processes by which it is extracted and exported show that those villages have declined considerably in the ways in which they relate to each other both socially and economically. In general, research shows a deterioration of interpersonal skills, ethical standards and critical analysis⁵⁰, which is

⁵⁰ Qualitative and quantitative research conducted between 2004 and 2013 within the program "CODEV- Enterprise and Development" (ESSEC Business School, France) by Cécile

extremely concerning in a country where half the population is under 18 and whose population could reach 400 million by 2045.

3. SOME RECENT ADVANCES

Among recent developments, we note the recognition - because of the role of international civil society - by oil companies (Shell in particular⁵¹) of their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the situation of poverty of the people of the Niger Delta.

However, some regulations are progressing: Nigeria has ratified the EITI (Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative) through which countries and signatory companies agree to report income received or paid. Two laws and guidelines in the US (Dodd-Frank, 2010) and Europe are forcing American and European listed extractive companies to report their payments for each country producing oil. Since 2011, the social and environmental perspective of Ruggie Principles - the name of the Special Rapporteur to the UN Secretary General on the issue of "business and human rights - sets out explicitly the duty of companies to respect human rights within their sphere of influence. The principles of the OECD Director for Multi-nationals as well as the new definition by the European Union of social responsibility of enterprises therefore strengthen the 'duty of care' that parent companies must abide by in respect of subsidiaries and

Renouard, Gaël Giraud and Hervé Lado, in collaboration with researchers of Nigerians, Togolese and French. Hervé Lado and Cecile Renouard, "CSR and social justice: the case of multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta," *Africa Development*, 2012, 37 (2), 167-194. "CSR and Inequality in the Niger Delta", *Corporate Governance*, Vol.12, p.472-484. Gaël Giraud and Cécile Renouard, "Measuring the contribution to local development companies: the case of oil in Nigeria," *French Management Review*, 2010, Vol 36, No. 208-209, p.101-115. Cecile Renouard, "Multinationals and local development: the myth of win-win political irresponsibility. The case of oil companies in Nigeria," *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 2015, forthcoming.

⁵¹ Shell has been accused of human rights abuses in the region, following the hanging by the General Abacha's regime of Ken Saro Wiwa, the Ogoni activist, along with other peace activists. The lawsuit brought by the Ogoni plaintiffs in 2009 concluded with an agreement from Shell to pay \$ 15.5 million in compensation.

subcontractors internationally. A law on due diligence is being adopted in France (2015).

Ultimately, the oil exported from Nigeria is of very good quality and requires little refining; it is therefore likely that these reserves will be exploited in the years and decades to come. Environmental degradation will nevertheless exacerbate the social issues already present and will continue to perpetuate and aggravate existing internal conflicts. The question is whether all relevant stakeholders (governments, the private sector, and local populations) can and will seek to promote other models of living together, whose solidarity will be linked to the fight against the huge inequalities that currently exist. The example of Nigeria shows how the environmental issue is primarily a social issue.

2. d Ethical and political challenges

Anastasio Gallegos

“From my office window I could see part of the mountain burning and how the flames spread quickly. Now, two months later, when the rainy season has started, there’s not a trace of the fire ; the mountain is green again”⁵².

I have to start by accepting that the issue of ecology is not one I face in my everyday life. This is perhaps because I live in a tropical country in which nature is so strong, so exuberant, that traces of disasters disappear quickly. On the other hand... In Ecuador:

⁵² <http://www.revistalideres.ec/lideres/industria-nacional-camaron-refloto-fuerza.html>

The prawn industry has destroyed 210,000 hectares of mangroves in the deltas of various rivers. It provides 180,000 jobs and generates US\$1,620 million in export earnings.

There are 240,333 hectares of African palm. Deforestation is required to sow it. It creates 1.153,584 days of work a year. In the world as a whole the largest producers of African palm are Indonesia (27 million tonnes on 2,076 million hectares), Malaysia (18 million tonnes on 1,385 million hectares) and Thailand (16 million tonnes on 1.230 million hectares). Almost all the production is bought by China and India.

These are just two examples of how nature is destroyed in the quest “to create new sources of wealth”. Let’s not even talk about oil, timber, the gold, diamond, emerald, coltan, copper and all the other mines. Nor will we mention the vast areas devoted to sowing soya and sugar cane and the cutting down of trees in search of tropical hardwoods.

GLOBAL TENDENCIES

This situation creates dilemmas that are used by the dominant thinking to sow confusion.

On the one hand, we can take the view that **nature exists to be exploited** so that it can provide food, “job opportunities” or “the hard currency our country needs”. This theory or common sense has been maintained by appeals to the biblical principle of “subdue the earth” and of the human being as the “centre and lord of creation”.

On the other hand, **nature includes everything**: human beings and beings that are not human, but still beings. On this view the human being is neither the ‘lord of creation’ nor its “centre”. In other words, the great majority of people have always thought that nature should be at the service of human beings, believing that it is, or was, an inexhaustible source of resources. For the economic system, what is today called ‘nature’ is no more than a set of *resources*: water, timber, minerals,

hydrocarbons, air, etc., belonging to whoever first took possession of them by invention, discovery or knowledge.

Paul Samuelson defined economics as “the study of how men and society choose, with or without the use of money, to employ scarce productive resource which could have alternative uses, to produce various commodities over time and distribute them for consumption, now and in the future among various people and groups of society.” In other words, the concept of “scarcity” starts to become part of theories.

In our time, the time of the triumph of neoliberal ideas in economics and neoconservative ideas in culture, there is talk of a crisis of values. The neoconservatives bemoan the loss of traditional values such as the family, honesty, responsibility. At the same time the neoliberals talk about the values of the techno-economic world: competitiveness, profit, individualism, instrumentation, anything goes, excellence, etc.

We find a real clash between one set of attitudes and another. For techno-economics, speeding up the creation of wealth is so important that it would be suicide to “stop the machine”. This theory takes the principle of exploiting natural resources to an extreme. Suddenly we find that resources are limited, that the planet, according to all the simulations, has “run dry”. But the consequences of technicist thought are much greater, because we find that the values of the techno-economic world have filtered down into culture.

Consequently, if everything has a “best by” date incorporated into it, why shouldn’t love, family and friendships be only a click away? I go ahead and delete from my Facebook account the people I don’t want to be my friends with any more. “The more I look at the numbers on my computer screen, the more blurred people become,” said a Spanish comedian in one of his sketches.

According to Zygmunt Bauman, human beings are no longer producers but consumers. As good consumers they can't be, or even get near to being, permanently satisfied, because the system would stop. They are doomed to be permanently dissatisfied.

RENEWING THE NATURAL CONTRACT WITH THE EARTH

Until the present, the Western white man's dream, universalised by globalisation, was to dominate the Earth and subdue all other creatures in order to obtain profit without limit. Four centuries later, this dream has turned into a nightmare. As never before, the apocalypse may be provoked by our own actions, wrote the great historian Arnold Toynbee shortly before his death.

This means that we face the urgent task of rebuilding our humanity and our civilisation by means of different sort of relationship with the Earth to make it sustainable, that is, to ensure the continuation of the conditions for the maintenance and reproduction of life on the planet. This will only occur if we renew the natural pact with the Earth and realise that all living creatures, which all have the same basic genetic code, form the great community of life. All of them have an intrinsic value and therefore have rights.

Any contract is based on reciprocity, exchange and the recognition of the rights of each of the parties. From the Earth we receive everything, life and the means of life. Correspondingly, in terms of the natural contract, we have a duty of gratitude, to give back and to care for it so that it maintains its vital force in order to do what it has always done for us. But we broke this contract long ago.

Despite all the breaches of the natural contract, Mother Earth is still sending us positive signals. Despite global warming, the erosion of biodiversity, the sun still keeps coming out, the Brazilian song-thrush sings every morning, the flowers smile at passers-by, the humming birds still

hover over the lily flowers, children keep being born and confirming to us that God still believes in humanity and that it has a future.

Renewing the natural contract implies recovering the vision and values represented in the speech Chief Seattle of the Duwamish people made before Isaac Stevens, the governor of Washington territory, in 1856:

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know.

All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself...

On 22 April 2009, after long and difficult negotiations, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the idea that the Earth is Mother. This declaration is full of significance. Earth as soil or ground can be moved around, used, bought and sold. Earth as Mother cannot be sold or bought, but only loved, respected and cared for in the same way as we treat our own mothers. This attitude would reaffirm the natural contract that is needed to give sustainability to our planet, because it re-establishes the relationship of mutuality.

The President of Bolivia, the indigenous Aymara Evo Morales Ayma, never ceases to insist that the 21st century will be the century of the rights of Mother Earth, of nature and all living creatures. In his speech at the UN on 22 April 2009 he summarised some of the rights of Mother Earth:

- The right of Mother Earth's bio-capacity to regeneration.
- The right to life of all living creatures, especially those threatened with extinction.
- The right to a pure life, since Mother Earth has the right to a life free from contamination and pollution.
- The right of all citizens to live well.

- The right to harmony and balance with all things.
- The right to the connection of the All of which we form part.

This vision, according to Leonardo Boff, “enables us to renew the natural contract with the Earth, which, together with the social contract between citizens, will have the effect of strengthening the sustainability of the planet.”

NEW ETHICS FOR A NEW AGE

In some places on Earth, the limit of 400 ppm (parts per million) of CO₂ in the atmosphere has been breached, which may lead to socio-environmental disasters on a grand scale. If we do not take firm action, the future may be bleak. And it is not true that nothing else can be done. If we cannot stop the process, we can at least reduce its speed. We can and must adapt to the changes and organise to mitigate the damaging effects. Now we must live in a radical way by the four Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle, restock. We need moral guidance that will help us to bring our actions into a pattern that will avoid the present crisis. In this dramatic situation, how can we find a basis for a minimally coherent ethical language valid for everyone?

Until now systems of ethics and morality were based on regional cultures. Today, in the planetary phase of the human species, we must re-establish ethics on the basis of something that is common to all and which we can all understand and implement. If we look to the past, we can identify two sources that have provided, and still provide, ethical and moral guidance for societies down to today, religion and reason.

Religion

Religions continue to be the preferred repositories of value for most of humanity. They come from and encounter with the Supreme Value, the Supreme Good. From this experience come the values of veneration, respect, love, solidarity, compassion and forgiveness. Many thinkers recognise that religion, more than economics or politics, is the central

force that moves people and can even bring them to sacrifice their lives (Huntington). Others go so far as to suggest religions as the most realistic and effective base for the construction of a global ethics for world politics and economics (Küng). To achieve this, religions need to dialogue with each other and in this dialogue place more stress on their points of agreement than their points of difference. This could mark the beginning of peace between religions. This peace is not enough on its own, but must encourage peace between all peoples.

Critical reasoning

Critical reasoning, which exploded at almost the same time in all world cultures in the 6th century BC, the so-called 'axial age', tried to establish universally moral codes, based principally on virtues, central to which was justice. But it also emphasised freedom, truth, love and respect for others. Providing a rational basis for ethics and morality – autonomous ethics – was a wonderful endeavour of the human mind, starting from the Greek masters, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, via Immanuel Kant to the modern philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Enrique Dussel, and in Brazil Henrique de Lima Vaz and Manfredo Oliveira, among others in our culture. Nevertheless, the impact of this rational ethics has been small, and limited to educated circles. This has meant that it has had a limited impact on people's everyday lives.

These two paradigms have not been invalidated by the current crisis, rather they have to be enriched if we want to be able to deal with the challenges we face from the world today, with its profound changes. To achieve this enrichment we need to go down to the level at which values – the main content of ethics - are continually being formed. Ethics, to win a minimum of consensus, must spring from the common, ultimate basis of human existence. This basis is not to be found in reason, as the West has always claimed.

Reason – and even philosophy recognises this – is neither the first nor the last impulse of existence. As a result it does not explain everything or include everything. It opens downwards, to the source of something more elemental and ancestral, emotions and deep feelings. It bursts up, towards the spirit, which is the moment in which consciousness feels itself part of a whole and culminates in contemplation and spirituality. The basic experience is, therefore, not ‘I think, therefore I am,’ but ‘I feel, therefore I am.’ At the root of everything we do not find reason (*logos*) but passion (*pathos*), which finds its outlet in sensitivity and emotion. This explains the current efforts to recover the notion of sensitive, cordial reason (Meffesoli, Cortina). For this type of reasoning we capture the precious quality of human beings, what makes us desirable.

We experience values from the heart and not in the head. It is through values that we move and have our being. In the last resort there is love, the greatest force in the universe and God’s own name. This ethics can involve us in practical actions to deal with global warming.

But we have to be realistic. Passion is inhabited by a demon that can be destructive. It is a fantastic surge of energy which, like the waters of a river, needs banks, limits and proportion. Without it, it bursts out and overwhelms us. And this is where the irreplaceable role of reason comes in. Reason’s characteristic role is to see clearly, impose order, discipline and direction on passion.

At this point we face a dramatic dialectic between passion and reason. If reason represses passion, what wins is rigidity and a tyrannous order. If passion does without reason, what prevails is the delirium of the impulses of pure enjoyment of things. But if what prevails is proportionality, and passion uses reason to develop with self-control, then there can be an ethical awareness that will make us responsible in the face of ecological chaos and global warming. This is the path we have to take. A new ethics for a new age.

Bibliography:

- Falconí, Fander. Al Sur de las Decisiones, Enfrentando la crisis del siglo XXI. Editorial El Conejo, 2nd ed., Quito 2014.
- Articles by Leonardo Boff, on his page on the Koinonía website: <http://servicioskoinonia.org/boff/>

2. E Migration and ecology: looking at the complexities

Amparo Marroquín Parducci

In 2008 Pixar Animation Studios and Walt Disney Pictures released **Wall-e**, a new animated movie. The film, directed by Andrew Stanton, won the Oscar, the Golden Globe and the Bafta as best animation film and earned over US\$500,000 million dollars across the world. Wall-e, a robot designed to collect waste, lives on an Earth full of refuse and toxic waste. In the year 2215 human beings abandoned the planet because of the excessive pollution they themselves had produced. In the movie life goes on in a space ship, far from a place that has become unable to produce life.

It is not the first time that ecological disasters and the destruction of the planet have attracted artists. The damage that we human beings cause through our excesses has been explored time and again in science fiction. The questions are endless. What will happen if we continue these excessive levels of consumption and lack of control on the dominant way of life in our societies? Will we have to flee the planet? Will we annihilate every living creature, including ourselves? Will we die of hunger, thirst or radiation? This future may be nearer than we think. Many experts have pointed out that one of the main causes leading people to leave the places they live in is connected with environmental disasters and ecological emergencies. Here I want to encourage reflection that links the two phenomena of migration and ecology.

I shall start by noting some facts about migration and then go on to examine the connections between those movements that are related to a situation connected with our environment.

CHANGES IN MIGRATION: THE CURRENT SITUATION

Migration is a process that has been a feature of the human race for ever. We move around and go from place to place for all sorts of reasons. Historical studies tell us that at the beginning social groups were nomadic, that is, they travelled from one place to another in search of water or food reserves. They settled in a place and when the resources were exhausted they moved somewhere else.

Gradually, as centuries passed, agricultural development obliged human groups to choose a particular territory and gradually the first towns began to take shape.⁵³

It was during the long and fruitful period known as the Middle Ages that the great majority of human groups settled. This was the period of the formation of the feudal societies, monarchies and empires, the conquered territories that became known as colonies and in subsequent centuries, especially from the 18th century onwards, nation states. Nevertheless, throughout history human beings have migrated from one place to another, attracted to the big cities, towards the imperial capitals during the colonial period, or towards new lands that offered possibilities for economic development.

⁵³ Nonetheless in our different cultures, on all five continents there are still nomadic human groups, such as the travellers, Sarakatsani and gypsies (Romanies) in Europe, the Mongols, Rabari and Rajis in Asia, the Tuareg, pygmies and Turkanas in Africa, the Aetas in the Philippines and Oceania, and the Chichimecas, Pehuenche and Maku in the Americas, to mention only a few.

More people migrate every year. We are at a time in history in which there are the most people living in a country in which they were not born. In 2013, according to the US Census, some 232 million people lived in a place different from their place of origin. This implies 78 million more migrants than in 1990. Nevertheless for a long time the percentage of people who have migrated from their place of origin has remained at around 3% of the world population. This means that three of every hundred people do not live in their place of origin. There are many faces and routes in migration.

A. Migration: faces and routes

One of the scholars who has written most about the many forms migration takes is the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. In his 1988 book ***Globalisation: The Human Consequences***, he offers images of migration: we all migrate, he says, but some people do so as tourists, others because they want to, and still others as vagabonds, forced to leave because they have been driven out of their territories. Some people have the impression that the direction of migration is always towards the developed countries. Many of these are situated in the north of their continents, countries such as the United States or the great majority of European countries which usually receive many immigrants seeking a better life. This is true, though the statistics show that in our time the routes are no longer so clear, nor so one-directional. Many migrants come from the south of our continents and live in other countries of the south, including people who come from the north, as in the case of Spain, and are now migrating to the south and to countries that historically were less prosperous. Female migration has also become very important; currently women account for almost half the world total of migrants and make up the majority in developed countries. Almost a third have moved from one developed country to another. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea and Singapore are only some of the developing countries that

have become receiving countries. 'South-South' migrants are almost as numerous as 'South-North' migrants.

B. Migration: old causes and new dangers

Many of the people who decide to migrate do so because they cannot have a decent life in their countries of origin, or sometimes leave to escape one of the many forms of violence, especially war or the lack of access to housing, education or a decent job.

The migrants who flee for fear of persecution for political, religious, racial or other reasons are recognised as *refugees* by the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). According to this Convention a refugee is any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

According to figures from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in 2013 alone there were 51.2 million people in the world displaced by force as a result of persecutions, conflicts, wars, and general violence or human rights violations. This figure is the highest recorded in the last twenty-five years. Of all the displaced people, some 16.7 million were refugees.

Deciding to leave the country in which you live often involves extreme risks. Some states restrict the entry of non-nationals. Free trade treaties make it very easy for a crate of tomatoes to cross several frontiers but restrict the ability of people to cross frontiers. More and more, controls on migration are being tightened.

The three countries in the world that accept the greatest number of immigrants are the United States (23 million), Russia (11 million) and India (7 million). Nevertheless more recent processes of introducing security criteria into migration policies has resulted in the expulsion of many people from the receiving countries. The United States alone deports approximately 400,000 people a year, and new immigration laws mean that this number keeps increasing. And the routes are becoming increasingly dangerous. Every year thousands of people die in the Mediterranean in an attempt to gain irregular entry to the countries of the European Union. The same occurs in the world largest migration corridor, the US-Mexico border, which, according to the World Bank, was crossed by over 11 million people in 2010. In the last ten years this corridor has been an area of extreme violence because many criminal groups, especially the cartel known as *Los Zetas*, have found migrants to be a secure source of income through kidnapping, torture, extortion and murder. Every year thousands of people are murdered and as many again disappear, often with the connivance of local officials.

Nevertheless, there is one cause of migration that scholars have looked at much less than one might have expected: migration for environmental reasons, as illustrated by the film *Wall-e*. There is as yet no agreement on the data on a world scale, but there are some features of these population movements that we know.

MIGRATION AS A RESULT OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

We have been experiencing many changes in our eco-system in recent years. Rainy regions are becoming wetter and experience floods or hurricanes almost every year, and in hot dry areas the climate is also becoming more extreme. Many urban areas are having increasing difficulties in accessing drinking water, and yet it remains an aspiration for many people to live in urban areas.

In 2014 World Bank data showed that 3, 838 million people lived in towns and urban settlements. 83.1% of people have access to electricity. This

means that we consume more energy and pollute more, since only 8.7% of all the energy we use comes from nuclear or alternative sources. Experts say that the world economy needs more and more energy to maintain economic growth, improve living standards and reduce poverty. The big problem is that current tendencies in energy use are not sustainable; we waste more energy than we should and do not give nature time to recover from the trees we have felled and the toxic gases we emit. As the world population increases and more countries industrialise, non-renewable energy sources will become scarcer and more expensive.

Analysts forecast that climate change will have more serious effects on developing countries, and especially the populations of the dryer countries. The effects of climate change, higher temperatures, changes in the precipitation regime, a rise in sea level and more frequent climate-related disasters imply increasing risks for agriculture and so for the availability of food and the water supply. This situation is increasingly forcing the world population to go back to the age of nomadism, that is, to look for new territories where natural resources have not been exhausted, to migrate to places that have access to water and where climate disasters are less frequent.

The first use of the term “environmental refugee” came from the analyst Lester Russell Brown, president of the US Worldwatch Institute, in 1976. With time the term has become accepted and it is now clear that climate change is an aggravating factor and a multiplier of the vulnerabilities that many populations are already experiencing. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines environmental migrants as “persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their homes or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.”

Currently the IOM proposes dividing environmental migrants into three categories according to the causes of the migration. First, there are “immigrants as a result of environmental emergency”, that migration that occurs as a result of sudden environmental events and disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes or tsunamis; some organisations focus on these phenomena when discussing environmental migrants. Second, there are “forced environmental migrants,” who are people forced to abandon their homes permanently because of deteriorating environmental conditions, costal deterioration or deforestation, for example. Third, there is a category of “migrants motivated by the environment” or “economic migrants induced by the environment”: these are not people forced to leave by an imminent disaster, but people who leave their territories to avoid possible future problems, as in areas affected by desertification.

This discussion has even penetrated popular culture. In 2010, for example, documentary maker Michael P. Nash presented his film *Climate Refugees* at the Sundance Festival.

Experts from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) have calculated that between 50 million and 700 million people may have emigrated by 2050 through causes related to environmental deterioration, though the causes are usually complex. In Sudan, for example, the nomads of the Zaghawa tribe have been forced to migrate from the Darfur region, often because of war, but there is also evidence of movement south in search of water and food for their animals. Some studies claim that competition between settled arable farmers and nomads was the principal cause of the displacement and that this became more acute with drought and changes in the conditions of land ownership, which increased pressure of land and water resources.

Environmental collapse in many areas is becoming increasingly evident. In Mexico the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation points out that migrations do not just occur because of the increasing violence of organised crime, but as a result of the economic situation of many people;

it is estimated that some 900,000 people have migrated annual from dry areas and moved to urban areas or to the United States.

Some analysts argue that it is not possible to isolate environmental causes from the other causes mentioned, although it is clear that the environmental situation has become a key factor in disasters and migrations. More than 30 million people were forced to move during 2012 as a result of such environmental disasters, and this tendency may be expected to be exacerbated as the effects of climate change intensify. The prospect is that within a few years environmental migration will become the principal cause of human movements.

STRATEGIES

Becoming aware of this link between migration and ecology also leads us to look for strategies for action that will allow us to contribute to a more human world, where all can live where they want and travel freely. Experts coincide on five proposals that we can adopt:

1. *Learning and building knowledge.* One of the most urgent challenges involved in facing up to this new situation is to work and provide studies that enable discussion of migration and migration policies to take account of the ecological situation we currently face. We must include these topics have in educational curricula, encourage discussion groups, and try to find activities that will make the problem visible and create awareness, not only in territories from which people come but throughout the world. If we succeed in reducing energy consumption, care for aquifers and reduce levels of contamination, it is very probable that fewer communities will have to migrate as a result of the exhaustion of a territory's resources.

2. *Being creative.* It is urgent to place all our creativity at the service of development projects. At present many people have to live in exile from their places of origin, far from their parents and

their childhood memories. They have to go into an exile they have not chosen. Encouraging joint investment and companies between developed countries and the developing countries most affected by climate change will in many cases make it possible to create new jobs and enable many people to stay in their countries and not have to migrate and run new risks.

3. Work on prevention. We have the tools required to improve our living standards. That is why we have to get to work. One element that cannot be left out, and which we have to publicise and discuss in our societies, is risk management planning. We cannot take it for granted that there will not be more droughts, floods, water shortages; we have to think what we will do when these disasters occur.

4. Persist in innovation and memory Work to make our planet a good place, decent and inhabitable for all, must carry on at all times. We have to invest all our resources in this, not just technology but also our memory. We must rediscover the traditional ways of working the land, we must dialogue with the first peoples in every territory because very often they have a better relationship with nature. We must dialogue with science to be able to understand the new data it provides us with.

5. Defending the dignity of life. Life is the fundamental human right, but also a fundamental right for nature, plants, and animals. We must care for the earth and we must care for each other. Migration should only take place when someone wants it. The dream underlying this article is that no human being should be forced to migrate because they cannot continue to live in their country and that anyone who does migrate should be able to travel freely with knowledge of their rights and enjoy new experiences, and other cultures.

Bibliography:

- United Nations data on migration in the world. The site breaks down the data by age, sex, countries of origin and arrival (in English):
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/index.shtml>
- Interactive map *Un Mundo de Migraciones* from the website of *El País* (in Spanish): <http://elpais.com/especiales/2014/planeta-futuro/mapa-de-migraciones/>
- *Pew Research Hispanic Trend Project*, data on the Hispanic population in the United States (in English):
<http://www.pewhispanic.org/>
- *Pew Hispanic Global Attitudes Project*, data on world migration from the United States census (in English):
<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/09/02/global-migrant-stocks/>
- Page of the UN Refugee Agency (available in English, French and Spanish): <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>
- Fundación IPADE, Madrid (in Spanish): *Migraciones ambientales ¿un viaje sin retorno? Guía educativa para secundaria*
<http://www.fundacion-ipade.org/upload/pdf/migraciones-ambientales.pdf> and *Migraciones ambientales*
<http://www.fundacion-ipade.org/upload/pdf/migracionesambientales.pdf>
- Documents and publications of the UN Convention on Desertification (UNCCD), English, French, Spanish
<http://www.unccd.int/en/resources/Pages/default.aspx>

2.f. Ways forward

For a reflection for personal, community or with others, consider using the following questions:

- What is my/our diagnosis of climatic and ecological mutations/changes?
- Do I feel concerned? What means do I take to get informed?
- What are the aspects of this which seem to me the most important in my situation, and in the context of the country where I find myself?
- What are the consequences of these questions for planning and political decisions, programmes of politicians and my/our voting choices?

Third Part :

3: Frames of Reference

This chapter aims to provide the biblical, theological, ecclesial and congregational framework of our commitment to the environment. It seeks to bring us closer to the actual trends of interpretation and to new paradigms that give a non-negotiable foundation to our concern for the planet.

In general, the different contributions coincide in denouncing the instrumentalising view that we have had of the world and of all Creation, as well as the manner in which biblical texts and theological works have been used to justify the domination and exploitation of nature. They also

examine to what extent an anthropocentric view of the world, history, and everything created has prevented us from living in a healthy fashion with Nature, giving rise to utilitarian and predatory relationships with her.

Mary Cecilia Claparols tries to bring us closer to a doctrine of Creation by proposing more adequate exegetical keys not only for the first chapters of Genesis, but for the whole of Scripture. She focuses on three texts: Gen 1:45; Job 38-42, John 1. She also references the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews. Mary Cecilia claims that a radical change of perspective – from a vision of the world that promotes a sense of separation between humans and the rest of Creation to a consciousness of our unity and interdependence - can be achieved in continuity with our sacred history.

Marie Claire Isifi, with her contribution *The Eschatology of Creation*, reminds us of the need to understand Creation in all its gratuitousness and purpose. The notion of gratuity makes us discover Creation as gift. Without a doubt, this means that the sense of the world and of humankind is accessible to research by reason. But above all, the notion of gratuitousness situates humans before God; it reminds one of one's origin received from God and of one's final destiny. The human being who is manifested in the centre should not be the centre. A human being is like a servant who has been sent/commissioned. The Centre is in God. If humans use Creation, they must do so wisely, imitating Christ Who came from the Father and Who returns to the Father along with everything created. Marie Claire concludes by emphasizing that every Christian and every person of good will, by vocation, has to act to make Creation progress toward its promised beauty and dignity.

In her contribution *The Eschatological Dimension of Hope*, **Ascension Gonzalez** demonstrates to what extent the different and multiple changes that we are going through profoundly question the theological reflection that has been done so far. Reality challenges theology, which is how ecological understanding needs a renewed theological paradigm that takes environmental issues into consideration. Starting from that premise, she looks to several passages from the Old and New Testaments to give us

keys for an enlightened interpretation of our reality today. In her exegesis of Genesis 1-2, for example, she picks up the invitation to recognise the goodness of creatures, to capture the beauty-goodness of what exists, thus freeing us of our economic outlook which always insists on questions like: "Of what use is it to me? How much will it give me in return?" For Ascension, Genesis reminds us of the enthralling history of the exercise of our freedom, dignity and greatness which have their origin in the unconditional love of God Who engages Himself with and in the world.

Maria Eugenia Ramírez wants to highlight how changes in paradigms have allowed the ecological vision of the world to touch not only the natural sciences but many others as well. We now speak of a human ecology, the ecology of the mind, ecology of action, ecofeminism, of eco-theology. Ecology today shies away from sectoral, partial explanations, takes into account the whole, and shows a peculiar sensitivity to relationships, interactions, and networks established in nature, on the planet.

In her first article, *Women and Ecology*, Maria Eugenia affirms that we conceptually manage to have some consensus regarding the ontological equality of gender. What is pending are the *concrete implications* affirming that woman is also created in the image and likeness of God, that Baptism confers equal dignity to both man and woman; that the conduct of both Jesus and the Apostles had quite markedly cultural conditioning. How can we then acquire a new outlook on both the human being - man and woman - as well as on all of nature? How can we create this new culture of solidarity with both nature and women? It is the integration of the ecological category within the theological reflection, either as a different discourse, or if you prefer, a complementary discourse to what has been traditionally known as the Theology of Creation.

Starting from these premises, her second article, *Religious Life and Ecology*, suggests some consequences arising from an ecological vision of reality, a profile of Religious Life - more inclusive, more holistic - lived from this ecological ethics.

Offering us the ecclesial framework for our engagement with the planet, **Silvia María Oseguera** offers a description of the Magisterium of the Church in matters of Social Doctrine. From Leo XIII to *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis, she notes how the Church has tried not to be indifferent to the urgent cries of our reality, and how the Magisterium has undertaken a process of accompaniment and of consciousness-awareness from the Gospel. She reminds us of the Church's doctrinal principles: the dignity of the human person, the universal end of goods, the common good, subsidiarity, participation and solidarity. In addition she points out that the Church has held to some fundamental values that favour the development of the person and social coexistence: truth, freedom, justice, all of which are invigorated by love.

Over the years, the Magisterium has proposed that we look at the environment as a common good that we all have the responsibility of safeguarding at all levels. *Laudato Si* brings a novelty: among other things, specific lines of dialogue and action that clearly incorporate human and social dimensions. These would include: the need for dialogue on climate at the international, national and local politics that include decisions that serve the human being, not only the economic interests of a few; the need for dialogue and transparency in the processes of the environmental impact of production projects, laws, plans and programs yet to be developed; the fact that politics and economics are at the service of life; and the need for religion and science to work together for the good of all, etc.

For her part, **Cécile Renouard** offers us an analytical approximation of the evolution of the social discourse of the Church. She makes us realize that there are two models linked to the reading of the word of the Magisterium (horizontal or vertical). This double movement involves on the one hand the faith that informs and explains our **way of looking** at the world, its evolution and the functioning of the economy with respect to the points of view and in a radical way for ecology. On the other hand, we see the social teachings/messages of the Church that finds itself

transformed by the circumstances. This double movement is also clearly seen with regard to the deepening of the relationship between human beings and nature.

Cécile introduces us to the different contemporary ethical positions regarding nature and where the Magisterium has situated itself. She also presents what have been the social teachings/messages of the Church on sustainable development and ecology with an eye to seeing how *Laudato Si* marks a considerable change of stance in the face of economic growth.

3.a Biblical Foundations of Ecology

Mary Cecilia Claparols, r.a.

The Christian scriptures, particularly an interpretation of the Creation story in Genesis 1, have been faulted by Lynn White, a cultural historian, as one of the main causes for the whole mechanistic and domination model of relationship between humans and the cosmos. He goes on to say that Christianity, in destroying “pagan animism,” made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. In his opinion, the texts in Genesis have been used to justify domination and exploitation of nature.⁵⁴

Theologian Denis Edwards shows, however, that White’s claim does not consider the other major contributors to this crisis, including the instrumentalising view of the natural world by the Enlightenment: the

⁵⁴ Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 189. www.Siena.edu/ellard/historical_roots_of_ecologic.htm. Lynn White has proposed St. Francis as patron for ecologists and as someone who has shown an alternative Christian view of human and nature relationships. He further suggested that we need to “rethink and re-feel our nature and destiny.” Sr. Mary Cecilia Claparols, “The Earth is a Place of God’s Glory: A Metaphor Mediating a Sensitivity to Interdependence through Dialogical Imagination.” (Dmin diss., Pacific School of Religion in the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, December 2007), 99-101.

concept of an economy based on endless growth, uncontrolled corporations and unrestrained greed.⁵⁵

Biblical scholars also critique such an inadequate exegesis and interpretation of this text and have reread these same texts in a way that honors and supports a God-human relationship that is inclusive of an ecologically sensitive human-nature relationship.⁵⁶

BIBLICAL TEXTS AND THE NATURAL WORLD IN OUR TRADITION

Given the breakthrough of research in science today, Carol Dempsey, another biblical scholar, argues that no rereading of Genesis 1-2 can be done without acknowledging the interrelatedness of Creation and the relational view of God toward and within all Creation. Other biblical scholars point out that other biblical texts besides the one critiqued by White support a cosmic vision. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, suggests that for a doctrine of Creation, it is necessary to draw on the whole testimony of scripture and not merely on Genesis 1 and 2.⁵⁷

It is important to note that in its early stages, Christianity drew from the scriptures of the Jewish tradition where the natural world is very present. There is also no compelling evidence, according to Donald Senior, which indicates that allegiance to Yahweh leads to a less reverent view of the sacred or spiritual nature of the earth.

⁵⁵ Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart That Leads to a New Way of Living on Earth* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 19.

⁵⁶ Ray McNamara, "Interdependence and the God-Quest: A Christian Ecological Spirituality" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, March 2006), 10. Gina Hens-Piazza, "A Theology of Ecology: God's Image and the Natural World," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13 (October 1983). Bienvenido Baisas, "The Bible and Ecology: A Renewed Re-Reading of the Priestly Creation Story with a Special Consideration of the Hebrew Verbs רדה and כבש in Gen 1,26-28." Keynote speech for the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines Meeting in 2006. This copy was sent by the author through electronic mail. Sr. Cecilia Claparols, *Ibid.* Carol J. Dempsey, O.P., "Creation, Evolution, Revelation, and Redemption: Connections and Intersections," in *Earth, Wind, and Fire: Biblical and Theological Perspectives in Creation*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey, and Mary Margaret Pazdan (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004)

⁵⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and Spirit of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 53.

For the first fifteen hundred years of Christianity, particularly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the natural world was integral to theology and appreciated as good and revelatory of the Divine. Despite this long heritage, after the Reformation and particularly with the advance of modernity and for political reasons connected with the censure of Galileo, love of Creation slipped away and eventually was “lost in the Christian Tradition.”⁵⁸

To effect a radical shift in perspective, in this case from a worldview that promotes a sense of separation between humans and the rest of Creation to a consciousness of our oneness and interdependence, it must be demonstrated such a shift can be made in “continuity with our sacred story. And the foundation of our Judeo-Christian story is biblical.”⁵⁹

ROOTING OUR ECOLOGICAL COMMITMENT THROUGH SOME BIBLICAL TEXTS

We shall examine a few texts and see how each contributes to providing us with a basis and a framework for an environmental commitment. Our scripture is filled with texts on the natural world but it is not possible to include them all here. Thus, we will limit ourselves to three.

1. GENESIS 1⁶⁰: A RESOURCE FOR ECO-SENSITIVITY

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Johnson, “Losing and Finding Creation in the Christian Tradition” in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Human*, ed. Dielter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Center For the Study of World Religions, 2000): 5-7.

⁵⁹ Donald Senior, C.P. “Where does the Bible Fit In?” in *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology*. Edited by Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards. (Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987), 48-49.

⁶⁰ Me baso en esta sección en Gina Hens-Piazza, “A Theology of Ecology: God’s Image and the Natural World”, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13 (October 1983), así como en algunas lecturas de Dianne Bergant, *The Earth is the Lord’s: The Bible, Ecology and*

a. The Context of the Text

This text is the priestly Creation narrative which was written later than Genesis 2-3. Some authors would take these chapters of Genesis as a whole. However, the choice of only the first chapter is partly to accept the challenge of Lynn White and to show that even this first chapter can provide Christians with an important foundation for eco-sensitivity and a commitment to ecology.

Genesis 1 is one of the cosmogonies in the Bible. Most authors agree that this text took its final form around the time of the Babylonian exile. Therefore, we find a people seeking security in the midst of the confusion created by the encounter with the Mesopotamian gods and goddesses, the loss of their lands and their political autonomy, and the crumbling of their social and religious structures. The people of Israel are undergoing not just an identity crisis but chaos in the different dimensions of their lives.

b. The Text as a Proclamation: Ecological Perspectives and Ethical Implications.

Thus the Genesis story in the midst of this chaos proclaims that Israel's God is the one God, Creator and source of all that exists. He is able to bring all kinds of chaos into order and his word powerfully brings forth beings into existence. Therefore, Israel's God is above the Mesopotamian gods and all that elicits fear in human beings. God brings order to the chaos and this God marvels at all that He has created: "And God saw that it was good." He proclaims his Lordship by pronouncing blessings on those he creates. Creation is good regardless of its utilitarian purpose for humans. To care for Creation is thus a spiritual issue!

Worship (The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998), 5-8 y el estudio hecho por Bienvenido Baisas for the CBAP 2006, *Ibíd*, 20-39.

From this text too, we see a God who can truly be trusted and to whom the earth belongs entirely. No one can claim ownership to Creation. God reigns unconditionally no matter how Creation responds. He sustains what he creates and “the final and most dramatic gesture of lordship is the explicit act of complete trust when He gives human beings capacities to act on his behalf as He created them according to His Image and Likeness. This is a rejection of the old royal interpretation and mediation of God’s holy image and presence in the cosmic temple in the ancient Near East.” God’s image here, Baisas notes, is no longer that of the kings, but of humans who are conscious participants in the divine work.⁶¹ They cannot, however, exercise this responsibility as autonomous agents; rather, they must always be in imitation of and in dependence on God. God shares with human beings this creative process and work, “the shepherding care in defense of the weak” (Ezekiel 34 -- another context of the use of the word *rada*, to subdue), putting order and harmony.

In Gen 1: 28, the injunctions to “be fruitful, and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it ...have dominion over...” are all in plural forms, which indicates that this responsibility of compassionate care which brings *shalom* and the assurance of the continuance of life, is to be done in partnership of both male and female.”⁶² Brueggemann regards these five verbs (all in the imperative) as endowments to restore and relieve the devastation brought about by exile. God brings them back to life and fruitfulness (Baisas). These returning exiles whose consciousness is marked by the powerlessness of a conquered people are thus assured that they are

⁶¹ Baisas, 30. Keith Carley, “Psalm 8: An Apology for Domination” in *Readings from the Perspectives of the Earth* (ed. Norman C. Habel; Vol. 1 of The Earth Bible (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 119.

⁶² It is important to note that there are more detailed interpretations of these terms in the context in which they have been used in Genesis itself and in other parts of the Old Testament which could further elucidate the real meanings of “subdue and have dominion.” None of them however, would imply a tyrannical exploitation of nature.

created in the image of God; they are good like all creatures, just as they valued their animals when they returned back to their lands.⁶³

Any arbitrary disposal of the plant or animal world for self-serving purposes is detached from the model of God's lordship. Similarly, decisions that alter the natural environment must be premised upon a commitment ultimately to foster its existence. Any action that destroys the elements of nature in the name of productivity is a rape of the nature and is a return to the perversions of Mesopotamian Creation stories....The human task then is to guarantee the continuance of the creative cosmos as a whole and to tend it for the benefit of all created life.⁶⁴

All of Creation lives by God's breath of life (2:7; 1:30). All of Creation came to be from the power of His word. Sharing a common origin, all creatures in the web of life are intrinsically interrelated and interdependent. The God of Creation is a God who has entered into relationship with Creation and "has established Creation as a series of relationships meant to function freely, wholly, and interdependently."⁶⁵ God's care and concern is for all, not just for humans. And God saw that they were all very good! The value of Creation lies in the fact of its existence from God and not in its usefulness to humankind (Bergant).

The phrases, "in the beginning" and "be fruitful and multiply," show that Creation began and is continuing. There is a promise of a new heaven and a new earth to which Isaiah and Revelation point.⁶⁶ It is faith in this Creator that will bring new life to the exiles, bringing a new and ordered relationship among the people and with the land that they are called to

⁶³ Alice L. Laffey, "The Priestly Creation Narrative: Goodness and Interdependence," in *Earth, Wind and Fire: Biblical and Theological Perspective on Creation* ed. Carol J. Dempsey and Mary Margaret Pazdan (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 29-30.

⁶⁴ Hens-Piazza, *idem.* 109.

⁶⁵ Carol Dempsey, "Creation, Evolution," 11.

⁶⁶ Dempsey, *Ibid.*, 12

repopulate and make fruitful again.⁶⁷ Israel's God can be fully trusted and as part of the community of Creation, human beings celebrate, love this earth, delight in it and respect the integrity of each creature as God loves them.⁶⁸

For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made,

For you would not have made anything if you had hated it.

How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?

Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?

You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living.

For your immortal spirit is in all things.

(Wisdom 11:24 -12:1)

2. THE BOOK OF JOB 38-42:⁶⁹ TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTERS THROUGH CREATION

While recognizing the beauty of this text, some scholars portray the Divine as the proud bully who outtalks Job and is indifferent to his sufferings. Kathleen O'Connor, however, shows the significance of Job's experience of

⁶⁷ Bienvenido Baisas, 25. Another very important aspect of the Genesis story is the role and the meaning of Sabbath for all Creation and Jubilee. These cannot be explored here due to space limitations.

⁶⁸ Denis Edwards, *Ibid.* 17.

⁶⁹ This section is based entirely on the interpretations of Kathleen O'Connor, "Wild, Raging Creativity: Job in the Whirlwind" in *Earth, Wind, and Fire* eds. Carol Dempsey, *Ibid.* 48-56 and Dianne Bergant, "Things Too Wonderful For Me" (Job 42:3) Job and the New Cosmology, in the Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines in July 20-22, 2007: 8-19.

beauty and the wild freedom of Creation and Creator, while Dianne Bergant focuses on the awesome God manifested through the natural world. Both show the transformative power of these encounters.

a. The Experience of Beauty and the Wild Freedom of Creation and Creator

The speeches of God are typical of the Wisdom genre which gives instruction. They use Creation to provide knowledge about the human world. Rhetorical questions invite Job and the reader to draw their own conclusions on the meaning of their storm. The storm, the whirlwind and the wild energy provide the setting of the divine speeches. The storm evokes images of biblical epiphanies as well as Job's own personal storm, and it implies the Divine to be wild, free, beautiful and deeply unsettling. The speeches show God's power and awesomeness and His pride in the cosmos. At the same time, Creation mirrors God and the different aspects of Job's personality, his beauty, and his life. What is the transformation that Job experiences in this encounter with beauty and wild freedom in Creation and in the Creator? Beauty transforms Job and opens him to an expanded vision of his place in the world during the storm. Beauty, O'Connor says, does not explain the suffering of Job but transforms it. She points to three effects of beauty has on Job:

- Beauty focuses one outward, relinquishing one's held position as the centre of the world.
- Beauty creates a sharpened attentiveness/ alertness that enables one to recognise injustice and opens oneself to care for the world.
- Beauty incites creativity, generates new beauty and harmony extending the realm of care to the entire cosmos.

b. The Awesome God is Manifested in the Natural World

Dianne Bergant notes that it is in Job's "encounter with God through the manifestations of the natural world (38:1-41:26) that he comes to see that reality is not subject to the rigid pattern of retribution but to the freedom

of God who is a provident Creator.”⁷⁰The rhetorical questions of God are focused on nature and they lead Job to greater depth beyond the information that answers to such questions could give. The Creator God, while referring to the structures and workings of the world as well as to the behaviors of animals, leads Job to focus on the awesome God who is manifested through the natural world. “The natural world was not only born of the creativity of God, it also bears the features of this creativity. Every property of Creation mirrors something of the Creator...the medium through which God is revealed is itself the revelation.”⁷¹

That is why Job is able to say: “Now my eye has seen you!” The theophany is revelatory and liberating. Job has been released from the prison of his worldview into God’s perspective: the value of Creation is beyond human usefulness, his suffering has been resituated in a broader context and he has made a shift from an anthropocentric to a cosmocentric worldview. The encounter with the Creator God led him to this new and transforming vision of all that he is, his storm, the natural world and his image of who God is. Job has become a chastened cosmic mystic: humble and filled with reverent awe before Creation and Mystery!

In Genesis 2:15 the human being formed from the earth is told to “cultivate and care” for all that God has given and in Genesis 9:12-16, the Creator makes an eternal Covenant after the flood with Noah and every living creature. The rainbow is the living sign of this enduring Cosmic Covenant with all things (Edwards).

3. JOHN 1:14: WHERE IS GOD/ WISDOM TO BE FOUND?

a. The Context of the Text

The Johannine community was composed of the followers of John the Baptist, the Jews openly professing as followers of Jesus, Jews secretly following Jesus, and the Samaritans who followed Jesus. This community

⁷⁰ Dianne Bergant, *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷¹ *Idem.*, 15.

faced pressures from within as a diversified community, and from the Jewish authorities who expelled them from the synagogue. Such a situation shook their beliefs, their shared perceptions and assumptions which gave meaning to their world within Judaism. At the same time, one of the issues faced by both the Christian community and the Jews after the destruction of the Temple was: Where is Wisdom? Where is God to be encountered and found? Wisdom literature of Judaism looked to the Torah as the locus of the divine presence. For the Johannine community, however, that presence was to be found in the life of Jesus revealed and accessible to human sensory experience.⁷²

b. Jesus in the Johannine community

Who then is Jesus for the Johannine community? The Prologue of John's Gospel begins with the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning," and follows the same structure as that of Genesis except that there is no seventh day climax of the Sabbath. According to Mary Coloe, the creative work of God had not been completed "in the beginning" but was instead continuing, with more to come.⁷³ She proposes that John 1:14 be considered as the credal statement of the Johannine community expressing the identity of Jesus as pre-existent, "with God from the beginning," eternally in communion with God, and "all things came into being through him." Not only was he present and an agent of Creation, but he also is the source of life and a light shining in the darkness. At the same time, this *Logos* becomes flesh (*sarx*) and dwells (tabernacles = *eskēnōsen*) among us.⁷⁴

⁷² Coloe, Mary L. *God Dwells With Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 20-21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

⁷⁴ Rekha Chennattu, "The Intra-religious Dialogue of the Johannine Community as a Model for the Indian Church in Dialogue," a paper delivered in the Institut d'été in Lyon, France, 21-26 August, 2003), 6. Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle In The Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and The Old Testament* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989), 103.

Sarx, translated as *flesh*, is heir to a diversity of meanings in the Old Testament traditions and not just limited to mortality or fragility of human beings. In Gen 6:19 and Num 18:15, for instance, flesh is related to all living creatures. Dorothy Lee states that although “flesh” has a primary reference to human beings, “flesh” has a range of meanings that extends to all Creation. The flesh embraced by God includes the whole interconnected world, the interrelated organisms of the web of life and not limited to humanity.⁷⁵ Therefore, the Word becomes “flesh” (*sarx*) implies that Creation is revelatory of God and the Word that God spoke in Creation can be seen and experienced.⁷⁶ That is why the structure of the prologue and the introduction of John 1:1-3 specifically state that the pre-existent Word that has become flesh and dwells among us can be seen, heard, looked upon and touched – accessible to sensory experience. This living presence, this Glory (*doxa*) among us in the community of Creation, can be seen and experienced. Lee says that “1:14 discloses the revelation of divine glory radiating in the flesh and at the same time, the Word becoming flesh brings to materiality (Creation) a transforming power, which is able to nourish and sustain the life of the spirit.”⁷⁷ God, the pre-existent Word who became flesh, reveals God and dwells in the on-going Creation, history, and the community.

c. Logos, the Word and Wisdom Woman (Sophia)

The first lines of the prologue on the *Logos* connect us to the Wisdom Woman in Prov 8:22-31; Sir 24:3-7; Wis 7:25-8:1 who was present with God in Creation, co-Creator with God, a companion with God delighting in all God’s creatures. It is by her that “God founds the earth, establishes the heavens, breaks open the deep, and enables the clouds to drop down

⁷⁵ Denis Edwards, *idem*, 58.

⁷⁶ Francis Moloney, *Belief in Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 31.

⁷⁷ Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: The Crossword Publishing company, 2002), 32, 35-36, 48.

their dew as refreshing, life-giving rain (Prov 3:19-20).⁷⁸ Therefore Wisdom Woman -- the *Word* in John's gospel -- was intimately connected with all of Creation. Wisdom Woman (Prov 9:1-6; Sir 24:8-22) comes, dwells among us, makes her home with us, sets her table and prepares her banquet, invites the poor and needy to come to eat and drink. Jesus-Wisdom is proclaimed as the Word made flesh (John 1:1-18) and is presented in the same language taken from Wisdom literature as the one who invites the poor and needy to his table and gives himself to them as the Bread of Life (John 6).⁷⁹

God communicates, reveals through "flesh" (Creation), and the community recognises this Glory. Creation is revelatory of God's Word and Glory and the community can see this Glory. This flesh-taking is a dwelling of God in the midst of all Creation. This "tabernacling" or dwelling is experienced as a transforming power in a sensory nature.

In response to the question: "Where is God/ Wisdom to be found?" we can say with Job, "now my eye sees you" and with the writer of John's epistle: "What we have seen, heard and touch, we proclaim!"

4. PAULINE EPISTLES AND THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS: THE COSMIC CHRIST

The theology of the Wisdom of God has contributed to the cosmic view of the Risen Christ. The Hymns in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:2-3, Col 1:15-20, 1 Cor 8:6) repeat the same theme, that

"through Him, the image of God, all things came to existence. He sustains all for themselves because each one is good, unique and interdependent and will be freed, transformed (Rom 8:21) and restored in and through Christ-Wisdom, the Icon of the Invisible God. The whole process of Creation of the universe is directed toward the Christ event, Christ the

⁷⁸ Denis Edwards, *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁹ *Idem.*, 54.

source (He is before all things) and the goal (in Him all things hold together).⁸⁰

These texts speak of the pre-existence and the utter transcendence of the living God, *panentheism* (God is in the cosmos and the cosmos is in God, but God is not the cosmos), the permeating immanence, the divinity that penetrates the whole universe so that “every part of it exists in Him and He/She is also the creative power who dwells at the heart of the world sustaining every moment of its evolution,”⁸¹ transcendent God yet intimately in and around us, being the One in whom we (the cosmos)⁸² live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28).

As Walter Kasper so eloquently writes, wherever “life breaks forth and comes into being; everywhere that new life, as it were, seethes and bubbles and even, in the form of hope, everywhere that life is violently devastated, throttled, gagged, and slain; wherever true life exists, there the Spirit of God is at work.” *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 202.

3.b Theological Foundations of Ecology

3.b.1 The Eschatology of Creation

Marie Claire Isifi, r.a.

⁸⁰ Denis Edwards, *idem.* 56.

⁸¹ Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ. *The Fortnightly Review.* www.fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2011/06 accessed 2/12/2015 at 1:40pm.

⁸² My addendum.

«... the whole of Creation is eagerly waiting for God to
reveal his sons...

*Creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us,
from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same
freedom and glory as the children of God»
(Romans 8, 19-21)*

These verses from the Letter to the Romans place us before the reality of Creation's groaning in one great act of giving birth as it awaits its full deliverance. These verses are also a very explicit statement of hope for a definitive liberation of the whole of Creation by Christ, King of the Universe and Savior of all Creation who will place everything in the hands of the Father once all things have been subjected to him. This process of liberation, total and definitive, finds its source and sense in the mystery of Christ, in his incarnation and in his death and resurrection. But what God has established for humanity and all Creation comes about too, through the life and action of the Church and of people of good will.

1 THE INCARNATION, THE EVENT THAT INAUGURATES THE RESTORATION AND THE DIVINIZATION OF HUMANITY AND CREATION

The Incarnation – mystery of the Word made flesh, taking on the body and face of a human being – demonstrates the same *project of love* as was at the origin of Creation. It constitutes a bridge between God and humanity, and between God and the created world. Through it God is able to restore humanity and the whole of Creation. “*Creation is a process⁸³ that takes place throughout the history of the created world.*” This unfolding is the way to an experience of the vision of the reality of God and the created world. It also shows the final goal of Creation. In effect, it is “*the coming of Jesus which offers us the greatest revelation concerning the significance and reason for Creation and each stage gives us more understanding of*

⁸³ Keith Warner OFM, 1998, from the translation from the English: Damien Gangloff (<http://core.assoc.free.fr/kakapo/regardFranciscain.htm>).

the finality of the world, and with greater clarity, its reason."⁸⁴ In fact then, Incarnation gives the world and its history all its sense. And the process of restoration goes along with a recognition of our identity: "*heirs of God, coheirs with Christ and sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory*" (Romans 8, 17). We are children of God committed with Christ to a new life.

Everything is like "*Creation waiting with eager longing, the revelation of the children of God*" (Romans 8, 19); humanity too is groaning and hoping for this liberation. This will happen by a certain death. Marie Eugénie writes, "*the creature must die to make room for Jesus Christ.*"⁸⁵ This is the way the life of the Word sprouts and grows in the Christian soul. It is there that one finds the pattern of all sanctity. The Word develops in persons who are able to receive and accept the life of divine beauty, wisdom, goodness and gentleness within. Then they can exclaim "O splendor of divine beauty, if I empty myself, pour yourself out within me."⁸⁶ The more human beings make a place for the Word in their lives, the more they are filled. Without doubt it is in this sense that we are able to repeat with Marie Eugénie: "*my total dependence on Jesus Christ is the secret chain of my liberty.*"⁸⁷ Dependence on Jesus Christ in all our actions, living in him and by him will necessarily lead us to a restored and liberated humanity.

In our being, in all Creation, it is possible to read an expression of transcendence. For Christians this transcendence has a name, a face. Better still, in the person of Christ it has become flesh. It is in this sense that beauty is an expression of the incarnate Word, and we see how the gaze of this incarnate Word illumines all things and enables the discovery

⁸⁴ Idem/

⁸⁵ Marie Eugénie, *Letter to Father D'Alzon* of April 18th 1843. Also the writings of St Paul: "You have died with , and your life remains hidden with Christ in God *Mortui enim estis et vita vestra abscondita cum Christo in Deo*" (Col 3.3.) Or again " I live, but it is no longer I that live, it is Christ who lives in me." *2 Vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*" (Gal2, 20).

⁸⁶ Marie Eugénie, *Letter to Fr D'Alzon*, April 18th 1843.

⁸⁷ Marie Eugénie, *Letter to Fr D'Alzon*, July 19th 1842, n 1556 (cf Foundation Texts – received in the General Chapter 2012 – pages 42 and 43).

of all things which are true, good and beautiful. The word contains all things within himself and brings all things to their fulfillment, returns them to their original beauty, for *“through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of all human beings”* (John 1, 3-4).

Through the cross, the death and resurrection of Jesus this glorious light brightens up and dispels all the shadows within humanity, within the whole of Creation, to him be the glory.

2 CREATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS, THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

By the cross of Christ, we see the world as God’s Creation but also as a place where evil is at work, but this Creation infected with evil is promised salvation. It is invited to participate in the salvation of God as is expressed so well in Romans 8, 1-23. So the cross and the light that it brings us unveil the origin and destiny of Creation. In good time God reveals himself as the one who creates, preserves, and redeems Creation and who leads it gradually towards its final transformation.

In the Letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul presents the cross, death, and resurrection of Jesus as a celebration of reconciliation, reconciliation between God and humanity, reconciliation between human beings and reconciliation throughout the cosmos. It is Christ who is the one who preserves and upholds Creation (Col 1, 17), is head of the Church and the prototype of the new humanity (Col 1,18), and is the universal agent of reconciliation (Col 1,19-20).

These texts make clear to us the universal dimension of the reconciliation that God has made for us in his Son, Jesus Christ: *“for God wanted all plenitude to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him...”* (Col 1, 19-20). Thus God, the Creator of the universe, brings together the whole of Creation into appropriate order and final harmony by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Here there appears something

passing beyond at work in and by the death and resurrection of Christ. In effect, the initial order of Creation has been upset, but by the death and resurrection of Christ, God has inaugurated a new Reality which is not just a restoration of the initial order, but a final transformation, the accomplishment of its final destiny.

3 TEMPORAL INVOLVEMENT: A COLLABORATION WITH THE FINAL DESTINY OF CREATION

If the mystery of Christ in his incarnation and redemptive work elucidates the origin and end of Creation, the actuality of that destiny is accomplished gradually in time and space by the temporal involvement of all men and women. With this perspective, for the believer, is not the promotion of life in himself or herself as well as in those around him or her, a manifestation of the splendor of the incarnate Word?

If *“beauty is the experimental proof that Incarnation is possible,”*⁸⁸ as suggested by Simone Weil, contemplation of the beauty of Creation is to recognise with admiration the Word present in nature and in it to see a sign to humanity. In fact *“it is right to love the beauty of the world because it is the identifying mark of the exchange of love between creature and Creator.”*⁸⁹ This way of seeing things changes the way our hearts look at the identity of the earth in depth, and all created things. By recognizing the manifestation of God in all that is created, humanity can worship the God who took a human face, and went all the way to the cross.

But it is not enough to worship God. The Church, our congregation, all Christians and all people of good will according to their vocation should help bring Creation onwards towards the beauty and dignity that is promised. This is the place to give homage along with and in association all the religions and all those who are working in that sense. Certainly this involvement will not be without suffering as it supposes that we take the same road as Jesus. It is a journey in “faith, not in clear sightedness.” We

⁸⁸ Simone Weil, *“La connaissance surnaturelle,”* Gallimard, Paris, 1964, p 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p 89.

beg the Lord to keep us alert so we can continually discern what we should do, and have the strength to do it until that day when all Creation is united by him and at last gives homage to the sovereignty of the Father. *“This is the direction, this is the end to which all things aspire: this is the desire for God which will not be quenched even in eternity, but will find its fulfilment in the joy of being engulfed by an inaccessible splendor which is always greater.”*⁹⁰

To reflect on the eschatology of Creation is, in the last analysis, to understand it as a free gift and recognise its finiteness. The notion of gratuity helps us discover Creation as gift; without doubt, this means that the purpose of the world and humanity is accessible to investigation by reason. But the notion of gratuity above all situates Creation before God; it remembers the beginning it was given and its final destination. Humanity which clearly is central will not be the centre. In effect our place is as stewards. The Centre is in God. Humanity, if it makes use of Creation, needs to do so in the dynamic of wisdom in imitation of Christ who comes from the Father and returns to the Father with all created things.

3.b.2 The eschatological dimension, hope

Ascensión González, r.a.

“Everything our eyes see is a gift God gives us to raise us to him!”. (MME. Instr. 15-07-1881) *“In la Assumption everything comes from Jesus Christ, everything belongs to Jesus Christ, everything must be for Jesus Christ”.*

“The earth is a place of glory for God”.

⁹⁰ Camille Dumont, SJ *“Esthétique et Dramatique, l’existence Chrétienne”*, coll. 17, Vie Consacrée, Namur, Rue de Bruxelles, 61, B 5000, 1997, p 38.

When Mother Marie Eugénie made these statements, she probably didn't know that she would be referring to a situation that would be in full effect in our times, and that her Sisters and lay Assumptionists would be deciding to live their discipleship of Jesus in a specific way, by responding to the world's global concerns. But how? By expressing love for our time, by being daughters and sons of our time, by understanding the earth as the place of God's glory, the place of his manifestation, his presence.

Responding to global concerns is one of the most serious challenges of the present moment because it involves the future of the planet, which is at risk. The many and varied changes we are experiencing represent some of the deepest questions posed to theology until now.

Reality challenges theology.

Each moment provokes new questions and implies historical processes that have to be understood in theological terms. In our time ecological understanding requires a renewed theological paradigm that takes account of environmental problems. These are not just 'green' issues or issues about species in danger of extinction; they are questions about the relationships between human beings themselves, and with nature and its meaning. We human beings were not created to set ourselves above creatures as dominators, but to be alongside them, to live peacefully together in an awareness of being sisters and brothers.

The more scientific discoveries reveal to us the origins and processes of the myriad life forms, the more we come to the certainty that everything is interdependent. No species is self-sufficient. There is a relationship between the networks of beings. We are part of a planet that is woven out of a multiplicity of beings. To feel ourselves part of them leads us to a responsibility, a concern and a loving, familial relationship. It instills in us an attitude of communion because we are related to everything. Nothing is without significance for us; everything is part of us and familiar to us.

The average person asks if it is possible to talk of God as Creator when the world has such great imbalances in the natural and the human order. How can we understand God as Creator today? How can we judge the action of God in our world?

All these questions make us believers take off our sandals and walk on the earth with veneration and gratitude (Ex 3.2), learning to discover the mystery of God revealed to us in it. It makes us adopt a relationship of respect that means, as Ernesto Cardenal has said, giving up the spirit of possessiveness and wastefulness. It means changing our consumerist attitude. It means thinking of future generations.

The most radical version of ecology criticizes Christianity for seeing human beings as the centre of the universe. Christianity, it says, thinks that human beings have an unlimited, sovereign right to subject creatures to their whims, can take arbitrary decisions about the fate of all other creatures precisely because they are the centre; it recognises a qualitative leap, an unbridgeable difference, between human beings and other living beings. In this view, the idea of humanity created in the image and likeness of God, and with the apparent task of subduing and having dominion over the earth (Gen 1. 26-28), is at the root of the present crisis. Christianity is accused of upholding an anthropocentric view of the world that has been damaging to the planet throughout history. In view of all these positions and situations, theology, working with other branches of science and in dialogue with the human sciences, is looking for alternatives that offer a future, a perspective, an understanding, for the planet.

Humanity today is aware of the consequences and implications of theological understanding. There is an attempt to go beyond the dichotomies that stress the differences between the spiritual and the temporal, the sacred and the profane, in order to promote a vision of the world and humanity as a whole that is both temporal and spiritual. An interest in ecological problems is implied by theological anthropology, by

our understanding of human beings in their relation to God. We shall look at the human condition in the light of Creation.

Recognizing the created universe as a sacrament, glimpsing the secret in the harmonious relationship between the infinitely large and the infinitely small, allows us to intuit, believe and accept the mystery disclosed to us in every particle of the created world. It leads us to a confession of the presence of God in everything. It leads us to a recognition of the sacred.

Today theology invites us to revise the traditional model of salvation consisting of paradise-fall-punishment-redemption-glory. It is a model that says little to a modern world marked by secularism. It is a view that produces an image of a punishing God that calls out for renewal. Theology today reflects the anxieties and issues of our time, and the problems of humanity have become part of the field of theological study. This is why Leonardo Boff says that we need “a new spirituality to find the deep meaning of living in nature”. It is a significant challenge for spiritual traditions, and one to which we in Assumption wish to give a response for the world from the perspective of the thinking of Saint Marie Eugénie : “The law of the Gospel is a state in which no creature has to suffer oppression from the others” (vol. VIII, n. 1610).

God reveals himself to us in Creation in this expanding universe with which we are familiar today and which astonishes us more every day with these irreversible processes which we could think of as a huge and increasingly complex embryo in which the fundamental forces are unified. All this keeps us in an attitude of admiration and astonishment, humility and surprise at the life of the created universe. It all leads us to respect and to “not let anything that has life suffer” (Or I. Ed 1903, p.32).

This is a truly contemplative attitude to history and the universe. It presupposes a change of paradigm that implies an acceptance of Creation, not as a finished, static concept, but as a dynamic one, in constant re-Creation, in which human beings are not a ‘unique’ element, nor even the ‘final’ one. They are, rather, an elder Brother and as such responsible for

what they have received as a gift. They contemplate in astonishment the evolving, grateful process of nature. They are a creature called to communion with all other creatures, to re-create, to collaborate in the growth of life, to care for the whole of the created world. We see the face of God that is being unveiled to the universe of which we are a part. We recognise how life is reproduced from different structures, how these nourish each other, how they interact with each other and finally acquire autonomy. The climax is a growth in consciousness, what Teilhard de Chardin identified as the reflective universe.

I would like to go back to some aspects of the reinterpretation carried out by the Old Testament believers, who recognised the warmth and the love in the work that came from God's hands.

In contrast to the commercial, utilitarian mentality that dominates our current dealings with nature, I think that it does us good to return to the biblical evidence to recover the sense of gratuitousness, of beauty for its own sake, of letting each creature exist in its own right; this is the spiritual dimension of the Old Testament texts that I would like to recover. I feel that it is these dimensions that enable us to discover the meaning and value of all Creation.

I believe that it is important to note that belief in Creation is neither the basis nor the goal of the statements contained in Genesis 1 and 2. As Gerhard von Rad says, "therefore with all its astonishing concentration on the individual objects of its faith in Creation, this preface has only an ancillary function. It points the course that God took with the world."⁹¹ We cannot take these statements in isolation, but in the context of the whole history of salvation. They are the gateway to a vision that culminates in the Beloved Son.

⁹¹Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: a commentary*, London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 46.

What is the question the authors of Genesis 1 and 2 are answering? Is it the question of the origin of the universe or its end? I think it is important to stress that *the priestly author of Genesis 1 shapes his account for liturgical purposes, for praise, the space of gratuitousness where we recognise and praise the presence of God's goodness in all that exists.* Creation is organised for a precise end: it is summed up in the Sabbath, the day of rest and praise of the Creator. The author gives a liturgical flavour to the understanding he shares with us of a God in love with the universe which re-creates itself in the beauty of everything that was the fruit of God's love. The emphasis of the whole account is on the seventh day, the day that is sanctified and blessed, set apart for God. This day will have no night. There will be no work, but it will be the time for blessing, for the Creation of the beauty that springs from thanksgiving and wonder.

In Genesis 2 the human being is taken from the earth that already exists and is destined for agriculture, indispensable for life. In Hebrew the performance of the liturgy and agricultural work are expressed by the same term, so they are not activities in opposition or irreconcilable. They express the same purpose. Life appears in the cultivated enclosure of the *eden*, in the garden. This word "garden" implies delight, enjoyment, pleasure. Saving actions, which are full of life, take place in the garden (Is 51.3; 58.11). God is the owner. The garden will be the place of love, the place to receive the whole created world as a precious gift for creatures. "God the Father wants the blessings of nature to be for all" (Instr. 03.11.1882).

In the centre is the "tree-of-life" and of the "knowledge-of-good-and-evil". Human beings in themselves cannot not think of themselves as creatures. Self-definition would be a negation of God's sovereignty. Obedience to the word or challenging the Lord's command is a matter of life or death.

It means crossing the *boundary of the fixed limit, the claim to be limitless, to set ourselves up as lords and masters of all.* From the beginning there has been a threefold transgression, which today we recognise with pain for the consequences it has had for the most vulnerable majority of our

world: the transgression of our limits as creatures, the claim to immortality, omniscience and omnipotence. All this takes us no further than the experience of our own nakedness and our own poverty. Egoism and self-sufficiency dazzle us and distort our reading of the reality of the world, of ourselves and God, and lead us to the discovery of our own vulnerability. It was to be at the foot of a tree that God made his unconditional commitment to mend the breaks caused by the human being's greed and rapacity.

Another element that I should like to highlight as a thread running through the Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, one that speaks to us of the gift of life, is the *life-giving presence of water*. In the beginning the earth is like a desert, negative (Gen 2.4b-7). But there is an alternative to this situation: we now encounter a term that means "spring", "flood water", "torrent". Moisture begins to open the possibility of life, there is a need for a cultivator, someone to care for things. The Yahwist writer uses the term "potter", someone who molds and shapes the human being. This being is beloved dust of the earth. The source of human life is only God, who blows and communicates a breath that stimulates an act of internal animation. The relation between human beings and the earth is plain to see. They belong to each other, they are connected.

In Ezek 47.1-12 we are told of the water flowing from the Temple that will make fertile all the places it passes through. The fertility makes the waters able to clean and give real life. They show forth the life-giving glory of the Lord who dwells in the Temple. Wherever the water from the Temple goes forests of trees will spring up on both sides, and everything will be made fresh (vv 8-12). Life will prosper wherever the torrent reaches. There will be plenty and the leaves of the trees will not wither and their fruit will not fail, and they will have medicinal properties.

So in this way the two initial accounts of Creation have as their purpose to sustain and begin the process of love, spelt out and cared for with a view to salvation and choice. A constant is the beauty and goodness of Creation. The goodness of the creatures corresponds to the goodness of the Creator. Recognizing the goodness of the creatures means praise of their Creator. Very often we feel incapable of appreciating the beauty and goodness of what exists because we are prisoners of an economic vision that immediately raises the questions, “What use is this to me?” “How much will it bring me?”

This confronts human beings with the *alternative of life or death*. An enthralling history is set in motion in which the exercise of *freedom* is developed, that symbol and patrimony of the greatness and dignity that originates in the unconditional love of the God who makes a commitment to the world. *Theology has become aware* of this historical process, of human existence and discovery as the locus of God’s saving action and revelation, fulfilled in the event of Christ.

John’s faith community described, ratified and saw the fulfilment of these symbols in the Son. He is the new Adam in whom everything has been created. Christ’s body is the new Temple (Jn 2.21), from the side of which water flows (Jn 19.34), water for eternal life (Jn 4.14; 7.37-39), as a river of life flows from the heavenly throne of the slaughtered Lamb (Rev 22.1-2). The Son of God, the word, which ‘was in the beginning with God’ (Jn 1.1-3), hangs from a tree from which life will come to us. Redemption comes to us through the tree of life, through the sharing of the Spirit with us from the open side. This is the new breath of the Father which we receive through the loving self-sacrifice of the Son on the cross, and which we receive in the Holy Spirit.

From this act of the Son in humbling himself “to the point of death — even death on a cross” (Phil 2.6-11), a new people is born. Someone is hanging on a tree in a new garden and from his life surrendered and shared, from this new birth process, with blood and water, a new people springs, life in abundance. It is the seventh day. In the garden life is born from the tree

and a new Creation begins. “In him all things are renewed”. In and through Him, Jesus Christ, we understand God’s saving plan. In him we are shown God’s action. As Paul said long ago, “All things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1.16; 1 Cor 8.6; Heb 21. 2-3; Jn 1.3,10).

St Paul inaugurates the tradition in which Mother Marie Eugénie will situate herself, that of the cosmic Christ. He presents Christ as the head of the cosmos, Christ “in everything and in all people”. He is the origin, the reason and the goal of everything that exists. Everything resonates in Him, is found in Him and in Him we meet all creatures. The cosmos is the result of a long process of evolution. Christ is also part and the product of this process. Through the Incarnation God becomes human and at the same time imbues the universe and humanity with Christ. Through his birth and his blood, the universal Christ leads every creature towards the Father. In the incarnate Word everything acquires consistency, everything converges. He makes matter a divine medium to express himself and communicate. Mother Marie Eugénie was to say that the “earth is a place of glory for God.” He is the centre and head of the universe, present in every moment of the cosmic and human adventure, which he sustains and accompanies.

All those of us who share such a vision cannot allow the face of Creation to be disfigured or despised. Must our task not be to rebuild and encourage spaces where life, the excluded and minorities can be defended, since we know that the Kingdom is like a seed and occurs in small actions? As daughters of Mother Marie Eugénie, must we not make an option for relationships of mutual collaboration, for universal causes, for planetary causes, for inclusion, to stand alongside and have our existence with the little ones, for a morality mediated by mercy and goodness, solidarity and peace?

Bibliography

- BÉJAR BACAS, José S. *Donde hombre y Dios se encuentran*, Valencia: EDICEP, 2004
- BOFF, Leonardo. *La dignidad de la tierra*, Madrid: Trotta, 2000
- BÓRMIDA, Jerónimo. *Visión franciscana de la justicia, la paz y la ecología*, Salamanca: Ed San Esteban, 2001
- MARTÍNEZ SIERRA, A. *Antropología teológica fundamental*, Madrid: BAC, 2002
- MENACHO, Joaquín. 'El reto de la tierra', *Cristianisme i Justícia* 89 (April 1999)
- RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, Juan. *Teología de la Creación*, Santander: Sal Terrae, 1988
- *Antropología teológica fundamental*, Santander. Sal terrae, 1988
- *Teología de la creación*, Santander. Sal terrae, 2000
- SAYÉS, José Antonio. *Teología de la creación*. Madrid: Palabra, 2002
- SCHMITZ-MOORMANN, Karl. *Teología de la creación de un mundo en evolución*. Pamplona: Verbo Divino, 2005
- TORRES QUEIRUGA, Andrés, 'La estructura fundamental de la esperanza bíblica', *Theologica Xaveriana*, N°154 (Apr-May, 2005)
- LEONARDO BOFF, *Ecology, theology, politics and mysticism*. See the English version of Leonardo Boff's blog: <https://leonardoboff.wordpress.com/category/english/>

3. b.3 Woman and ecology: a quick look at what anthropocentrism forgot

María Eugenia Ramírez, r.a.

ECOLOGY

The first to coin the term *ecology* was Ernst Haeckel (1834 -1919). According to his understanding, ecology means the study of the relationship of all living and non-living systems among themselves and with their environment. Therefore, ecology is “**knowledge of the interrelationships, interconnections, interdependencies and the exchanges of all with all, in all their aspects and at all times**”.⁹² In ancient Hebrew, there is no word that corresponds to our term *nature* since, for the ancient Hebrews, there was no such thing as two separate worlds: the world of nature and the world of human beings. For this reason, the strength of the Old Testament’s theology lies in one God, Lord of all Creation. About this, it is important to remember that the masculine Hebrew word *’adâm* is derived from the feminine noun *’adâmah*, which means earth; this is very important for the Jewish mentality, because it indicates close harmony ties between Man and the cosmos, since they both have a single origin, and they depend on one another. This leads us to think that the Hebrews had a profoundly integral world vision in which both human beings and the rest of the creatures are in a close union and dependence on God. Moreover, what is perfectly observable is a great sense of interdependence of all creatures and an image of the world as a single cosmic community instead of a series of autonomous entities.

A FEW ANTHROPOCENTRIC TRADITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

⁹² Leonardo Boff: Grito de la Tierra, Grito de los Pobres

In the West, on the other hand, and as a consequence of our anthropocentric thought, Jesus has been seen as one who lived in Galilee two thousand years ago but whose work and messages had only to do with human beings. This way of thinking has been so ingrained that even some of Jesus' works have been interpreted as the confirmation that the Christian should consider nature as a profane realm. This is how Saint Augustine interpreted the Gospel passages that discuss the sterile fig tree and the pigs of Gerasa, for example.

The androcentric inclination

From an androcentric way of thinking, there has been a devaluation of those activities and forms of perceiving and feeling because the world is considered to be feminine. Religion and philosophy have presented "the woman" as Nature and sexuality. Western thought has generalized an "arrogant" perception of the world (Warren, 1996) in which Nature is a simple raw material, inferior and existing in order to be dominated and exploited by a reasoning that lacks a feeling of compassion (Plumwood, 1992).

In dialogue with the so-called "ethics of caring", eco-feminism⁹³ has shown that all the tasks that are related to the sustenance and maintenance of life (starting with domestic tasks and the tasks that are proper to people far from the logic of the market) have been unjustly devaluated (Mellor, 1997) according to the inferior status granted to Nature. Even compassion and love for non-human animals has been affected by gender status. A culture that has mythologized the warrior and the hunter tends to see the attitudes of empathizing with suffering creatures as feminine sentimentality and infantilism. The Woman has been naturalized and Nature has been feminized.

² Alicia H. Puleo, ecofeminismo: the perspective relating to gender in the ecological consciousness. Chapter extracted from the book Capítulo extraído del libro Claves del ecologismo social, editado por Libros en Acción-Ecologistas en Acción.

A PARADIGM SHIFT REQUIRES A TRANSFORMATION OF OUR WAY OF SEEING THINGS

According to Leonardo Boff, the definition that most suits our ideas about change would be: “The paradigm is an organised, systematic and current way of relating with ourselves and with the rest around us. It is about patterns and models of appreciation, explanation and action concerning our surrounding reality.” A conversion on these levels is not exclusively for men but is also for women, a task that should be done in union and from the depths of their own common roots, a task that implies overcoming great cultural conditioning as well.

It is necessary to highlight the incidence that this paradigm shift has for the living of an authentic spirituality: a spirituality in the style of Francis of Assisi, who lived in great communion with nature without worrying about falling into some type of pantheism, that is, a spirituality that isn't incarnate. Second, it is urgent to emphasize that “ecology is not a fashion. If we do not realize that we are ruining our home, future generations will have to live outdoors”.⁹⁴

Not only reflection and change of thought

What role does an eco-theology play in the destiny of humanity and the destiny of the cosmos? Does the Christian faith have a proper understanding concerning the right relation between human beings and the rest of Creation? I believe that conceptually speaking we can have a certain degree of consensus in answering these questions. What is at play are the **concrete implications** that the following affirmations should have: that woman is created in God's image and likeness; that Baptism confers the same dignity to both men and women; that both Jesus' and his apostles' conduct had a very marked cultural-historic conditioning.

⁹⁴ LÓPEZ, A., EDUARDO, “Exigencias ecológicas y ética cristiana. Proyección”, en *Selecciones de Teología*, No. 143, Vol. 36, 1997, pp. 263-268

A serious theological reflection about these topics leads us to find anthropologic arguments that provide a solid base for such a reflection. It is evident that we cannot continue having the same arguments that the first seven ecumenical Church councils have had according to which, woman was ontologically inferior to man having been formed from his rib; “it is like affirming that man is the “original” and that women are a poor and discolored copy”⁹⁵. How then can we acquire a new way of looking at both men and women and all of nature? How can we create a new culture of solidarity with both women and nature? If we take into account that “a human being and the cosmos not only have the same origin, but are also oriented toward an identical destiny, nothing of our world is destined for death”⁹⁶. This is the integration of the ecological category into theological reflection, as a different discourse, or if you like, complementary to what has been traditionally known as the theology of Creation.

It is about acquiring a new gaze, a regard that will only be possible by a different way of **thinking and integrating all reality**. An interior transformation is necessary which will allow for an integral appreciation and valuing of the human being’s reality, man and woman, and of their relationship with the cosmos. It is clear that the living of this new spirituality will substantially affect our way of relating to other beings. It is our challenge, complex, unavoidable and fascinating at the same time.

As women, we are neither the planet’s saviors nor the privileged representatives of Nature, but we can contribute to a sociocultural change toward equality that allows *caring practices*, historically feminized (and thus devalued), to be universalized, that is, that they would also become a characteristic of men and be extended to the natural non-human world.

⁹⁵ María Isabel Gil,

<http://www.javeriana.edu.co/theologica/UserFiles/Descarga/ediciones/140/La%20mujer%20y%20la%20ecologia.pdf>

⁹⁶ LÓPEZ, A., EDUARDO, *Exigencias ecológicas...*, p.236.

3. b. 4 An Approach to a Theology of Consecrated Life.

From an ecological perspective. A new position emerging out of selflessness

María Eugenia Ramírez, r.a.

“Consecrated men and women are called to be citizens of the place where they happen to live, children of the cosmos who acknowledge no other absolute demand, save that of belonging to God and because of this they can transcend the artificial boundaries introduced by humans to divide the earth, resources, peoples, even religion.”

Sandra Schneiders

THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: TOTALITY!

At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is developing a new consciousness (men and women, the followers of Jesus are among these). We seem to have discovered a new, broader horizon. We now think compatible what before we thought incompatible. We glimpse new paradigms. We discover goodness and truth where before we saw malice and error. And all this without renouncing the essential principles of our faith and the revelation given to us.

The ecological approach to the world is not confined today to the natural sciences. We also talk of human ecology, mind ecology, ecology of action, eco-feminism, eco-theology. What ecology aims at today is to shun partial, sectorial explanations and to take the whole into account. With a very simple example, we could say that ecology does not reduce the body to the combination of its organs, but focuses on the body as a whole and in this it discovers the organs and their internal relations. Ecology is

particularly sensitive to relations, interactions, the connection established in nature and in the planet.

Having an ecological perspective implies renouncing fixed, determined, self-contained concepts: renouncing uncovering the truth in a part without taking the whole into account. This is why the ecological mind takes as its starting point a fundamental intellectual humility, because it knows that it will not understand anything that is not presented as part of a whole, connected to the whole.

The theology of Creation invites us to adopt an ecological point of view. In the project of our Creator God, of our God Father-Mother, totality is included. He created everything and saw that it was “good”, “beautiful”. God-Abba set his creating finger on everything that exists. All existing things have a reason to exist. Everything is interconnected. Nothing finds a definition in itself, only when related to its whole. The thinker Gregory Bateson rightly said: “only totality is sacred!” Only in the totality of everything that exists shows God who He is and how he acts. A limited partiality that is seen as a total is heresy.

IF THERE IS A CREATOR, WE ARE ALL CREATURES

God creates with no forewarning, from scratch, taking himself as a starting point. He is in the very root of everything that exists. This world is sustained and maintained in a full dynamism thanks to God, the “ultimate foundation” on which the whole universe rests, the “first cause”. To conclude, “God acts *the* world, He does not act *in the* world, said Karl Rahner, one of the great 20th century Catholic theologians. This God is marvelous, he restricts himself, hides, veils his presence in the world so that the world can exist and so as to make human beings free. Freedom would be impossible if God did not retreat from the world. He is an absent presence.

We are God's footprint, a trace in reality. Everything has his fingerprint, the stamp of his 'image', but is offered subtly, gently... nearly imperceptible to inattentive eyes and ears. The French Dominican theologian Christian Duquoc often talks of the 'discretion' of our God. God's presence is very discreet, elusive, we do not see it in Creation. A presence which sometimes we would wish were stronger, more obvious, more manifest. But in the meantime we are part of this labor, of this longing for a new world for which we await impatiently. This has deep implications in terms of responsibility... and also of mystic experience.

Implications?

It is not always easy to uncover the consequences of an ecological approach to reality and in general religious life tackles them from the commitment to work in favour of ecological justice and peace. We shall try to bring together several which can be used as fireflies for a more integrated path, a more holistic one, as regards religious life. What is the profile of a consecrated man or woman who lives with this ecological ethic?

1. S/he takes care of life

Life appears in the Bible as an entity that is both frail and holy. Little is needed to finish it off. But at the same time it is vivified by God's breath, the *ruhá* which sustained the beginning of Creation. God's spirit is still winging over the waters.

The people of Israel could discover that the same liberating God who had accompanied them through the events of the Exodus, was at the same time the God of Creation. Later narratives gathered in the book of Genesis express with rich symbols the certainty that life is God's gift. Throughout the Old Testament God appears as defender of life. He worries about the poor, the needy, the widow. Real cult is not disconnected from justice for the poor.

Jesus carried on along the same lines. His is a qualitative leap: from life as a gift, to quality of life. He showed that humans are not only assigned to embrace life as God's gift, but to commit to build it up. This was the assignment of his public life. Jesus envisaged the road to quality of life as one that traverses self-renunciation. This quality is achieved taking as a starting point the theory of the ear of wheat that loves life but dies to produce life around itself.

Religious life is an invitation to live these two experiences: life as a gift and a quality of life.

But in a life in which life endures so many oppressions and injustices we need to work to build quality of life. Living is not only breathing. Today more than half the inhabitants of the world see their lives threatened. A life under threat is not having access to enough food, to a roof, to education. People in this situation have fewer rights. And what is more, many of them do not even have the right to life. The sorrows of the world challenge religious men and women.

He does not only give them life, He gives them the earth, Creation... He invites them to be part of his work of Creation and tells them: grow! I give you the seeds, I give you the earth, water, sun, I give you your hands and your siblings' hands. Here you are, it is yours too. It is a gift, it is a present, it is an offering. It is not something acquired, nor is it something bought. It was here before us and it will succeed us. It is a gift given by God so that, with Him, we can make it ours.

God does not want Creation for Himself, as a mirror for Himself. On the contrary. Creation is a gift to be shared. It is the space God gives us, to build with us, to build a "we". The world, history, time is the place where we build this "we" with God, a "we" with others, "we" with the earth... The person who does not take care does not

cultivate and those who do not cultivate do not care...⁹⁷

Pope Francis

2. S/he lives gratuitousness

We have asserted that life is a gift, something we have received for free. The wonder of having intelligent life has been given to us as the product of an evolutionary process during millions of years. An ecological consciousness helps us to feel we belong to that long chain of events and be grateful. An understanding of the Big Bang gives us a history and at the same time it is about humility. Besides being grateful to God, we can also show our gratitude towards the creatures who make our life possible.

For instance, all the time we breathe and use oxygen produced by plants. The Sun is our main source of energy. Every day we consume food elaborated by a marvelous relationship between living and inanimate things. Across the long food chain we end up eating the Sun. Light, with its wonderful colors, helps us not to live in shadows and to give some color to the world. Water, a marvelous invention, is present in so many processes related to us. Our ears are as alert to the birds singing as much as to songs in electronic media; the language of music rejoices human hearts. The Earth, as a great system, maintains its balance and on it we take part in the cycle of life-death that falls to every human being. Daniel Teufel, a biologist, says that *“the carbon in us has been part of 600 organisms before.”* This is a call to feel we belong to the cosmos and be grateful to it.

We could carry on like this naming the wonders around us that make our lives possible. A Buddhist tradition invites us to be aware, i.e. to develop the skill of becoming aware of the value of each creature. Unsurprisingly, an exercise practiced in this school is simply to learn to drink a glass of water.

⁹⁷ Pope Francis' speech to educators. Quito. July 2015.

Jesus, acting from his quality of life, was very sensitive to gratitude. He felt hurt when only one of the ten lepers came back to thank Him. In many gospel passages he thanks God, for knowing that He listens to him, as much as for seeing that the poor understand his message and for the bread they are going to eat.

Jesus, who lived gratitude, lived together with others as *“the man for others,”* as Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it. The pair **gratitude – gratuitousness** appears clearly in the way he went through life. Jesus was the man of gratuitousness. When we are aware of all we have received, we are in a better position to do things for free. St Paul will connect these two attitudes: *“what you received for free, give away for free.”* Being grateful encourages us to do things for free.

In a society in which everything has a price, where everything ‘costs’, living an attitude of gratuity, of being available, is a necessary service in order to take the path towards a new humanity. As religious men and women we should understand that *“my time”* is available for the person who needs me. It does not belong to me, it is a means of humanity for others.

A conscience of gratuity! Make God’s gratuity present! Go back every day to it, return every day to the gratuity with which God chose you. You did not deserve it. We are God’s object of gratuity. If we forget this, slowly we become more and more important... The advice of a brother: every day – it is perhaps better at night, before going to sleep — turn your eyes to Jesus and tell Him *“you gave me everything for free”*. This immediately repositions us...

Pope Francis to Members of Institutes of Consecrated Life,

Ecuador, 08/07/2015

3.S/he is co-Creator, free and responsible... s/he confesses and announces a God who is terribly respectful of our freedom, non-interventionist, but ‘intentionist.’

A good service to our society would be to remind it of the beginning of the Creed: *“I believe in God, Creator of heaven and earth.”* The consequences of this assertion are huge. We are creatures of clay with stardust in our bodies, fed every day with the photosynthetic gift of solar light, water and air.

From the very moment of our conception, we belong to God because we are a product of God’s Creation. From the birth of the earth itself, our God Creator always gives life to beings endowed with grace and beauty. God creates us and believes in us. He gives us the gift of freedom and with this gesture of trust He creates us again. If we are called to be co-Creators, we can conclude too that we share with God the same undying trust in his Creation, in everything He has created. Do we believe in our brothers and Sisters, in their immense possibilities, in the dynamism of life that inhabits everything that has come from God’s hand? Claiming our rightful place in Creation (our place, not our anthropocentric obsession with prominence) and our responsible behavior as co-Creators on earth is becoming our main and most urgent spiritual challenge. Religious men and women who do not accept this challenge cannot be a prophetic voice now or in the future.

4. S/he is a welcoming person in his/her reflection, in his/her capacity of analysis, in his/her believing intelligence.

S/he renounces ideological totalitarianism, rigid definitions that are very precise, too logical. Because every definition engenders limits, divisions, distinctions and does not take into account relationships and interaction. Weak postmodern thinking is not weak because it sees itself as incapable of reaching truth, but because no truth is enough for it, since it searches the totality within which partial truths are interrelated. This is why a person with an ecological mind permanently searches for truth; s/he recognises the truth in others; s/he allows others to enrich her/him; s/he is open to dialogue, to interaction and to interchange.

5. S/he senses her/his own identity.

This identity is not found in her/his simple individuality, nor in the separation from others, nor in the emphasis of her/his individual characteristics. S/he discovers it in interrelation, in communion. S/he searches for links and connections. S/he reaches maturity through relationships, not through isolation. When we are only in contact with people with similar frames of mind, those frames of mind easily prevail and remain invisible. The more isolated a group or person, the less s/he will relate to what is different, which should help her/him to see through his/her own mode of thinking. At the same time, identity in religious life is not expressed only by what makes it different from lay Christian life, or from the life of those who belong to other societies, religions or cultures. Religious life is also identified by identifying elements shared with others. This is why the joint mission, the joint charism (in our case Assumption Together) includes an essential identity principle. Today we favour everything that is “inter” as a form of enrichment of our own identity. We acquire a world identity in the constellation of humanity and nature, not appearing as isolated stars that shine separately.

6. The religious wo/man with an ecological mindset

Such a person understands community life in a different and enriched way. Community life is not confined to the relationships established with each member of the community group as legally established. “An ecological mindset typically” – according to Cristo Rey García Paredes – “establishes a relationship with everybody, but also with the place, with the home (*oikos*, *oiko-logia*). A community group is identified as such when it generates a material and spiritual space called ‘home’. A community – a form of alliance – ‘gets married’, creates a home, relationships and domestic spaces.” This is the opposite of an unresponsive space, a neutral space that does not become a form of identification, or give shape. This is what happens when a community

does not behave as such, when individuals approach each other in a space that is a no-place (Marc Augé), a space of transit and indifference. For those with an ecological vocation a community is a biotope, i.e., a space of life. But each biotope correlates to other biotopes. One does not live in a community communion, without a communion with the borough, the city, the national or cultural space, so that each biotope is oriented to welcome a biocenosis: a community of living creatures that share the great gift of life and of sharing life.⁹⁸

A final hunch in this direction. A community (the people that create it and itself as an entity) from this ecological perspective is called to engender and give birth to life, changes, creative innovations. In general we are all resistant to change, creatures of habits. Like a woman giving birth, a community and each of its members should acknowledge when they need to keep pushing (to welcome those necessary changes) and when... they simply need to breathe and to adapt to group rhythm.

7. The vows that are so characteristic of religious life have an ecological dimension.

That is to say, not only a mystical dimension (of connection and alliance with our God), or a community / fraternal dimension (relationship to our community Sisters or Brothers), or a missionary dimension (charisms that enable and favour our prophetic mission). The ecological dimension shows us that obedience, chastity and poverty place us in the interrelation that enriches others and enriches us. Obedience is interrelation: attention to all reality and service and a covenantal relation to live life to the fullest. Celibacy is interrelation: it is not a matter of blocking sexuality and breaking relationships, but of a peculiar form of living in the body, of establishing relationships with the whole, of service to the whole. The celibate body is at the service of life and of nature's body to create a

⁹⁸ A biocenosis (also-called biotic or ecological community or simply community) is the ensemble of organisms of different species living together in a clearly defined space called biotope, which offers them the environmental conditions necessary for their survival.

balance, to fill the rivers of life, love and tenderness. It becomes the trial space for new languages in the exercise of charity, seeking to heal and create new gender relationships of equality, respect and true reciprocity. Poverty is, when ecologically understood, a form of defense of the integrity of Creation, using goods and interchanging them not as a form of control, but of respect and love. “The person with an ecological mindset lives his/her vows in relationship with the whole and never in isolation. These are the signs which respond to the initial project of the Creator and which can be recovered from the cross of redemption.⁹⁹

8. Our mission is understood differently.

Mission does not mean to give what others lack, to save what is lost. A mission from an ecological perspective is, before anything else “*missio inter gentes*”, the way to create correlations, to contribute through service to the breathing of the world, to connect all existing mechanisms of grace, to help Grace to flow around, without hindrances, everywhere. The mission in an ecological key requires much wisdom, trust and strategy: wisdom because great knowledge does not necessary yield solutions, it comes from the deep hunches born from the contact with the Mystery that is the ground of everything: trust because one is sure that the presence of grace beyond the well-defined limits of a religious system or of the criteria engendered by our beliefs; this trust is trust in the Spirit that fills the whole earth: and strategy because ecology reminds us of complexity, chance, and creativity beyond Aristotelian logic.

I could carry on naming different traits of a religious life that expresses this ecological perspective. But I shall let each Sister, each of you, continue and complete it better than the suggestions I have outlined. Ecology – like other opportunities, preoccupations and sensibilities of the contemporary world – opens a new understanding to us, allows us to re-discover

⁹⁹ Cristo Rey García Paredes. Eco-teología de la Vida Religiosa.

ourselves in new contexts, propels the consciousness we have of what we are... This is a real challenge, but also a blessing.

Bibliography

- Leonardo Boff, *Ecología: grito de la Tierra, grito de los pobres*. Ed.Trotta, Madrid.2011
- Alfonso García, *Dominad la Tierra. Cristianisme i Justicia*, Barcelona
- DIARMUID O’MURCHU msc: *VIDA CONSAGRADA, El cambio de Paradigmas*, 2008
- Jose María Mardones. *Matar a nuestros dioses-un Dios para un creyente adulto*. PPC 2012
- *Revista Christus, Ecología*, vol 657, Aug 1992
- Jose A. Merino, *De la crisis ecológica a la paz con la Naturaleza*, Cuadernos pedagógicos de Vida Consagrada, Madrid.2004
- José Cristo Rey García Paredes, cmf “Conciencia “ecológica” e impacto en la vida consagrada: ¡sólo la totalidad es sagrada!” (2011) <http://www.xtorey.es/?p=847>

3.c. The Social Thought of the Church

3.c.1 An approach to ecology from the social doctrine of the Church

Silvia Oseguera, r.a.

INTRODUCTION

When I was thinking about ecology and migration, the image of the extraordinary Monarch butterfly came to my mind. This migratory species has a wingspan of only about 10 centimeters and it flies more or less 4500 kilometers, from North America to the forests of Mexico, looking for the

necessary conditions for the preservation of the species. An immense sense of gratitude then came to my heart for the marvelous gift of this earth that God gave us and for the many things that we can learn from her.

One of the characteristics of the Church all throughout history is that she is always looking for new ways of sharing the Gospel, of trying to respond to many different realities, coming to these realities from different angles, and imagining different ways to think about them; of shedding light on them in season and out; of establishing criteria for judgment and discernment; of motivating attitudes and concrete guidelines for action, from which each person, starting from his/her own reality and function, could engage as a Christian with integrity and solidarity. Actually this is the role of the Social Doctrine of the Church as stated by the Pontifical Council “Justice and Peace” in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.¹⁰⁰

The Social Doctrine of the Church is the mediator between the Gospel and concrete reality. It doesn't pretend to have solutions of universal value (OA4) but only to present doctrinal principles, as footholds of a general and foundational character, which make reference to social reality in general and this is why they need to be constantly actualized in order to respond to the ever new realities of the world and history.

The Social Doctrine of the Church has its sources in Sacred Scripture, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium of the Church through its letters, encyclicals and in the teachings of the Bishops and reflections of important theologians as well as in the reality of our society as recognised by the social sciences. The dialogue between Faith and life is continually being streamlined without losing sight of the fact that the dignity and rights of the human person are the foundation and objective

¹⁰⁰ The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church, Vatican Edition, 2004

of this dialogue. This dialogue concerns the entire Christian community, pastors as well as each member.

A LOOK AT REALITY

In the last 50 years the realization that the earth's resources are limited has been a wakeup call in the realm of ecology. This is in contrast to the technical scientific vision that progress has no limits and in opposition to a social model of accumulated riches and unending exploitation of natural resources that doesn't respect the natural environment, but destroys and contaminates it.

The defense of life and of the environment has indeed increased. However, not enough in view of the exploitation and dilapidation, of human as well as natural resources: the devastation of forests and woodlands with their biodiversity puts millions of lives in danger and obliges them to leave their natural habitats; out of control industrialization in cities and rural areas are contaminating the environment; mining industries cause damage to the earth also...and the list could continue of all the different things that are threatening the existence of life.

To go back to the image of the Monarch butterfly, during the time of their migration all along the route, there are many obstacles that their fragile nature needs to overcome, obstacles that are both natural and man-made, in order to arrive in their sanctuaries and reproduce, assuring a new generation to this progressively diminishing species ; and so we can compare this to our present environmental crisis, which everyone recognises and feels but which affects the poorest, because they live in places that are more subject to erosion and desertification. They also tend to be more involved in armed conflicts which oblige them to flee.

As Church we have not been indifferent to these realities. We share in them and suffer from them as God's People. As Magisterium we have

accompanied these realities and have raised consciousness of them through Gospel teachings.

The Magisterium since Leo XIII with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) started speaking of social problems. Pius XI continued with *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937), and Pius XII with his radio messages of 1941, 1942 and 1944; John XXIII contributed with *Mater et Magistra* (1961), and *Pacem in Terris* (1963); the Second Vatican Council with *Gaudium et spes* (1965) generated a whole movement; Paul VI with his encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Humanae Vitae* (1968) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) reinforced the social thinking which Faith implies. All of them implicitly evoke the theme of ecology and migration but not directly because in those times it wasn't seen as a "sign of the times." Nevertheless, Paul VI did express from time to time that there was an undue exploitation of Creation's resources (OA 21) because of a wrong interpretation by man who considered nature as an instrument and not as the "house" of all, separating him from his relationship with God, his Creator, and causing him to cease seeing the Creation as a gift that had to be taken care of and cultivated.

John Paul II and Benedict XVI both presented the ecological problem as one of the principal problems faced by humanity. John Paul II most insisted on this and called attention to it through different talks and documents, touching the theme implicitly with his encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), *Centesimus Annus* (1991), *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) and more explicitly in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* of 1998 (no.104) and in his messages for World Peace Day of 1990, 1999. Benedict XVI also touched on the theme in *Deus caritas est* (2005) and *Caritas in Veritate* (no. 50). For his part, Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 215,216) spoke of the earth as our common home where we are all brothers, guardians of the other creatures, and closely united to the world surrounding us. He invited us not to leave signs of destruction and death behind us which

would affect our lives and the lives of future generations. And recently in his message for World Peace Day 2015 he expressed sorrow at the conditions of life of so many migrants who put faces on slavery and poverty today.

The Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, echoing the different documents of the Magisterium, judged that the crisis in the relationship between humanity and the environment is caused by different factors, among which are: the pretention that humanity is to exercise absolute dominion over things without taking into consideration the morality which needs to characterise all human activity; the undue exploitation of natural resources; the manipulation and constant exploitation of nature; the ideology of science and technology; a vision of man and of things as disassociated from God and a lack of the sense of transcendence, and considering humanity as having an autonomous existence.¹⁰¹

The lack of an ecological conscience and a division between faith and social commitment generate cycles of death, such as those between misery, migration, and ecological deterioration: the poorest and most vulnerable live in the margins, where they are more exposed to natural risks and those of contamination. This generates more poverty and more environmental destruction; those who live in rural areas sometimes need to migrate in search of better living conditions for themselves and their families because of climatic changes and a lack of subsidies to cultivate the land. This can only be reduced by improving the living conditions of these groups and thus reducing zones of misery and proposing models of alternative societies where the dignity of all creatures are taken into account.

CRITERIA WHICH ENLIGHTEN

¹⁰¹ Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church, 461-465.

The ecological crisis is global and that is why we have to address it globally. The different man-made natural disasters and the rapidity of the means of social communication to communicate them have given rise to an increasing awareness of the seriousness of this reality that affects all of us. This has motivated the Magisterium to shine light on some concrete situations, to re-elaborate and reformulate its criteria for saving the environment as the patrimony of present and future generations. The continuous and interdisciplinary dialogue with this reality is of vital importance given the fact that the intervening factors are numerous, especially that of economics which is one of the most strongly implicated in the excessive exploitation of our natural resources and directly responsible for environmental deterioration. It is the responsibility of us all at every level of society to respond by going from denunciation to concrete action.

The Social Doctrine of the Church, like the Monarch butterfly, has its routes – doctrinal principles - that have been enriched over many years and that can approach and enlighten any social reality: setting parameters of reference for their interpretation and valorization, these are: the dignity of the human person, the universal destiny of goods, the common good, subsidiary, participation and solidarity. Moreover, they present some fundamental values which favour the development of the person and social coexistence: Truth, liberty, and justice, all vivified by love.¹⁰²

These principles propose seeing the environment as a collective good which we all have the responsibility to safeguard at every level: at the juridical level, by disciplining the use of the goods of Creation according the exigencies of the common good together with the firm sense of responsibility and an effective change of mentality and style of life; by programming economic development of countries, with the Creation of policies which respect the environment; by putting into place preventive strategies for the use of natural goods; and for the use of non-renewable sources of energy at the service of the whole of humanity; that bio-

¹⁰² Ibid., 124-208

technology would be used according to ethical criteria, looking at the advantages and eventual risks. Catholic Social Teaching invites us to remember that the goods of the earth were created by God to be wisely used by everyone and equitably shared with justice and charity, living solidarity at the international level.¹⁰³

PROJECT OF ACTION

It's necessary as Christians to act as one people, assuming our responsibility in caring for the environment and in the pastoral accompaniment of migrants, denouncing abuse and raising awareness in society, as well as planning concrete actions according to the reality of each place.

In Latin America, for instance, the 5th Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Aparecida, Brazil listened to the different expressions of the diverse realities of the Continent, offering help and suggestions, while opening a space where the Bishops can call us to assume our responsibility as disciples and missionaries.

Aparecida offers some concrete propositions and orientations concerning the care of the environment and ecology:

- Evangelize so as to discover the gift that Creation is; to know how to contemplate and take care of the earth as the “home” of all, educating to a style of life that is sober and austere for the sake of solidarity.
- Deepen the pastoral presence in the more vulnerable populations, who are threatened by predatory development.
- Look for an alternative model of development, which is holistic and in solidarity with the poor and based on an ethic which includes responsibility for an authentic natural and human ecology.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 466-487

- Increase efforts in the promulgation of public policies and citizen participation which guarantee the protection, conservation and restoration of nature.
- Determine ways of monitoring and of social control over the application of international environmental standards.

CONCLUSIONS

I will close this theoretical framework with the words of John Paul II:

While we are rightly preoccupying ourselves with preserving the natural “habitat” of the different endangered animal species, albeit, less than necessary, because we realize that each one of them makes its unique contribution to the general equilibrium of the earth, we are putting very little effort into safeguarding the moral conditions of an authentic “human ecology”.¹⁰⁴

As Assumption, assuming our educational role, we still have a lot to bring to the struggle for a healthy environment where persons can be happy and fulfilled in their own surroundings. And we need to be just like the Monarch butterfly that flies through thick and thin to create a suitable place where all can reach their full potential.

3. c.2 The church's social teaching :

the evolution of its thought in the light of different ethical views of nature and of development

Cécile Renouard, r.a.

¹⁰⁴ Encyclical *Centesimus annus* no. 38.

According to the analysis of Christoph Teobald (2001), there are two main ways in which the pronouncement of the magisterium can be understood: on the one hand there is the model of revelation handed down from above; in the other model it is seen as rising upwards from within society (as Karl Rahner presents it, for example).

The two models are evident in the way in which Christians interpret the social teaching of the Church. For some, it is a question of knowing what the Church says so as to act upon it; for others, it is a question of discovering how humans can collaborate with God's project by the patient deciphering of the circumstances and meanderings of written history. There certainly exists a relationship between statements of universal principles and the study of how they are reflected in the complexity of real life. The common understanding and sharing of all the faithful in the development of social teaching - by the *sensus fidei fidelium*, the collective discernment of the signs of the times - is of great significance, as is the social action to which it leads. In this respect Jean-Paul II's description of the aim of social teaching, at the beginning of his Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, is enlightening: "The Church guides people to respond so that, with the help of reason and human knowledge, they may fulfil their vocation as responsible builders of earthly society."

A perspective which is ethical and spiritual must take into account all the dimensions of our existence and all our institutions. There is movement in two directions: on the one hand there is the seeking out of how faith informs and sheds light on our view of the world, of its evolution and of the workings of the economy as it faces the radical challenges of ecology. On the other hand, there is a similar seeking out of how the social teaching of the Church can itself be transformed by circumstances. The two directional movement appears clearly in the deepening study of the connection between human beings and nature.

1. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE BIO-CENTRIC AND ECO-CENTRIC ETHICAL VIEWS: IS THERE INCOMPATIBILITY OR CONVERGENCE?

Since the 1990's the Christian churches have been speaking with conviction of a triple concern for "justice, peace and the integrity of Creation." If there is a consensus on the overall objective, the safe-guarding of Creation, it has to be recognised that there are different ethical stand-points taken by the churches and different ecclesiastical sensibilities.

There are different contemporary ethical positions with regard to the view of nature: between the "non-extensive" position which attributes inherent value to humans alone and the "extensive" position which attributes inherent value to everything that has life.

There are three different viewpoints among those who take this position:

- the patho-centric view point which attributes inherent value only to sentient animals;
- the bio-centric view point which attributes inherent value to everything that has life;
- the eco-centric view point which attributes inherent value to all that exists.

As a result of these different views, more or less attention has been paid to how the objects of these views are treated by humans and their institutions. Several philosophers/Protestant pastors have set out their views favouring either a bio-centric (Albert Schweitzer) or an eco-centric (J. Baird Callicott) standpoint.

In contrast, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church 2005* is clearly firmly opposed to

a conception of the environment derived from ecocentrism and biocentrism, because it disregards the ontological and axiological difference between humans and other forms of life, and considers the biosphere as a biotic unity which is inherently undifferentiated.

As a result, every form of life is seen as worthy of being treated with the same degree of dignity, and the view that humans have superior responsibility is lost. (no. 463)

However, are these divergent views as far apart as the *Compendium* seems to believe? The same document promotes an attitude of respect towards all forms of life and Creation, and proposes that whatever we use for our benefit should be seen as God-given and not abused; it is not only human beings, as Kant suggests, that deserve respect. This position is close to the idea that every form of life has inherent value, the view held by proponents of biocentrism, such as Kenneth Goodpaster (Afeissa 2007).

According to the theologian Jurgen Moltmann (1988), the dignity of living forms can be regarded as the expression of their intrinsic value. To say that all forms of life have value does not mean that they are all of equal value. It is therefore possible to reconcile the special value of human beings with the idea that all forms of life have dignity. Today an anthropocentrism which minimises the interdependence of all forms of life is clearly not widespread. But the anthropomorphic view that priority must be given to the preservation of balance in the biosphere for the sake of human beings is compatible with Christian belief.

This is certainly the view taken by Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato Si*: the Pope criticizes deviant anthropocentrism and recognises that "it is not for our sake that other forms of life exist "(no.83), and he invites us to see the special role of humankind in Creation as being to care for our environment which we share with every form of life whose innate goodness we must respect. (No. 69).

Jewish and Christian thought introduces the idea of Creation *ex nihilo* and insists that the act of Creation inaugurated the concept of otherness. According to the Jewish Kabbalah [an ancient wisdom that reveals how the universe and life work], the *tsimtsum* is the withdrawal of God; God brought into existence a vacuum so that he could create something other

than himself, his power took the form of self-limitation. At the same time God is present in the heart of Creation. God accompanies human kind and reveals himself as a Savior in the heart of the history of Israel, an event played out again in the history of humanity. This presence is manifested in Christian belief in the mystery of the Incarnation, the Word made Flesh (John 1); in several recent writings, the cosmic Christ described by St. Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, for example, is seen as the supreme form of the divine presence, both in the individual and in the universe. This presence which does not impose itself is paradoxical. It allows human beings to be autonomous with an immense responsibility for the rest of Creation, but at the same time giving them an ultimate objective: the Kingdom of God and a transfigured Creation. On this same theme, the theologian Karl Rahner speaks of the fundamental law that independence from and dependence on God merge to follow the same path.

This relationship with a God who offers himself and is sought throughout every element of Creation and in every action in the heart of the world is sometimes defined as panentheism, as opposed to pantheism: God is not Creation itself, but he is present throughout his Creation. This view is firmly held in The Orthodox Churches of the East; Maximus the Confessor writes of the divine energy in Creation, and Gregory Palamas in the 14th century writes of the doctrine of the innate energy within Creation (Egger 2012). Leonardo Boff has equally contributed to this perspective in Catholic theology which is inseparable from the recognition of the sacredness of the world, a view for which Jean de Peragame is well known, and which is also held by the Patriarch Bartholomew 1 today. Such stand-points are both theocentric and eco-centric.

2. THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH ON DEVELOPMENT THAT LASTS, AND ON ECOLOGY: ITS THINKING IS DYNAMIC, NOT SET IN STONE.

The social teaching of the Church in its thought ranges between the broad principles which underlie human decisions and deeds, and the detailed search for ways of putting into action and of expressing them in the midst of the complexity of reality, in specific contexts. Hence, it is evident that it is important to situate each encyclical and each magisterial document concerning ethical questions, in its historical context; and that the responses given to contemporary cultural, technological, economic and political challenges may vary according to the depth of knowledge and collective discernment of the signs of the times.

Among examples of how the views of the magisterium may change in relation to different ecological challenges, one can mention the importance for human development that is accorded to economic growth, and to the use of nuclear energy. Let us take the case of economic growth.

Can we reach collective prosperity without growth?

The social teaching of the Church has adopted a conception of economic and social development which is based on the increase of the GDP. This view is repeated in the apostolic exhortation of "The Joy of the Gospel" (2014) of Pope Francis:

"We can no longer have confidence in blind force and in the invisible hand of the market. The growth of equality demands something more than economic growth, even though it is necessary; it demands decisions, programs, mechanisms and procedures specifically directly towards a better distribution of income, the Creation of job opportunities, an all-encompassing concern for the poor which goes beyond simple welfare." (No.204)

However, there is a change of position in the Encyclical ***Laudato Si*** (2015), as the Pope stresses the need to promote a slowdown in growth in certain regions of the world (No.19) in order to ensure that everyone benefits from development. He criticizes several times the argument that a

deregulated market and the maximization of profit are essential if social well-being is to be achieved (e.g. Nos. 109,141,194). In this respect his position is the same as more and more unorthodox scientists and economists (such as Tim Jackson, Steve Keen, David King, Gaël Giraud) who stress the inadequacy of such a viewpoint, primarily because of the importance of the energy factor in the growth of the GDP. Growth, as we have measured it up till now, is incompatible with the struggle against global warming and climate change. New economic models linked to new styles of life must be encouraged and become the norm among those who are rich and middle class in every country, in order to improve life for the poorest people.

We must be aware that the Social Teaching of the Church contains resources related to the development of the complete human being which enable it to be far-sighted in its approach to development based on economic growth. We must also be aware that the approach to development promoted by the Church is similar to those of others, such as the idea of development as freedom proposed by Amartya Sen (1999) and by Martha Nussbaum (2000), whose influence explains why certain international organizations such as the United Nations Program for Development favour alternatives to the GDP as measures of development. The ambiguity in some magisterial documents up until *Laudato Si* is partly due to the influence (by lobbying) of business leaders and financiers who take the neo-classical view of economics. Hence it is important that the whole of society should share in the reflection on this topic.

Bibliography

- Afeissa H-S. (dir.), *Ethique de l'environnement. Nature, valeur, respect*, Vrin, 2007.
- Bastaire J. et H., *Le chant des créatures. Les chrétiens et l'univers d'Irénée à Claudel*, Cerf, 1996.
- Boff L., *Ecology and liberation*, Orbis books, 1995.

3.d Marie Eugénie and the Charism of the Congregation

Ana Senties, r.a.

INTRODUCTION

As we reflect as a Congregation on our position and responses to the question of ecology, we are taking up the Pope's invitation to 'return to the sources' and making the charism dialogue with our present situation in order to reinvent it to face the future.¹⁰⁵

For us, this "return to Marie Eugénie's original intuition" is the opportunity to recognise, in the creative spark that inspired her to found a new type of religious life and education, precisely the force that may continue to enable us to make relevant responses to the challenges we experience. She may not have talked about ecology, but she *understood and felt the deep distress of the society of her time and felt driven to try everything to make Gospel values permeate it...*¹⁰⁶

The new cosmo-vision that gives Assumption spirituality, life-style and education its energy is a recovery of the experience, the intuitions and the reflections that Marie Eugénie shared with the first Sisters of the Assumption.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter To All Consecrated People on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 21 November 2014.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacрати.html

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Père Gros.

¹⁰⁷ This cosmos-vision was a new way of seeing things, which she called 'the Christianization of the intelligence,' with its consequences for emotions, will and character.

This chapter presents first Marie Eugénie’s vision of the natural environment, which she calls ‘Creation’ and which, rooted as it was in her childhood experience, was then fed by deep theological reflection with consequences for education. We then present her vision of the Kingdom, a feature of biblical theology that for Marie Eugénie was closely linked to the challenges of her time. She was inspired by the Christian social thinking of the period. This reflection on the Kingdom introduces us to Assumption spirituality, which we show to be a wide range of possibilities that enable us to construct what might have been Mother Marie Eugénie’s ecological teaching; although, as was noted earlier, she did not deal directly with this topic, we can see it as implicit in many of the texts quoted in this section

In the Assumption, liturgy is not only the expression of and basis of spirituality; it also reflects it. A spirituality that takes this dimension into account has a resonance in liturgy. This is what we find in the chapter ‘Liturgy and Ecology,’ which brings together the experience of some of our communities in Latin America.

This chapter ends with Assumption transformative education and the commitment to Justice, Peace, the Integrity of Creation and Solidarity,¹⁰⁸ two topics which, after this survey, we will see as logically and naturally connected.

We do not know if Marie Eugénie imagined the ecological disasters we face today. We may presume that with her lively intelligence and her close attention to the challenges of her day she was alert to the voices raised at that time urging respect for nature and suggesting alternative models. That is why her intuition of the need for change and transformation and a revolution in attitudes resonate with us today as an urgent challenge, a fundamental and necessary condition for building a human community

¹⁰⁸ The integrity of Creation is ecology.

based on the values of Justice, Peace, the Integrity of Creation and Solidarity.

3.d.1 Marie Eugénie and Creation

Claire Myriam Milanese, r.a.

INTRODUCTION

Marie Eugénie's outlook on Creation and on the relationship between creatures is affected by the Christian formation begun since her conversion at Notre Dame, by her education within her family, and by her interest in the cultural changes brought about in the 19th century concerning the relationship with nature and its resources. Meditation on the Word of God, as well as her efforts at self-purification, at listening and at sharing thoughts, had broadened her outlook little by little and made it more contemplative. Her vision of Creation affected the concrete attitudes which characterised the lifestyle of the first Sisters, the development of the living spaces used by both Sisters and pupils, as well as the use of resources in their daily life.

SOURCES OF MME'S THEOLOGICAL VISION OF CREATION

The historian René Epp describes the formation given in the 19th century in the seminaries and in new religious congregations in this way:

The teaching is traditional in nature. Theology (which might even be called "official theology") is presented under the form of treatises, prioritizing St. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastics. It places great importance on Tradition and on the decisions of the Magisterium, focusing especially on all that has to do with the intellect; it uses Scripture to support a thesis but neglects to a

certain extent the historical context of the definitions and propositions used in the argument.

Professor Epp mentions that the ecclesiastic sciences had been slow to develop since the medieval period and thus he *recognises the efforts made by certain Religious Orders to revitalize them and to extend theological studies*. Fr. Lacordaire's re-establishment of the Dominican Order in 1839, for example, would bring about a "Thomist" revival both in theology and in philosophy. He notes the complaints of Felicité de Lamennais concerning *"the mediocre intellectual level of the clergy,"* and then continues by remarking that *"La Chenaie [Lammenais's ancestral home] became a centre of studies where most of the great names which will mark the Church in France a few years later -- Gousset, Donnet, Salinis, Gueranger, Lacordaire, Rohrbachet, Combalot -- can be found... They studied not only philosophy and theology but also history, languages and literature."*¹⁰⁹

In this context and in conformity with the teaching of the time, Marie Eugénie, who had close ties with several members of this elite set of Catholics, elaborates her theological thinking. She writes to Fr. d'Alzon on 10th July 1842:

In order to Christianize our studies, we had to study Christianity seriously. The most appropriate works for that are works written in more Christian times and in the period when the Fathers of the Church approached the Gospel in the most elevated human light. St. Thomas sums it up in the clearest and least controversial way that I know, and so helped us to get to know the precise dogma. In this way, when we read modern authors, we are able to recognise any errors easily.

¹⁰⁹ Seen in the Faculties and schools of Theology in France in the 19th century, in **Revue des sciences religieuses** (1990, No 64-1pp 53-71)

These, then, are the principal references for her vision of Creation: Sacred Scripture, the theology of St. Thomas and the Scholastics, and the works of the Fathers of the Church, especially St. Augustine. An attentive reading of her Chapter Instructions allows us to grasp the essential traits. Her references to St. Thomas become more explicit and more frequent after 1879. Here we can see a link with Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeternis Patris*, written in 1879, which not only encourages Thomist thought but imposes it on the formation of the clergy.

THE PRINCIPAL TRAITS OF MARIE EUGÉNIE'S THINKING ON CREATION

For the Foundress, the world is not the result of chance but of an act of Creation; it owes its existence to God. It is by the benevolent plan of God that the entire universe, still unfinished, remains in existence and is journeying towards its completion. The status of "creature" binds

all beings, both animate and inanimate, together, and establishes them in a special relationship with God. "We bless God for all that He has made in Creation: the earth, the sea, the mountains and valleys, (...) and we call upon all creatures to bless Him".¹¹⁰ These are the main elements of her vision of Creation.

God the Creator

To speak of the Creator, the Foundress uses the neo-platonic axiom, reviewed and deepened by St. Thomas: "*Bonum diffusivum est sui*" [Goodness tends to spread.]:

God is Goodness who desires to give Himself. He suffers if He does not give of Himself. This is not a definition of my imagination; it is that of St. Thomas: God is the sovereign Goodness who, of His very nature, loves to pour Himself

¹¹⁰ Ch. of 24th September 1876

*out, to give all the good that is within Him in abundance.*¹¹¹

Elsewhere we find other affirmations:

*In order to know God, as Catholic theology teaches it, we must know Him as infinite Goodness who wishes to pour Himself out. (Bonum infinitum diffusivum sui.) These four Latin words suffice to define God.*¹¹²

And further on in this same chapter:

If I insist on this, Sisters, it is because all errors are as nothing in comparison with this truth. Indeed, what becomes of Jansenism faced with the infinite goodness of God who gives Himself and communicates Himself through His gifts and His Sacraments. What becomes of the errors of false mystics?

By depending on traditional theology, which allows her a different approach to God, Marie Eugénie takes a firm position against the Jansenist view of God. In the tradition, Goodness defines the very Being of God: a goodness that gives itself; a goodness that is at one and the same time both Truth and Beauty: *It is strange that in piety God is not always considered as good, as infinite goodness, the supreme Goodness who tends to give Himself and gives Himself continually to all the beings He has made.*¹¹³ Elsewhere she continues: *You also know that at the beginning of the world, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity were involved in Creation.*¹¹⁴ Creation is in fact the communal work of all three Divine Persons, according to their diverse roles. *The Church attributes Creation to*

¹¹¹ Ch. of 20th July 1879

¹¹² Ch. of 22 July 1883. Also Ch. of 29th August 1881

¹¹³ Ch. of 22nd July 1883

¹¹⁴ Ch. of 10th March 1878

*the Father, Redemption to the Son and Sanctification to the Holy Spirit, who is the mutual love between the Father and the Son.*¹¹⁵

The Father is Goodness who pours Himself out ceaselessly in Creation.

*God is everywhere, in us as well as outside of us, in each one of the beings whom He has created. He fills every one with His immensity. "It is in Him that we live and move and have our being" (Cf. Acts.17, 2). The heavenly Father does not deprive any of His creatures of nature's treasures; He works ceaselessly for their good.*¹¹⁶

The Incarnate Word is Goodness who enlightens.

*"The Word was the true Light who gives light to all." (Jn.1:9) The first sign of this light is goodness. It is also said of Our Lord as He appeared in this world: The day when the goodness of God, our Savior and His love for humankind appeared.(Tt.3:4) It is a kindness that is complete and absolute.*¹¹⁷

The Holy Spirit is Goodness who sanctifies.

*We must pray and invoke the Holy Spirit every day because He is the Lord, the Almighty, one of the three Persons of the holy and adorable Trinity, our sanctifier. If we do not pray to Him, how can we drink from the source of life that flows from Him?*¹¹⁸

The Unique Place of Human Beings in Creation

Goodness, being at the source from which flows the work of Creation of the Trinity, means that creatures, who are

¹¹⁵ Ch. of 9th February 1873

¹¹⁶ Ch. of 3rd November 1882. Cf. also Ch. of 28th September 1884

¹¹⁷ Ch. of 16th March 1879

¹¹⁸ Ch. of 16th June 1889

*the result of this, cannot but be good. In Genesis we read:
“And God saw that it was very good.” (Gen.1:31)*

Human beings are the masterpiece of Creation.

Human beings occupy a unique place in the work of Creation. Marie Eugénie often quotes Psalm 8. Here, for example, she affirms:

It is said in the Scriptures that human beings are the work of God’s hands. This expression (...) implies that in order to make the masterpiece of Creation, to make this creature in which He wished to place His own likeness, God invested special care; all three Persons of the Holy Trinity were involved.¹¹⁹

Human beings are created in the image of the incarnate Word.

The Father is the Creator but it is by His Word that He created everything. Some interpreters think that when He created human beings He had in mind the image of the God-Man, Our Lord Jesus Christ and of Mary, his Virgin-Mother, destined to come in the plenitude of time. Even though He never had any sin, (...) it was on this wonderful model of the incarnate Word that human beings were formed.¹²⁰

In the image of Christ, we are king, priest and prophet.

Our soul was made in the image of God and our mind was made to be filled with knowledge of the divine. We also have a body, a mission to fulfill, faculties to use and a purpose to accomplish in this world.¹²¹

In carrying out the mission that God has entrusted to them, human beings carry out a royal function.

¹¹⁹ Ch. of 24th December 1880

¹²⁰ Ch. of 10th March 1878

¹²¹ Ch. of 24th March 1878

From the beginning when God put humans into the terrestrial paradise, it was in order to cultivate and care for it. (Gen.2:15)¹²²

By their praise of the Creator they exercise a priestly function.

Human beings have been placed in the midst of Creation in order to give honor to God by an act of intelligence and will. Adam's principal function was to be Priest of Creation. In the terrestrial paradise he adored, he gave thanks, he offered praise; he was the Pontiff of all the wonderful, splendid things that God had made for human beings.¹²³

Called to know God and to enter into communion with Him, human beings discover how much they are loved; they therefore become the joyful witnesses of this love.

God, who created human nature and made it in His image, loves this work of his Hands. (...) He is the Friend who knows our joys and our sorrows and who understands all our emotions.¹²⁴

Marie Eugénie thus reminds the Sisters that they have received from God the joy of being spouses of Jesus Christ; *the joy of belonging to Him; the joy of loving Him and of making Him loved and the joy of the hope of possessing Him.*¹²⁵

The Place of Other Creatures in the Benevolent Plan of God

The existence of other creatures also has a sense, a reason for being. They too were created to praise God and to witness to His existence (in a certain way):

¹²² Ch. of 21st September 1878

¹²³ Ch. of 22nd June 1884

¹²⁴ Ch. of 28th December 1889

¹²⁵ Ch. of 29th September 1872

*The whole universe gives glory and honor to God by the harmony that exists in it, by the marvels that are within it. Everything sings to the glory of God and in adoration of God. However, it is an unconscious glory and adoration. When the birds sing, when each being responds to God's law, they are obeying the will of the Creator. In the whole marvel of Creation, the details are so sublime, so beautiful and so harmonious that the unbeliever who studies them is obliged to recognise the finger of God's Hand in them.*¹²⁶

They were also created to be of service to human beings and to lead them to God. *God has placed earthly things at the service of human beings. To rejoice in them is completely in order.*¹²⁷

A Creation Disfigured by Sin, Saved by Christ

Marie Eugénie follows the traditional teaching of the Church concerning original sin and its consequences:

*We are poor, miserable, weak creatures, fallen in Adam and inclined to evil. To what measure do we believe in the results of original sin in us? No doubt we believe it because the Faith teaches it. Why then this discouragement when we feel these bad tendencies in ourselves, when we know that we are inclined to evil? Why then are we astonished if we see badness in ourselves or if others see it and speak to us about it for our own good?*¹²⁸

The Foundress invites us not to allow ourselves to be trapped by the sadness that can affect us when we recognise our interior disorder but instead to look at ourselves and at others in a different light:

By a life of faith we must try to see creatures as God sees them. In the eyes of God and of Jesus Christ each person is seen differently

¹²⁶ Ch. of 22nd June 1884

¹²⁷ Ch. of 24th December 1880

¹²⁸ Ch. of 8th February 1874

from the way we see them. In every person Jesus Christ sees a soul redeemed by His Blood. He ardently desires salvation for them. In the whole of Creation He sees all His Father has made. He sees that it was very good but that it had been partly disfigured by sin. As all that God has made is an act of love towards humanity, it is for Jesus Christ, as it should be for us, an occasion of thanksgiving, adoration, praise and prayer.¹²⁹

Sin disfigures but does not destroy the original goodness of Creation; it does not prevent human beings from following the purpose for which they have been made in the likeness of God.

A Creation “In The Act of Giving Birth” – Moving Toward the Original Goodness Desired by God.

It is our responsibility to develop attitudes and behavior that, with the grace of God, help to re-establish in ourselves and in others the divine image and likeness. In the Chapter of 22nd July 1883 already quoted, Marie Eugénie tells us that the work of conversion is not something extraordinary because it is the same for everybody:

To see and to love God above all else

There is nothing simpler than what I have told you: there is no question of extraordinary ways. It is nothing more than what is required of everyone: to see and to love God above all else because He is infinitely good. To bless, praise and glorify Him in all things and to give Him thanks.

To cultivate thanksgiving, admiration and goodness

One thing that is often lacking in the spiritual life is to know and value the gifts that we receive from God.¹³⁰ May

¹²⁹ Ch. of 11th August 1878

¹³⁰ Ch. of 22nd July 1881

*benevolence be felt and goodness predominate, making us see the best in everything.*¹³¹

To recognise the importance of life

*It is an amazing thing that the human race is of such great importance to God: “You have made them little less than a god, crowning them with honor and glory” (Ps. 8:6). God cares greatly for our thoughts, our feelings and our dispositions. We must try to conform them to this infinite goodness, this goodness that lives within us: so we must have great kindness.*¹³²

To respect the dignity of the person and of all people

*The most humble, obscure and despised existence has a profound interest for Him...¹³³ God sees, even in the sinner, the depth of the creature whom He has made in his divine likeness (...) Therefore God loves endlessly this imprint of his divine hand, even in the worst creature, in the most evil person.¹³⁴ ... He knows the condition of the nature that He has made; He hears the most silent cries and weighs in his Hand what human beings cannot do against what they would wish to do. He is just in regard to all their movements and all their thoughts. Faced with that, who can justify themselves... nobody is saved apart from His mercy.*¹³⁵

It is out of a profound respect for human beings and for every being, joined to the conviction that each one is able to receive God's grace and undertake the path of conversion, that the commitment to work for

¹³¹

¹³² Ch. of 14th September 1884

¹³³ Ch. of 28th December 1879

¹³⁴ Ch. of 14th September 1873) Cf. Also Council on Education of 1842

¹³⁵ L. To Fr. d'Alzon of 22nd April 1847

justice is born. For Marie Eugénie, *the realization of the will of God through the law of the Gospel and by the Redemption was a social state where no human person has to submit to any other fatality than that of nature, that is to say that the Christian principle tends to remove each one from the oppression of others.*¹³⁶

The end of murderous violence and of all kinds of oppression and the promotion of peace and social justice are for her the indispensable conditions in which *the earthly regeneration of humanity and of social law* can be realized, in order that everything may be restored in Christ.

To work to re-establish original goodness in oneself and in every human being

*There is a natural uprightness in which God created human beings. It is for the honor of God that creatures re-establish themselves in this natural uprightness. From there proceeds sincerity, honesty, sensitivity, simplicity, honor, goodness and courage.*¹³⁷ *God, infinite goodness, wishes us to be good to others. What would be the use of goodness that is never put into practice?*¹³⁸

To use the resources of Creation without abusing them, but rather valuing them by respecting them

*Created things are made for human beings in the sight of God. This is not so that humans can use and abuse them for their own pleasure, or that they can appropriate them or make of them their aim in this world. They are meant for a higher purpose in order to lead us to God.*¹³⁹

The letters addressed to the Sisters are full of information, advice, and remarks that touch on the relationship with the environment and the

¹³⁶ L. To Fr. d'Alzon of 12th March 1884

¹³⁷ Ch. of 26th May 1878

¹³⁸ Ch. of 14th September 1884

¹³⁹ Ch. of 8th August 1880

resources of Creation. They show the care of the foundress to promulgate a healthy and balanced life both for the Sisters and for the pupils. A sensible use of the goods of the earth will contribute to this, and Nature has a prominent role to play as well. Marie Eugénie never forgot her days at Preisch, her parents' country house. As a child there, she had experienced a life full of freedom and charm in contact with nature. "This makes for a more vigorous disposition, less impressionable, better prepared for serious duties and capable of carrying out more challenging studies".¹⁴⁰

The foundress emphasizes to the Superiors that each house should have a "green space" arranged so that both the Sisters and the pupils have the possibility to get some fresh air and to do some physical exercise to compensate for the long periods of intellectual and sedentary work. On 9th March 1890, for example, she wrote to the Superior of Rome, who was looking for a house: *Nothing seems to be more difficult than to have a garden in Rome, but how can we do without one?* And the next day she writes: *If you are in the centre of the town, you will need a garden outside of town to which the school bus can take you on Thursdays and perhaps for part of Sundays. What an ambition for Sisters who haven't got a penny!*

When possible, orchards and vegetable gardens were added to the parks and gardens, not to speak of fields with enclosures, stables, sheepfolds and henhouses for the domestic animals. *When you design the garden, don't forget to keep a place for a vegetable garden and space for fruit trees in the best spot.*¹⁴¹ In fact, such gardens answered both nutritional and economic needs – catering to both the physical and the economic well-being of Assumption communities. The use of medicinal plants was also greatly encouraged by Marie Eugénie, who enjoyed extensive knowledge in this domain.

¹⁴⁰ *Les Origines* I, p. 20

¹⁴¹ Letter to Sr. Marie de la Nativite, 19th August 1878

Taking the waters at the thermal spas so prized in the 19th century, and spending time by the seaside were also remedies that Marie Eugénie did not hesitate to offer to sick Sisters, despite the journeys, the expense, and other inconveniences that this kind of care included. Similarly, the movement for hygiene that developed in the 19th century and the progress in the domain of biomedicine helped increase the awareness of unsanitary conditions in over-populated urban districts. Marie Eugénie advocated fresh air and sunshine as ways of improving the health of her Sisters and of preventing unsanitary and humid conditions which contributed to illness and contagion. *“I am quite anxious about what you tell me about Sr. M. Clementine’s health. I would like her to spend a month here to recuperate and get stronger in the fresh air (...) I think that after the humidity of winter, her frail constitution needs a good dose of fresh air and sunshine that she cannot get in your little garden.”*¹⁴²

Marie Eugénie not only encouraged livestock farming for the important provision of food or for the protection of the houses that it assured, but also demanded that all the stock should be well treated and cared for. *“Make quite sure that the place arranged for the cows is healthy and not damp (...) I rely on you to take care of the health of the cows.”*¹⁴³

To conclude, a word written by Marie Eugénie to Fr. d’Alzon on 20 March 1853 on the relationship with our earth and the responsibility we should take for Creation: *“We must dig our furrow and feel the weight of the earth.”*

3. d.2 Marie Eugénie and the Kingdom: Social consequences of the Gospel

Mercedes Escobedo Solórzano, r.a.

¹⁴² Letter to Sr. Madeleine Eugenie of 23rd April 1873

¹⁴³ Letter to Sr. Marie Ignace of 18th August 1865

Marie Eugénie's thinking about the Kingdom springs in part from her experience of Jesus, the way of understanding the Christian faith she had recently discovered, from her process of searching and the maturing of her own vocation. It is also the result of the analysis, the reinterpretation, which she makes of the world around her. This is what she calls *the social consequences of the Gospel*.

Her time was a period of drastic political changes, social inequalities and exploitation, and of movements against oppression. It was also an age of discoveries, a propitious time for the rise of new ideas and forms of relationship. Many factors came together to make possible the confrontation between a rigid, exhausted system and the new phenomena that were struggling into life.

The disillusionments and hopes of the 19th century, the defeats and the achievements, and the struggles and plans that left a particular stamp on Marie Eugénie's context, marked the world, and we can still see the consequences in our own world. In both cases and periods, Marie Eugénie's and our own, we human beings are faced with the choice between remaining in the established order and going out in search of changes that will secure better living conditions for all.

Marie Eugénie looked at her world and had the courage to explore the new phenomena. In her experience of life, which God burst into, radically transforming her ideas and her heart, the Kingdom acquired such an importance that she felt she had received the will to overcome everything and work for it.¹⁴⁴ She could not accept a world in which so many people lived under oppression because of the injustice of a few. She imagined a different, "truly Christian" society and found in Jesus Christ and his Kingdom the motivation and the transforming power society needed.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Fr D'Alzon 1843.

Marie Eugénie sensed that the Kingdom announced by Jesus showed the unconditional and merciful love of God, who acts in history to heal, forgive, welcome and share. God's Presence and action free all men and women so that the Father's plan can be fulfilled in each and in all.

Her conviction was that *what was required was not to proclaim a doctrine but to carry it out*. She was convinced that only through the Gospel was it possible to transform human beings and society, and decided to stake her life on this. This is revealed in her letter to Père Lacordaire, in which she talks about the motivation behind her work: "...I do not think I need to explain where I fixed my gaze to obtain the final result, but it is totally on Jesus Christ and the extension of his Kingdom."¹⁴⁵

The Kingdom became her passion. She was confident that when the Kingdom was actively accepted by a human being it became a powerful stream of life, able to inspire hope and strength, inspiration to imagine and seek other possible worlds. Her decision to work for the Kingdom was rooted in the certainty that "the regeneration of humanity, its social law, must come from the words of Jesus Christ..."¹⁴⁶

The Kingdom is a connecting thread in the history of the people of Israel, who longed for the coming of a king who would establish justice among his people. According to Israelite ideas from the earliest times, the king's justice meant defending and protecting those who were unable to defend themselves, the incapacitated, the weak and the poor, the widows and the orphans. That is why when Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God had come, the people understood that there would be a change, that finally the situation yearned for by so many would become a reality, a different world, with more justice, friendship and solidarity.

¹⁴⁵ Letter No 1501 to Fr Lacordaire 1841.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid..

From this point of view the Kingdom represents a radical transformation of values: it completely overturns the established order and proposes a different way of looking at the world, interpreting it and acting in it. Over against a system based on competitiveness, on the struggle of the stronger against the weaker, on the domination of those who hold economic and political power, Jesus proclaims that God is the Father of all without distinction and that therefore we are all sisters and brothers. His proclamation is an invitation to act accordingly.

The Kingdom is therefore life as God dreams of it and wishes to build it; it is God's plan for humanity. If God reigned in each of us, if we let God be God, if we acted like God – so Marie Eugénie thought – no-one would have to suffer through oppression, rejection, violence..., we would have a truly Christian society.¹⁴⁷ It would change the Church, the world and our lives.

From the perspective of this logic of the Kingdom, which is always relevant, it is unacceptable that an economic and financial system, in its greed for limitless material profit, should be altering the ecological balance. The human cost is so great that such basic aspects of life are affected as health, employment, food, human stability and the harmony of the species. All this does not just exacerbate inequalities, but creates new forms of poverty linked to the deterioration of habitats (desertification, contamination of land), increasingly frequent and more violent natural disasters, etc.

In the face of all these situations the Kingdom that is Good News has a vocation to condemn everything that prevents men and women from enjoying decent, stable living conditions and equality of opportunities that allows them to fulfil their human potential and contribute their talents to the building of society. In our time the task of transforming society is indissolubly linked to the fight to break all these tendencies that are exhausting nature and human beings.

¹⁴⁷ Letter to Fr D'Alzon 1842 or March 12 1844?

The Gospel tells us that the Kingdom “has come near,” that “it is within us,” but also “in us.” To build it we need to learn to discern its signs in our world. The parables suggest that the Kingdom is as small as a mustard seed,¹⁴⁸ and at the same time as valuable as treasure,¹⁴⁹ that we have to look for it because it isn’t always obvious and works slowly and silently, like yeast in dough.¹⁵⁰ The Kingdom of God grows despite difficulties and even failure. The Kingdom is always near and is here, but will not be fully established until we men and women learn to live like children of the same Father and brothers and sisters of others, until we are able to care for the earth on which we live, until at last ‘all may be one.’¹⁵¹

Today it seems that we have no solution to the ecological crisis. But from the smallest groups taking action to care for the environment to large organizations working for sustainable development on a world scale, signs of the Kingdom are already visible.

During the first years of the foundation Marie Eugénie understood the implantation of the Kingdom as a fact visible in time and history: she dreamed of the social Kingdom. But gradually she began to see that this Kingdom was growing in herself, enabling Jesus Christ to become “*the only Lord, the only teacher, the only one who has dominion over all things.*”¹⁵² She then began to talk about the ‘Kingdom in souls’, realizing that the transformation that comes with the Kingdom is not just a transformation of social structures, but also a deep change within a person. Even so, Marie Eugénie asked God to “*preserve in her that spirit of love for his Kingdom here below*”.¹⁵³

In her last years she wrote to the Sisters:

¹⁴⁸ Mt 13,31-32; Mk 4,30-32; Lk 13,18-19.

¹⁴⁹ Mt 13,44-52.

¹⁵⁰ Mt 13,33; Lk 13,21.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Jn 17,21.

¹⁵² Chapter, Sept 7, 1872.

¹⁵³ Letter to P. D’Alzon 1843.

We must not tire of praying for the coming of the Kingdom of God, even in a time like ours, when the insolence of rejection seems to tell him... You do not exist, I do not recognise you, I will put myself in your place... It is not just in their hearts that those men say this; it is aloud, in their laws, in their institutions... So we need to pray for the re-establishment of his Kingdom in this world...¹⁵⁴

It is impressive to find that we can recognise in this prophetic saying a description of present global society: a political, economic and social system whose dynamic, based on its laws and institutions, is dedicated almost entirely to ensure increased production and consumption. And it does all this without taking account of the natural equilibrium and ignoring the spiritual and transcendent dimension of life.

Our earth, this common home in which we all live, in which life comes into being and develops, is under serious threat today. Marie Eugénie saw it as *"the place to give glory to God"*,¹⁵⁵ the geographical place where we find our roots, discover our identities, meet our needs and support our feet to take steps in history. Earth was also, for her, the space of the transition from oppression to liberation, where our desires, attitudes and actions can anticipate that Kingdom that is God's Plan.

So it is right that we should go on praying for the Kingdom to continue coming to this world, that we may learn to recognise it, in its smallness and silence, but also full of strength and fruitfulness. It is right that we should work for it and widen the spaces in which it can reveal itself. To do this it would be perhaps be useful for us to redefine what we mean by progress, well-being, and needs. The Kingdom invites us to be creative, to have ideas in the areas in which we live and work for new relationships between human beings and nature.

¹⁵⁴ Chapter Dec 3 1882.

¹⁵⁵ Letter to Fr Lacordaire, around 1841-44.

It is right that, like Marie Eugénie, we should make the Gospel the key to the interpretation and transformation of our lives, so that we may understand ever more deeply that God's cause is the cause of humanity.

3. d.3 Ecology in the Spirituality of the Assumption

Mercedes Méndez, r.a.

The Spirituality of the Assumption offers us a wide range of possibilities out of which it is possible to discern what could have been the ecological teaching of M. Marie Eugénie, even though this topic was not directly addressed by her. This article will develop the most significant elements of her spirituality, extrapolating our own conclusions regarding JPIC from these. There is no doubt that the category *Kingdom*¹⁵⁶, with its dimension of personal and social transformation, structures this teaching; consequently this section is closely related to the previous article.

We can begin by asking: where are the deep roots of the problems of justice, peace and the integrity of Creation (JPIC) in our world, Church, family, community, work? At the same time, where can we start building JPIC-S so a new world is really possible?

At the root of the problem

At the root of the problem is *natural egoism*, and therefore, the transformation must begin in the human heart. This was lived and taught by M. Marie Eugénie, undoubtedly inspired by the message of the Gospel and her personal and social experience. The terminology used by our

¹⁵⁶ "We are in this world to work on the coming of the Kingdom of the Father in ourselves and in others" [Or. I.2.XI] "May our Lord reign in us, we might say wholeheartedly that he is our God, our Lord, our King [...] It is necessary that everything we do in our classrooms, in our efforts ...in everything that we do this is revealed"[C. 3.12.82].

founder to describe what she called *natural egoism*, which she considered the main cause of personal and social sin, is very close to what different contemporary authors have called the *current narcissistic tendency*¹⁵⁷. This is worsened by *the globalization of indifference*¹⁵⁸, which considers the problems of our world as “normal” and is oblivious to the need for a commitment to JPIC-S. Certainly, human growth and social growth are activated by love: how can the forces or energies of our desires be reoriented to selfless love?

Natural selfishness is what drives each and every human being. How?

1. by defining and looking to defend our own rights above any universal plan (≠Justice);
2. by pursuing our own ends using any means (≠Peace);
3. by appropriating and overexploiting what it is to be shared by all (≠ Integrity of Creation)
4. by turning in on oneself (≠ Solidarity)¹⁵⁹.

But *disinterested love*

1. sees personal fulfilment only if it is accompanied by the personal development of the people surrounding it, the one helping the other (= justice);

¹⁵⁷ Cf. C. LASCH, *La cultura del narcisismo*, Andrés Bello, Barcelona 1999; A. LOWEN, *El narcisismo. La enfermedad de nuestro tiempo*, Paidós, Barcelona 2000.

¹⁵⁸ “Usually, when we are healthy and comfortable, we forget about others (something God the Father never does): we are unconcerned with their problems, their sufferings and the injustices they endure... Our heart grows cold. As long as I am relatively healthy and comfortable, I don’t think about those less well off. Today, this selfish attitude of indifference has taken on global proportions, to the extent that we can speak of a globalization of indifference. It is a problem which we, as Christians, need to confront.”. Message of his holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2015, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

¹⁵⁹ C. DOMÍNGUEZ MORANO, *Los registros del deseo. Del afecto, el amor y otras pasiones*, Desclée De Brouwer, Bilbao 2001, 108.

2. lives a unification of desires resulting in a peaceful heart, so it is an agent of peace (= peace);
3. manages and cares for the Earth and its resources in a sustainable way (= Integrity of Creation);
4. understands itself as a being-in-the-world and a being-with-others (= solidarity).

At the same time, M. Marie Eugénie expresses a great optimism concerning the human condition which can be clearly seen in her writings [EC-TF 547]. On many occasions she declares that human beings are naturally good, that we have been created by God to live in communion with Him, with ourselves, with other human beings and with the whole Creation. But this communion, which was perfect in the beginning, was broken down by **egoism** [C. 03/10/78]. The harmony was broken because human beings preferred the love of self to divine love¹⁶⁰; consequently, only true love could restore this lost communion. This Love is manifested in the mystery of the **Incarnation**: the Father, by his infinite goodness, has sent the Son to reopen the path of love and communion [EC-TF 535]. Humanity is called to receive the Grace that the Father gives through the Son in the Spirit and find our way back to God¹⁶¹. This path is the **Incarnate Word**¹⁶² : M. Marie Eugénie invites us to know this **Truth** and live the **values of the Gospel**.

¹⁶⁰ "Before the fall, the human being saw all things in God and God in all things; but when our sight was confused by sin, when our intelligence was obscured by ignorance, when lust became our teacher, then human beings stooped to remain fixated on lower things and enclosed within ourselves"[C. 19/05/78].

¹⁶¹ The mystery of the Incarnation appears frequently in the writings of M. Marie Eugénie. She gives this mystery a central place in our spirituality [L.VII, 1590]. For her "the humanity of Jesus is the access to the Father" [C. 01/21/72]. It was explained by her in three instructions: C. 12/15/78; C. 25/03/81; C. 23/09/88

¹⁶² The mystery of the Incarnation appears frequently in the writings of M. Marie Eugénie, a mystery that she wanted to be central to our spirituality [L.VII, 1590]. For her "the humanity of Jesus is the way to the Father" [C. 01/21/72]. She developed this topic in three instructions: C. 12/15/78; C. 25/03/81; C. 23/09/88.

How can we heal or redirect our *natural egoism* toward a commitment to JPIC-S? Our hearts are wounded by love, and we will always be restless until we can rest in God¹⁶³. We are torn between retreating into our wounds and trying to fill the void within us with ephemeral realities (this often results in the exploitation of other human beings or over-exploitation of the planet's resources), or opening ourselves up to the One who gives us life and upholds us, in a relationship of love which is our true fulfillment¹⁶⁴. M. Marie Eugénie considers that overcoming *love of self* is part of the Christian vocation, something that can only be done with the help of Grace, only this can bring us to real disinterested love. *Natural egoism* does not determine the person, human beings have been created free, but we must choose to have Jesus as our dynamic starting point to learn the way of true love [L. VII, 1556]. As St. Paul wrote [Rom 8, 18-23], the whole of Creation waits expectantly for this moment, what happens in the human heart has its impact on all of society and the whole of Creation because it gives us another way of being in the world, with others, and according to God's Plan.

M. Marie Eugénie conceived of spiritual growth as a return to our origins, to a union and communion with God: we do this through the imitation of the same model used by the Creator to create the human being, the **Incarnate Word**. The sanctification of human being is a process of decentring, involving both Grace and will, by which the person is increasingly detached from love of self to reach perfection in God's love and through Him reaching out to all humanity [C. 3/24/78]. Although M. Marie Eugénie did not express it in this way, this new way of loving also encompasses all Creation. This process of detachment or simplification is a unification of the whole being in God, with a heart only for Him [C. 04/07/78]. The goal of the human being is communion with God [C.

¹⁶³ St. Augustine, Confessions, Book I, 1.

¹⁶⁴ "St. Augustine, whom we call our blessed Father since we follow his Rule, said that there are only two cities in this world; the city of the love of self which leads to contempt for God and the city of the love of God which leads to contempt for self. This means, my dear daughters, either egoism or self-sacrifice" [CE-TF 535].

14/12/73]. This union takes place in the interior of a person, where God dwells [C. 10/3/78-TF 435], in that *secret point*, as M. Marie Eugénie said, from which the divinity communicates Himself to the creature¹⁶⁵. Therefore, this *Interior Kingdom* is created by a life of prayer and charity [TF 179-180] and it is realized in social transformation [Or. I.2.XI; L. VII, 1556]. Hence the great importance that M. Marie Eugénie gives to **personal prayer**, understood and lived as an intimate relationship with God, praying the **Divine Office**, and the **study of the truths of faith**, revealed in the **Gospel** along with the history of the teachings of the **Church**. M. Marie Eugénie said that the "spirit of faith" [L. VII, 1556] should encompass the whole of our existence as if it were an atmosphere, a *habitat*, which penetrates all the dynamics of our living [C. 03/03/78].

This saving movement, Creation-sin and redemption-grace, is also a key to understanding the pedagogy of the Assumption, and therefore the **apostolic dimension** of the Assumption. M. Marie Eugénie urges educators to help students to redirect their *natural egoism*. This is a necessary condition for them to achieve personal happiness, and to engage in the transformation of society. The mission of education is to restore the **natural virtues** marred by this *original deviation* [EC-TF 539]. Among these virtues, we highlight today **justice, peace, solidarity** and of course, the **care of the environment**, so future generations can also enjoy the planet that is a home to all.

M. Marie Eugénie affirmed that the **community** is the first place where we must live love and build JPIC-S, and at the same time the community will teach us how to live this love. The community is a school of evangelical love [Const. 40.30; 44.14; 66, 16]. Perhaps the feature that best illustrates the theme of ecology in the teaching of M. Marie Eugénie about **community life** is the desire to have everything in **common** [Const. 44.8],

¹⁶⁵ "Let us open our hearts widely to receive these gifts; we recollect ourselves internally, so that He can touch this secret point in the soul where He chooses to communicate Himself to us. This is the secret point that God touched when you were called to your vocation" [C. 23/06/78]. This "secret point" is the "place" of union with God [C. 08/19/81].

and the need to create an "atmosphere of peace" or, as she says in another letter, to live "a spirit of justice, generosity and peace". This *environment* is necessary for each member to be able to live both the contemplative and apostolic dimensions of our life [C. 07/13/1879; Const. 66.8]. Community life must also witness to another way of being in the world.

Among of the different elements in the spirituality of the Assumption there are two that stand out and pertain specifically to the teaching of M. Marie Eugénie: *The Adoration of the Rights of God* and *joyful detachment*.

THE ADORATION OF THE GOD'S RIGHTS

The Adoration of the Rights of God is one of the ways used by M. Marie Eugénie to express the *Kingdom of God*, perhaps one of the most important characteristics of her spiritual teaching¹⁶⁶. *The Adoration of the Rights of God* is not opposed to Human Rights; rather it is opposed to the defense of these "rights" in ways that could be called "individualistic," ways that arise from our *natural egoism*. It is opposed to "rights" which are defended regardless of the rights and freedoms of other human beings. We could, however, say that the Rights of God are the foundation of Human Rights, because His will is for a Universal Plan of Salvation not subject to particular interpretations such as are made by many current governments.

Adoration of the Rights of God arises from the recognition of divine benefits which are affirmed by believers; it is the loving response to so much love and good that God gives us, and the confession of His sovereignty over our life and all that exists. **Respect for nature and the responsible use of resources** are part of this dimension of spirituality,

¹⁶⁶ "Looking for what would be the main feature of our Institute, this idea is come across: in everything and in every way we should be adorers and keepers of the rights of God [C.24/02/78]. Marie Eugénie contrasts the rights of God to an exclusivity illustrated by the rights of man without God, and the Truth of Revelation to the prevailing positivist reason that denies the truth revealed.

because it is the recognition that all that exists arises and is kept in being by God, and is oriented to fulfill his plan of salvation. The person, discovering herself received by God and founded on God, restores all to Him so that He can dispose of everything according to His will; by this she confirms His divine right to govern over her life because she understands that His designs are merciful [C. 03/03/78]. But it is also a confession of what God is in himself, of his sovereign and absolute Being [C. 08/19/81]. The desire to know more arises from this experience [C. 08/19/81]. This adoration is not crushing, but it is done with respect and veneration because it arises from a *burning love, which is the beginning of adoration*¹⁶⁷.

The Adoration of the God's Rights is an attitude that colors every moment of life; it is the perfection of a love that comes from adoration¹⁶⁸, a praise and service to God in everything. This kind of adoration was lived by Mary all her life long, culminating in the mystery of the Assumption, because *in Mary all was adoration*. All her work was an adoration, a worship of God, a service to Jesus, and after to the new born Church, until raised to the heavens she *remains in adoration and love forever*, returning to God all that she had received from Him [C. 24/2/78].

JOYFUL DETACHMENT

United with most genuine spiritual traditions, M. Marie Eugénie develops a central element of Christian spirituality: simplicity¹⁶⁹, albeit with her own terminology. According to M. Marie Eugénie, *detachment* is the human response to the experience of *God's goodness* which is *infinitely* revealed

¹⁶⁷ [C. 24/02/78]. "Adoration is a flame, it is the love that burns before the things of God" [C. 03/03/78].

¹⁶⁸ "Love must reach, in all things, until adoration, so that all your works, all internal and external actions of your life can be directed to God and, by a sense of adoration, respect for rights of God, you forget to yourselves to adore, to love, and always give God the place that he must have in your life" [C. 24/02/78]. In this *Instruction*, MME exemplifies the expression of love that goes to adoration with the relationship between two lovers: when saying "I love you" falls short, they say "I adore you."

¹⁶⁹ MARTÍN VELASCO, J., *El fenómeno místico. Estudio comparado*, Trotta, Madrid 1999, 335-341.

in the world and in history [C. 19/05/78]. She was deeply certain that human beings can receive everything they need to develop as persons, from Him; and what is more, they are able to reach their true identity in all its complex multiplicity by not being centred on themselves, but rather by belonging to God in a simple unity. To do this it is necessary to move out of self and self-love in order to achieve unification in the love of God who longs to dwell in the human heart¹⁷⁰.

It is *joyful* because it moves toward the true end of human beings, life in God, although much of the time this good is not perceived nor understood. We must, therefore be anchored in hope. This theological virtue makes for *joyful detachment*. This spiritual disposition allows us to live in all circumstances anchored in the certainty that *all things work for good* [C. 19/05/78]. Rather than dwelling on useless regrets *joyful detachment* becomes a means by which we are driven to devote our time *to filling ourselves with truth, and loving and working in the service of the Kingdom* [C. 19/05/78]. We need to live this joyful attitude; just a smile can transform relationships, color our personal life and the life of those around us.

M. Marie Eugénie found this attitude, or spiritual means, was an antidote against the *natural egoism* which makes us *withdraw into ourselves*. It returns us to the original state of communion when in the beginning, human beings did not need to *detach themselves from themselves to be in communion with God* [C. 19/05/78]. *This joyful detachment* is a renunciation of everything that comes from the ego, (and) everything it gets back [EC-TF 536]. It is a way of focusing personal energies in the service of the Kingdom and not wasting time on selfish concerns [C. 19/05/78]. This disposition helps us to lead a life in which all actions are

¹⁷⁰ "The spirit of the Assumption leads to detachment from ourselves. Search only God, not wanting more than God and his service, seeking only His law, His reign, just looking for Him in the other, in our life, in all our relationships." [C. 2/3/78. Id C. 05/19/78.; L. VII, 1555].

directed to God as *our end*¹⁷¹, and it accomplishes the motto: *God alone suffices* [C. 09/29/72].

Joyful detachment is a source of joy for the life and the mission. It is the joy of sharing the joy of the risen Christ, after sharing the sufferings of his passion, as Mary did in her life until her joy culminated in the Assumption [C. 21/04/78]. It is the joy that comes from giving love¹⁷². It leads us to the universal communion with all Creation.

This dimension of our spirituality helps us to *live simply*, to perceive and detach ourselves from all that is superfluous, in order that many people can simply live. Our relationship with nature will not be one arising from selfishness, predatory and possessive attitudes, but conducted according to a plan and lived in detachment.

These two elements of our spirituality lead us to forget ourselves and commit ourselves to God's plan of salvation, which is experienced as the Infinite Goodness that creates us and redeems us. The God of Justice and Solidarity who reigns in our lives if we let his Spirit permeate our being and our existence, detaches us from all that separates us from Him. Or in the same way, we are remade as just and peaceful caretakers of Creation and, by God's Grace, a people of solidarity. This is certainly a way to live and build JPIC-S.

3. d.4 Ecology and liturgy

Lucia Del Carlo, r.a.

¹⁷¹ "Let go the vain, small, minor things, to constantly rise towards God, engage with God, seek God, to find God, and love God, reaching this through a holy and joyful detachment" [C. 19/05/78].

¹⁷² "We live with a good spirit, with a good heart, despite our prickliness. We have to do everything with a good grace. "[C. 08/19/81]."Oh! how the freedom of love makes me cheerful at all times. "[L. VII, 1592].

INTRODUCTION

“Today there is an acute pathology inherent in the system that currently dominates and exploits the world: poverty, social inequality, the exhaustion of the Earth and the severe imbalance in the life system. The same forces and ideology that exploit and exclude the poor are also devastating the whole community of life and undermining the ecological foundations that sustain Planet Earth” (Leonardo Boff).

Ecology is not just concerned with questions to do with green spaces or threatened species. Ecology implies a new paradigm, that is, a way of organizing the whole set of relations of human beings among themselves, with nature and with their meaning in this universe. It inaugurates a new alliance with Creation, an alliance of veneration and kinship. We were not created to place ourselves above nature to dominate, but to be alongside, living together as brother and sister. This is the way in which we discover our cosmic roots and our citizenship of earth. Today it is not just the poor that must be liberated from captivity to a development model that denies them dignity, destroys their resources and breaks the equilibrium worked out during millions of years of work by the cosmos. In this way the cry of the poor joins the cry of the Earth. And from here liberation theology is broadened into a theology that is truly integral and universal, because it concerns all people and the whole planet. The experience of ecology enables us to recover anew the sacredness of Creation, a new image of God, a broader, cosmic conception of the Christian mystery and a new spirituality (Leonardo Boff).

The first thing I need to share with you is **‘where I’m coming – or writing – from’**. There is a ‘habitat’ in which we, the Sisters in Argentina, celebrate life. I say ‘habitat’, but it might also be called ‘humus’ or ‘amniotic fluid.’ These are not just words, but content, **the nutritive medium of our liturgy**. (I think it’s extremely important to share this because it will help

us to understand each other and enrich each other in the diversity of expressions of liturgy as Sisters in an international family like ours.)

1. INSERTION

...of all the Argentine communities since I joined Assumption in 1973.

My present community is 'inserted', as we say, in a poor environment, on the frontier (with Brazil and Paraguay), a 'tourist destination' (the Iguazú Falls), which many of my neighbours have never seen because transport to it and the ticket to get in are expensive. There are Paraguayan immigrants living in inhuman conditions, shacks made of boards, without water or electricity, homes with earth floors, without any other work than 'speculating' (as they say), which means buying and selling anything from a kilo of flour to their own 'improvements' (board shacks), if necessary. Without papers (getting them costs money), without access to health or education services.

We, the Sisters, live in the neighbourhood, we meet on the same bus, we suffer from the lack of water and electricity (though not as much as them since we have a well and a more reliable electrical installation), and powerlessness in the face of the exclusion they have to face. The guidelines for our 'option for insertion' are the documents of the conferences of the Latin American bishops. The first was Medellín in 1968: in the Church context after Medellín we left the upper-class college we had in Buenos Aires to move geographically and 'put our money where our mouth was,' among the poor. Then came Puebla, Santo Domingo, Aparecida and finally Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. These documents confirm us, sustain us, and challenge us.

In Assisi the Pope talked about 'countries that carelessly throw away food and natural resources while in other latitudes millions of people are dying of hunger. Only if we care for nature can we also protect people, be concerned for all, especially children, old people, the most fragile.'

Another text that especially challenges and confirms us is *Evangelii Gaudium* 106-201.

2. RELIGIOUS LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA AS SEEN BY THE LATIN AMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF RELIGIOUS (CLAR) AND THE ARGENTINE CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS (CONFAR)

I personally experience this religious life as the sacramental presence of the merciful love of God who makes a Covenant with his People (Dt 6.4-9), so loved this people, his people, that he became flesh and placed his dwelling among us (this Word and Mystery have stayed with me since my vows).

‘The biblical Jesus tradition in Latin America has recently acquired an iconic martyr who speaks clearly to us about the relationship between ecological concern and the option for the poor, Sister Dorothy Stang, SND. She was murdered on 12 February 2005 in the Amazon jungle; six gunshots took away her life at the age of 73. This was the violent attempt of the powerful to silence her commitment to the defense of the First Peoples who live in Amazonia. It was the murderous reaction that could not bear her condemnation of the landowners who shamelessly exploit the rural workers. In the Brazilian Amazon state of Pará in the last 33 years, there have been 772 murders of rural workers and people who supported them. Dorothy is a witness in our time to the way concern for the preservation and care of the forest interacts with the fight for the rights of the poor to land and decent work for an abundant life and full citizenship. From this dramatic witness – that of Sister Dorothy and of so many other men and women – liberation theology has found a channel for its reflection and engagement with ecology’ (Ezequiel Silva, *Grito de la Tierra, Grito de los Pobres*).

...This world in which we live is a moral scandal that cries out for the correction and the abandonment that bears on the poor. The meeting of the environmental and the social for us means changing our viewpoint and

‘looking from below’. We need a growth of ‘species consciousness’, the recognition that all of us humans are part of the same species, and a widening of the idea of our neighbour, because neighbour means not just a person near us spatially; we can also have distant neighbours.’

‘The inspiring perspective of CLAR invites religious to **LISTEN TO GOD WHERE LIFE CALLS**. To this end it reminds us of the challenges and the urgent needs of this moment in the society and Church of our continent...it reminds us that there is a spirituality linked to life, because God’s way is *Incarnation*. It is useful for us to remember that. In consecrated life too, as Bernanos says, “We must look for the true cause of our misfortunes in the dis-incarnation of the Word.”’

For the Christian faith community, the INCARNATION is a theological key to sustain its responsibility for the care of Creation. When God took on the human condition, God made matter divine. As a result, since the Mystery became human, Christ has no other face than that of our sister or brother. That is why ecological concern is an issue that includes the quest for sustainable development and living well in the Creation of which we are an integral part.

‘We live in a competitive society, centred on individual interests and lacking solidarity. The result of its accompanying logic is plain to see, a fantastic accumulation of profits in the hands of minority groups and a perverse exclusion of the majority of people, groups and countries. The great crime of humanity today is social exclusion...if religious life wants to be an honorable minority for the future, it has to embody a serious commitment to the present. We religious can’t fall into aesthetic temptations, or lose ourselves on the freeways of greatness. Our place is among the many faces supersaturated with regrets, overflowing with sadness, to prevent that the tears of the poor dry up in forgetfulness and indifference...Our sacred cloister is the world. Our prayer cannot be pure, it has to become incarnate, be involved in people’s lives. Our timetables are not our own; they have to be first and foremost those of the Lord’s beloved. Our money is not our own; it belongs to those who need it to

survive. Our vows are not our own; they must be lived out in the street to be a reference, a question mark, shock therapy for some people...what is ours is to give our lives that they may have life.

‘What is unique to us...to awaken our passion for Jesus. This is the best thing we have to communicate to others, if we avoid the risk of turning Christ into an object of worship and leave in the shadows how he was on the roads of Galilee. This was a Jesus with a single deep focus on an explosive experience, God the Father of all. In Jesus’ time the religious teachers associated God with their religious system: the priority was to give glory to God by observing the law, respecting the Sabbath and carrying out the Temple worship. Jesus associates God with life’ (Editorial, *Revista Testimonio*, No 246).

‘We need women and men mystics that are more human: we might think of a person who is a mystic as one who develops to the maximum, in all their abilities, the deepest dimension of humanity that they are called to achieve. “God engaged in being human and we engaged in being mystics” (Federico Carasquilla).

‘Yes, because to become human is to become divine, to give birth to the most authentic essence we carry within us, to share with pleasure the DNA that unites us to other human beings, the animals, the mountains, the rivers and seas, the atmosphere, the universe that surrounds us and welcomes us into its embrace. We feel one with everything, close, familiar friends with everyone else.

‘Today we cannot make sense of mysticism as it was lived in the 16th century. It’s clear, however that we have to drink from the crystalline waters of the mystics of that century (Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross...) and beyond them of that of all ages, cultures, religions, philosophies and beliefs. ‘Because times have changed. Now we live in a globalized world, in the digital age of social networks on a world scale. We cannot believe, live or make commitments in the same way as before, since the internet, quantum physics and the theory of relativity. What has also changed are

ways of behaving, the people and groups that are our models, family structures and paradigms in so many areas of life.

‘And although our hurried world does not encourage us to do so, we have to look for our spaces of serenity and silence, stop all our rushing about for a moment and get clear about everything that is reaching us and send to the trash all the rubbish and spam, and be able to think about what is important and transcendent. We must make a firm stand in order to be able to breathe, feel and live in a different way. We will be doing this along with many others who, in different ways, are looking for the same thing.

‘A mystical person recognises that there is an echo deep down, an indescribable presence, which invites him or her to become fulfilled, human, to open up completely to reality. He or she feels a vital spark that gives them life, which forms part of a common project, alongside all humanity and Planet Earth of which we form part.

A mystical person realizes that his or her behavior and consumption affect the environment in which they live and the poorest and most abandoned parts of the human race. That is why they make an effort to live in a simple, austere, responsible way, in solidarity. And they know that this way of life, despite all the lures of advertising, makes them happy, and that they enjoy so many small pleasures that are available to us each day, within reach of our hand, free, to be savored.

(3) THE WORD OF GOD

‘Listen with one ear to the people and with the other to the Gospel’ (Bishop Enrique Angelelli)

This saying of this martyred Argentine bishop has become a popular maxim. Enrique Angelelli’s martyrdom was not finally recognised until 2014, when the final verdict resulted in a sentence of life imprisonment for his executioners, those who were still alive – the assassination took place on 4 August 1976!

I saw, felt, and lived the ‘incarnation’ of this remark in the local church of Bishop Angelelli; for him it was a motto that affected everything. I am a witness! It was here that I did my novitiate, and received the habit from his hands on 9 February 1975, when there was already an atmosphere of persecution and hostility towards the local church – bishops, priests, laity, nuns – on the part of the military dictatorship and the ‘feudal lords’ of La Rioja province.

‘There can be no doubt that the secret of the fruitfulness and vitality of religious life lies in making the Word of God the source and centre of both personal and community life’ (Ángel Santesteban O.C.D.).

‘In Latin America the Medellín Conference (1968), when it talked about the formation of the clergy (Chap.13,10), stressed the need to train future priests to listen faithfully to the Word of God so that they would be able to interpret as a matter of course the situations and demands of the community in the light of faith.

‘This recommendation began to be implemented also in houses of formation of women and men religious. Gradually formation focused on a live and committed listening to the Word of God, for the discernment of the signs of the times, for listening to the Word in biblical contemplation and for the celebration of commitment in the liturgy. In the area of continuing formation, at the end of the 1980s, as part of the celebration of 500 years of evangelization in America, the Latin American Confederation of Religious treated this anniversary as a *kairos*, a time of grace, an intense moment of reflection and renewal. In this context there was a feeling of an urgent need for getting closer to the Word of God as an incomparable source of renewal and life for religious. This was the start of the ‘Word-Life project’, as a guide to meditating on, praying the Bible in terms of the everyday situation of the people with whom religious were sharing their faith. The aim was that in this way religious life in Latin America would nourish its spirituality from the word of God interpreted in terms of the lives of the poor in order to deepen, in ecclesial communion, its prophetic vocation in the commitment to a New Evangelization... stimulate the

conversion of religious life in the light of the Word and through it illuminate its liberating mission expressed in the processes of insertion and inculturation... This brought a liturgical renewal, which revealed the connection between the celebration and the proclamation of the Word it and the practical implementation of its demands...In the Eucharist religious communities began to learn to celebrate the possibility of the 'New World' proclaimed by Jesus and, through liturgical prayer, engage with active hope work to collaborate to bring about its anticipation in history.

'The Divine Office gradually became a school of the Word. Through the psalms, which are the Word of God, religious began to learn to pray, to praise, to give thanks, without becoming removed from everyday life, to get used to transform their own history and that of the world into prayer.... Praying the psalms and reinterpreting them in terms of life, they began to assimilate in their own experience the fact that praying is listening to God, engaging in dialogue with Him and committing oneself to others' (Camilo Maccise).

'In Brazil some years ago a 'Divine Office for the Communities' was published in an effort to translate the Liturgy of the Hours into popular idiom and bring its riches to ordinary people.... Life, the events of every day, the people, their sorrows and hopes, the achievements and failures on the journey, natural phenomena, all these are signs from God for the person who has eyes to see, ears to hear.

'This contribution from the Brazilian church led to a liturgical renewal for us in Argentina. The language used, the theological content of the closing prayers, the translation of the psalms, ...spring from this 'nutritive medium' I mentioned at the beginning. *Lectio Divina* acquired a new dynamism. In Latin American consecrated life 'prayerful reading' was gradually transformed into part of prayer life and led the consecrated to discover and savor in events the active and creative presence of the Word of God and commit themselves to the transformation of society. ...The Word of God listened to with availability and transformed into life

gradually purifies faith and brings it to maturity' (Camilo Maccise, OCD - *Revista Testimonio* Nº 226).

For us on a weekly timetable (instead of the daily Office of Readings) we take a reasonable amount of time, approximately two hours, for a community celebration of prayerful reading. This has become the source of a deep sharing of life and experience of God. It makes us grow in communion, in affection for one another, in a joint exploration of the world around us through the Word of God and in a shared commitment, as a response to this Word, heard, meditated on, prayed about...loved.

3. d.5 Transformative education and JPIC-S commitment in the Assumption: two closely related themes

Ana Senties, r.a.

Talking about transformative education in the Assumption means bringing together rather more than 170 years of foundational intuitions and innovations, pedagogic tradition and very varied experiences in which Assumption education has been incarnated, in educational projects in schools, communities and society etc.

How education is conceived is a consequence of the dynamism that was the trademark of our Foundation, in the middle of the 19th century. This very dynamism still impels us today to *listen to the calls of the world and to find new answers so as to collaborate in the transformation of the societies according to Gospel values.*¹⁷³

This ensemble of *challenges and principles, of values and methodologies*, as summed up in the *Reference text*¹⁷⁴ **constantly reinvents itself** when

¹⁷³ Rule of Life 81 - 85.

¹⁷⁴ Text written after the International Congress of Education in 1998.

adapting to the different contexts in which we have been call to extend the Kingdom today. Just as in our origins, we are moved by Marie Eugénie’s belief: *to make history evolve towards a greater justice and solidarity according to God’s dream for humanity.*¹⁷⁵

MARIE EUGÉNIE AND TRANSFORMATION

Moved by a deep spiritual experience, supported by great mystics such as Augustine, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Jesus, as well as by the *French School of Spirituality*,¹⁷⁶ Marie Eugénie senses that “**the transformation**” is a task to be approached first in the area of inner life: one should become an *image of Jesus*.¹⁷⁷ This means that faith is not only a form of devotion or religious practice, but an experience that transforms our perspective little by little, to see and react according to Gospel values, so that their dynamics becomes in us and through us a humanizing power that reshapes the world.

Many of MME’s writings insist on this spiritual work, conceived by her as an intimate relationship with God: Just as two candles burnt together acquire the properties of one another, in the same manner, part of God is mixed with our substance, **it changes us, transforms us, deifies us...** We can **somehow understand this transformation** of ourselves in God **by the effects** we can verify.¹⁷⁸ The Eucharist is **mystery and model of our own transformation.**¹⁷⁹

And she suggests to us some means, such as study, prayer, reflection: **...meditation triggers transformation**, it changes our thoughts, our relationships, and our habits.¹⁸⁰ This *process of exodus* frees us of our fears and our egocentric inclinations, and little by little brings about the best in us:

¹⁷⁵ Pre-chapter text for Transformative education 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Founded in the 17th c. by Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle.

¹⁷⁷ To try to be in every way a faithful image of Jesus Christ, MME January 7th 1858.

¹⁷⁸ Chapter January 21st 1872.

¹⁷⁹ Chapter January 20th 1875,

¹⁸⁰ Chapter December 30th 1881,

...you know the meaning of the word Passover. How the apostles were **transformed**! How, being frail... they became strong, full of faith and zeal, how they became determined... We have already received the Holy Spirit, so that the feast of the Passover can cause all those effects of **transformation and passage**... each one of us knows where are the areas of fight and triumph, which are her frailties, her attachments...¹⁸¹

The transformation is, therefore, **an inner task** and as such it demands from us decision, perseverance, courage and lucidity about ourselves.

MME and the Sisters see themselves as “apprentices” in the school of the gospel, in which it is necessary to be *a few steps ahead* of this dynamics of conversion if we want to transmit the true word to the young people entrusted to us, a word that invites not with the persuasion of beautiful speeches or with demagogy, but with the *humility of example*.¹⁸²

This process is unrelated to perfectionist or intimate perfectionism. When explaining her first intuitions to P. Lacordaire, MME tells him that the objective of religion, as she sees it, is not only the salvation of the soul, but a complete availability so that God can make use of each of us so that the humanizing energy of the Gospel radiates and confers Life to all beings, thus transforming society.¹⁸³

AN URGENCY THAT SPRINGS UP FROM HER OWN EXPERIENCE

When starting the foundation, MME and the first Sisters not only study and pray, they also share their experiences: We had experienced, she says, a superficial education, useless and disconnected from faith... completely

¹⁸¹ Chapter April 13th 1879.

¹⁸² ...when they are responsible of any subject, they are usually two or three courses ahead in preparation. Why should we not apply this principle to spiritual realities? When you demand from your students this or that act of humility and obedience, should you not be ahead in the practice of these virtues? ...we should see our institute as a school of the spirit of Jesus Christ... (The spirit of the Assumption in education and teaching, p. 51)
Reference text, chapter V; pre-chapter document of Transformative Education.

¹⁸³ cfr. Letter to P. Lacordaire cited in the Origins I, chapter XI, written ca 1841.

false ideas about a woman's dignity and duties...¹⁸⁴ An education with no convictions,¹⁸⁵ a pedagogy they designate as the theory of egoism in action.¹⁸⁶

In a historical moment of deep change, they reflect about the socio-political and ecclesiastic phenomena they are experiencing and they try to discern their causes: to build the project of a new religious family they wish to offer a new understanding of the human being and the world that helps to return sense and direction to society. ***Nobody like us has been founded with a view to this future society...***¹⁸⁷ writes Marie Eugénie to P. D'Alzon in 1848, at the same moment as their contemporaries and friends were risking their lives in the trenches.

In an unstable socio-political context like this, the Assumption, together with other committed Christians, wants to be a sign of going against the current, a choice to think and act differently, a voice to awaken us out of the sleepiness of conformism, of fatalism; which shakes consciences so they can commit to contributing their part to the construction of greater social justice. They dream that *the earth* can be *a place of the glory of God*.¹⁸⁸ This **utopia**¹⁸⁹ empowers their convictions which then soon become actions. The world can be that place in which each human being, being him or herself in plenitude,¹⁹⁰ collaborates with his or her particular grace¹⁹¹ to build a fair and reconciled society.

¹⁸⁴ Letter 1556 from 1842.

¹⁸⁵ Chapter April 28th 1889.

¹⁸⁶ Note 1512.

¹⁸⁷ Nobody more than us has been founded with a view to this future society, the advent of which is the constant aim of our most ardent desires. We want the wellbeing of the people and sympathize with everything that is reasonable and Christian. The peoples should be taught morality, not exploited" (Letter no. 1923, from 1848).

¹⁸⁸ cfr. Letter to Father Lacordaire cited in *Origins* I, ch. XI, written ca 1841.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid..

¹⁹⁰ "To me, it is madness not being what you are in your greatest plenitude"(Letter 1563, from 1842).

¹⁹¹ Notes to the superiors, cited in "The education of character", p.134.

The Sisters believe that the Gospel has the virtue and the power to **regenerate**, to **rehabilitate** the whole of humanity.¹⁹² They consider this action is *so necessary and urgent that it will be made true sooner or later*,¹⁹³ and they put their hands to the task to help in this *colossal work*, creating modest but innovative pedagogies. The small seed of mustard sprouts and grows, extending its branches gradually to different contexts, countries and continents, bringing with it its ferment of novelty and transformation.

We do not know whether Marie Eugénie envisaged the ecological disasters we face today. We can assume that with her alert intelligence and her eyes intent on the challenges of her age, she was touched by the voices raised then inviting respect for nature, proposing different models.¹⁹⁴ What we read in her writings is clearly a way of looking on Creation that is full of admiration and appreciation: *the whole universe gives glory and honor to God for the harmony reigning in it, for the marvels we see...*¹⁹⁵ She thinks that the Creation is called to bring the human being to God.¹⁹⁶ She is also aware of the precariousness of nature, and its negative consequences on human life: *she believed in God's will as a social state in which nobody would endure again any other misfortune than natural disasters, i.e., where the Gospel would free each human being from being oppressed by others.*¹⁹⁷

How far they were at the time from imagining that the development of science and technology could actually prevent and remedy certain natural catastrophes! But, above all, few people could perhaps imagine the devastating consequences – both on an ecological and social level – of the individualistic, predatory and irresponsible growth model that has become

¹⁹² Ibid and letter no. 1648, undated, classified in 1844.

¹⁹³ Letter no. 1611, March the 15th 1844.

¹⁹⁴ Cfr. C. Bonneuil et JB Fressoz, *L'événement anthropocène*, Seuil, 2013.

¹⁹⁵ Chapter June the 22nd 1884.

¹⁹⁶ Cfr. Chapter August the 8th 1880.

¹⁹⁷ Cfr. Letter 1610, from 1844.

the general spirit of the times, and of which we are victims and actors in different degrees, depending on where on the planet we are.

Hence her intuition: the ***need of change and transformation, the revolution of mentalities***¹⁹⁸ sounds like an urgent challenge today, a requirement both fundamental and necessary to build a human community based on the values of ***Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation and Solidarity***.¹⁹⁹

HOW DOES MARIE EUGÉNIE PUT INTO WORDS THIS TRANSFORMATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL DOMAIN?

For Marie Eugénie and the first Sisters, education would be the privileged means to get involved in this mission of transformation. They described it as the act of **reforming, re-establishing, regenerating, rehabilitating...** “*we always have this objective in the horizon: to restore, re-found everything in Christ. Instaurare omnia in Christo. This is the word we want to make come true through education*”.²⁰⁰

These words ring a bell in our contemporary situation: **to re-establish, to restore** means to “return to its original condition or a better condition; to renovate, restore the rights, re-integrate into society”. Also “to return to existence, give vigor: to restore to health, appreciation: to restore in truth...”²⁰¹

In a time of economic growth thanks to the industrial revolution, but also of notorious social injustice, the Sisters already glimpsed the urgency, still

¹⁹⁸ TF p. 45; Letter no 1501, end of 1841. In this letter we do not find the phrase fundamental revolution but renovation of my intelligence.

¹⁹⁹ The past 30 years have seen the appearance of entities, especially in the Church, which inspired in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the synod of Bishops for Justice in the world (1971) have taken in the cause of Justice-Peace-Integrity of Creation (JPIC), to which the Assumption has added an S for Solidarity.

²⁰⁰ Conversations of MME, April the 29th, 1873.

²⁰¹ Dictionaries: Larousse, and Dictionary of the Royal Academy for the Spanish Language.

present today, of working to free so many individuals and groups from segregation and exclusion, from abuse and violence.

Regenerate is a word frequently used nowadays, in the sciences, for instance, it is defined as “the capacity of a living entity (cell, organ, organism, ecosystem...) to rebuild itself after having suffered destruction; it is a second birth after a state of corruption; the partial or complete reproduction of an object of living thing into its first shape, reformation”.²⁰²

To reform, re-establish, regenerate, rehabilitate – all of these are thoroughly Biblical terms.

Marie Eugénie never imagined that her words would have an impact in the contemporary context, but the problems of Ecology and Migration make us turn to them very naturally. What we sense in her texts (chapters, letters and conversations), is that all of them are the fruit of long moments in contact with the **Word of God**, meditation, study, prayer. In many Biblical texts we find similar expressions; for instance, the prophet Ezekiel presents God as a surgeon who **re-establishes** in human beings their main vital principle: *a new heart... a new spirit, removing the heart of stone and inserting a heart of flesh*”.²⁰³ He also describes God’s action as the **physical and moral regeneration** of the whole people, where only *dry bones* were left,²⁰⁴ i.e. a people with no hope, exhausted, desiccated and distant from the source of life.

Isaiah suggests the image of the Lord’s envoy as a **restorer of ancient ruins**,²⁰⁵ meaning with this metaphor it is God’s will to reconstruct and return the life and dignity to his people.

In the New Testament Jesus announces the Kingdom healing, easing pain, restoring people to their life and dignity. The Gospel of John puts in his

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ez 36:26

²⁰⁴ Ez 37

²⁰⁵ Is 49:17; 58:12

mouth a sentence that sums up his words and acts clearly: *I have come so that they have life, and life in abundance.*²⁰⁶ He will tirelessly encourage a new understating of God, his project, the commandments of the law... all completely directed to **restore the dignity** of every human being, the servant-king and guardian of the garden of Creation, and of his brothers and sisters, human beings²⁰⁷ .

With no exhaustive reflection on what the Bible tell us about these expressions, the cited texts invite us, as they did with Marie Eugénie in her context, to revise how we represent the human being and the cosmos, but also God. The Word of God invites us to live in a constant attitude of discernment: *...“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”*.²⁰⁸

EDUCATION IN THE ASSUMPTION AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS IT GENERATES

Education in the Assumption is, therefore, a **dynamic process geared to transform** our vision and our way of acting. Like Marie Eugénie and the first Sisters in their time, like many other prophets of the Bible and History, we are called to live in tension between two poles: reality and God’s project.

Listening to God and at the same time to the rhythms of history, we want to allow them to put into question our own views and attitudes, as well as to discern the causes and consequences of what happens around us. This should lead us to enter with determination and courage into *“a process of humanization, of conversion to the Gospel; (...) seeking the transformation of persons and situations, no matter how humble and modest, thus making an effort to reorient the world towards a greater justice and solidarity.”*²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ John 10:10

²⁰⁷ Genesis 1 and 2

²⁰⁸ Rom 12:2

²⁰⁹ Pre-chapter text “Transformative Education”. General Chapter 2006.

Today, in the context of the big global village, in which we are increasingly more aware of how all beings are closely **interrelated**, this change of mentality has global consequences. If the current ecological crisis is the product of a **consumerist, individualistic and irresponsible mentality** affecting resources that are the patrimony of humanity and future generations, the solution will then be a radical change of mentality, a **paradigmatic revolution**. *“We have no choice: either we change or we shall experience obscurity (...) it is not a matter of correcting the system that generated the current ecological crisis, but **to educate for its transformation...**”*²¹⁰

A change of the paradigm of this type means, as we have said, **to redefine** our relationships in all spheres: with ourselves, with others, with nature, with God. We need to adopt a critical distance from our **predatory and abusive impulses**, from our individualistic and egocentric tendencies, so as to restore the principles of **respect, harmony and careful love** towards our eco-community of life and of **solidarity** towards future generations.

SOME CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSUMPTION’S TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Like Marie Eugénie and the first Sisters in their time, listening to God so as to *reinvent paths of communion, wisdom and prophecy*,²¹¹ we need to:

- Re-read critically our educational work in each and every context in which we are present, assessing what is it that our education is transforming.
- Analyze reality with lucidity, so as to acknowledge in what ways human beings and ecosystems are coming under threat: segregationist and discriminatory prejudices; deterioration of the environment; disproportionate eagerness to consume, which *turns everything, even the human being, into disposable objects*, etc.

²¹⁰ Boff, Revistas Koinonía, 2011 y 2012.

²¹¹ Objective of the General Chapter 2012.

- Revise with courage and honesty what in our cultures demands purification and maturity; what in them needs to be healed, as we are invited to do by Pope Francis, for instance sexism, alcoholism, violence, and so on, so as to respect the dignity of each human being.
- Approach in a critical way all educational models that promote competitiveness, excellence and welfare, at the expense of discrediting or excluding, reducing or exploiting others. We need to guide the passion and inner desire of the young towards the excellence of the Gospel, in which the benefits of development contribute to global well-being.
- Look *for means to educate in wisdom, sense of beauty and reusing or recycling; the taste for a simple life-style.*²¹² To tune up our educational projects: principles, means, methodologies, activities... so that they cohere with our vision and with the challenges of the context in which we are set.
- Get involved in specific acts of social activity and solidarity; of voluntary simplicity and an economy of solidarity; or a word in favour of inclusion; of non-violent communication and the peaceful solution of conflicts; of preservation and restoration of biodiversity... to proclaim, by actions and concrete decisions, our conviction that *a different world is possible*.

“In solidarity with other people of good will, we approach every human reality in a different way. We take part in the search for a new framework of ethical references, inspired in the Gospel, which can give shape to thought, make us active and inspire decisions. We work to create a society enlivened with more justice, more humanity, more solidarity. We build a future in which the Gospel and the values of the Kingdom lived and

²¹² Working paper “Ecology and Migration”, General Chapter 2012.

proclaimed by Jesus can still be part of the heart, spirit and life of each of us".²¹³

3. d.6 Ways forward

On 3.d.1 Marie Eugénie and Creation

- How does Marie Eugénie's vision shed light on God the Creator (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)?
- What new relationships can be inspired by her vision of the human being and living creatures?
- How does Marie Eugénie illustrate her anthropological optimism and how can this vision transform our representations and attitudes?
- What work orientations can we apply to our educational mission in the project entrusted to us?
-

On 3.d.2 Marie Eugénie and the Kingdom. Social consequences of the Gospel

- What is Marie Eugénie's vision of the Kingdom and how does it evolve throughout her life?
- What biblical images of the Kingdom inspire your activity and reflection about ecology?
- How would you describe today God's project, the utopia of the Kingdom, to inspire hope and creativity when confronting the ecologic disasters we experience nowadays?
- What are the signs (related to ecology) of the presence of the Kingdom you can recognise in your environment, in your mission?

On 3.d.3 Ecology in the spirituality of the Assumption

²¹³ Pre-Chapter text "Transformative education", General Chapter 2006.

- How would you describe a spirituality that is focused on the others and not on self?
- What values or virtues can we nurture in ourselves and in others, oriented towards the care of the environment?
- What would be the contemporary, accessible translation of what Marie Eugénie called “the adoration of God’s rights”?
- What attitudes related to an ecologic commitment are inspired by Marie Eugénie’s phrase, “joyful detachment”?

On 3.d.4 Ecology and Liturgy

- How can Leonardo Boff’s reflection on the new paradigm inspire an experience of the liturgy as a celebration of life from your reality?
- How do local culture values, situations lived in your closest environment influence and color liturgical celebrations?
- Revise the phrases from the article about the world, mysticism and the way of reading the Word of God, that have left a mark in you.
- How could liturgical texts (Liturgy of the Hours) be, in your reality, an expression of the care for life and the environment? Suggest some examples.

On 3.d.5 The Assumption’s transformative education and JPICS commitment: two closely linked themes

- Marie Eugénie dreams of a form of liberation that transforms society: how can we link her belief with environmental issues?
- What are the inner and educational conditions necessary for a real evangelic transformation?
- What challenges apply to your reality, to your mission?
- How do you suggest an answer to those challenges with your community or work team?

3.e Religions, Spiritualities and the Environment

Jessica Gatty r.a.

Contributions in this section touch on various religious and spiritual contexts: the contexts are largely where the Assumption is situated at present. The texts have been written by Assumption Sisters and associates, whose day-to-day lives bring them into contact with the major world religions and a variety of spiritualities.

Dialogue involves first of all listening and openness to the other. Since *'Nostra Aetate'* (2 October 1965) we are able to recognise 'one is the community of all peoples, one is their origin, and one is their final goal.' Increasingly we recognise too that we have an essential common task, care for our beleaguered environment, and a renewed attitude to nature in order that human life may once more be in harmony with the rest of Creation. This is an urgent task for which religions and spiritualities have an irreplaceable contribution to make, for, as is pointed out in many contributions, at root this crisis is a spiritual crisis.

The first step is to listen to one another. After the overview, 'Religion and the Environment,' there are articles from the Judeo-Christian tradition and from the other major world religions, and a consideration of the task for interreligious dialogue. Finally, two articles focus on spirituality.

3.e.1 Religion and environment

Mary Cecilia Claparols, r.a.

Paradigms and perspectives determine how we situate ourselves and relate to the rest of reality. Myths and narratives shape our consciousness and direct our decisions, which are then embodied in behavior. An identity

is born out of the narrative and this narrative becomes the very heart of the people or community's spirituality, ethics and action. However, this narrative is open-ended and allows it to be reread and continued through application to different circumstances. Narratives can also co-exist within a plurality of narratives.²¹⁴

The underlying narratives of the dominant and pervading culture of our present society contribute to the increasing violence, greed, domination and destruction of all life. Such perspectives come from stories which propagate the illusion of "separateness among humans and the entire Creation." Those who control the stories define the culture of a society, control its politics and economy, and decide on the structure of relationships which impact the planet. With time, the stories imprison and dull the mind, legitimize and protect established relationships by force, and soon perpetuate a system that now creates a cultural trance.²¹⁵

Two perspectives from the tradition and textual hermeneutics of monotheistic religions have also contributed to this perspective and illusion of separation between humans and the rest of Creation. First is the total allegiance to "God alone and no other" and the denigration of other gods and spirits as idolatry; second is the teaching on the innate superiority of human beings *vis a vis* the rest of Creation. This has created what Elizabeth Johnson calls a "hierarchical dualism (matter and spirit, male and female, the sacred and the profane, etc.) reinforcing the dominion model with humans at the apex of the pyramid of living creatures with rights over Creation." Johnson suggests that the neglect of

²¹⁴ Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J. "The Mediating Role of Narrative in Interreligious Dialogue: Implications and Illustrations from the Philippine Context," in *Creeds, Rites and Videotapes: Narrating Religious Experience in East Asia*, ed. Elise Anne de Vito and Benoit Vermander (Taipei, Ricci Institute, 2004), 285-286. Sr. Mary Cecilia Claparols, Dmin "The Earth, A Place of Glory for God: A Metaphor Mediating the Consciousness of Interdependence," Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, 2008, 1.

²¹⁵ Sr. Mary Cecilia Claparols, *Ibid.* 2. David C. Korten, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006), 237.

the earth is intimately linked to the marginalization of women and the forgetting of the Creator Spirit who pervades the world.²¹⁶ The 300 year drive to gain control over nature, according to Anne Clifford, has stripped nature of its magical properties, viewing nature simply as resources “there” for human use.²¹⁷

Separation thus considers the “other” as an enemy, a resource for one’s needs and purpose, even for one’s greed. All obstacles to pursue the goal must be eliminated, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. Thomas Berry, a cultural anthropologist, points at this mode of consciousness, which has established a discontinuity between the human and other modes of being, as the main cause of the present devastation.²¹⁸ Yet we are awakening to a new and sustaining relationship with the earth at a time when the very existence of all life forms in the planet are threatened.

To make this shift towards a “life-sustaining civilization,” we need a perspective that goes beyond anthropocentrism; we need to learn to “act our age” and so experience the vitality of our interdependence with past and future generations and to the entire cosmos.²¹⁹ “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”²²⁰ In this context, time is neither linear nor disconnected. In any place we stand in the present, we are physically standing on layers of centuries of evolution, what is called “deep time.” To recover this sense of deep time is to bring us back to gratitude, reverence and responsibility

²¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 3,13-14. Claparols, *Ibid.*

Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (Bloomsbury: London, 2014), 260.

²¹⁷ Claparols, 2. Anne Clifford, “When Being Human Becomes Truly Earthly: An Eco-Feminist Proposal For Solidarity,” *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 74.

²¹⁸ Sr. Mary Cecilia Claparols, Dmin, 2-3. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 3.

²¹⁹ Joanna Macy, “Deep Time,” <http://www.ioannamacy.net> (accessed June 24, 2007).

²²⁰ John Muir, quoted in “Interdependence,” (accessed September 21, 2007).

for all beings.²²¹ For Berry and many religious leaders, the environmental crisis is spiritual and ethical. The situation is complex and would require nothing less than the participation and collaboration of all, bringing the resources that could address such a crisis.

Thomas Berry speaks of four wisdoms to draw from as guide for the future:

(1) the wisdom of indigenous people for whom the natural world is experienced with intimacy and sensitivity to the powers of the universe;

(2) the wisdom of women that joins the knowing of the body to that of mind, the soul to the spirit, intuition to reasoning, feeling consciousness to intellectual analysis, intimacy to detachment, subjective presence to objective distance;

(3) the wisdom of the classical traditions which are based on revelatory experiences, both transcendent and imminent, and the capacity of humans to participate in that world and achieve a mode of being; and

(4) the wisdom of science which has shown that the universe has come to being in evolutionary transformations over a long period of time, from a lesser to a more complex structure and mode of consciousness.²²²

Indigenous peoples espouse an organic understanding of the cosmos and the community which extends beyond the human. Community is all of Creation, living and non-living, visible and invisible beings interconnected and interdependent. Mother Earth, the land and the oceans, all life is sacred. Sacredness is pervasive in all beings inviting all to reverence.²²³ The regard for the sacred is integrated into daily life and one carries a sensitivity to follow the rhythms of nature to live in harmony with the world of the spirits and with the entire Creation. Humans take from the

²²¹ Sr. Mary Cecilia, 4.

²²² Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* 7, 180.

²²³ Jojo M. Fung, S.J. *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Church and Shamans in Dialogue for Liberative Struggle in Asia* (Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc. Quezon City, 2014),124.

earth only what is needed and nothing more, always grateful because nature provides all yet humans are not owners of nature. Geographical space is alive and can affect the human psyche, the lifeway, and practice.²²⁴

Religious traditions provide stories of who we are, what nature is, where we come from, where we are going and the kind of interrelationships we have with the Divine, among humans and with nature. Religions give purpose and meaning, unify communities towards a common goal with values that provide the ethical orientation of a society.²²⁵ Rituals are symbolic bodily actions that build personal and cultural identity. They facilitate the transmission of worldviews, values, attitudes, and through repetition, deepen spiritual insight opening persons to a transformation of consciousness. At the same time, rituals give shape to emotions and helps humans come to terms with major events in life. The rituals are often connected to cycles in nature and are expressed in sacred spaces chosen by communities. "Religious rituals model relations with material life and transmit habits, practices and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations." The religious worldviews are primordial because they are a revelation of the first things and they propel and compel communities to take creative action.²²⁶ Studies of the history of peoples and nations show how a meta-narrative from religion can become a vision which inspires a movement for liberation. (Francisco).

Religions carry prophetic and powerful resources for transforming consciousness and behavior, but they also through the limited understanding of the situation and interpretation of their narratives,

²²⁴ John Grim, "Recovering Religious Ecology with Indigenous Traditions," (Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale Divinity School and the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics), 2-3.

²²⁵ Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams, eds. *Buddhism and Ecology* (Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997) xvi.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, Lawrence E. Sullivan, xi.; William H. Swatos, Jr. ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*. Kieran Flanagan, "Ritual." Bowden, John. *Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

contributed to the present crisis. The complexity of this ecological situation challenges religions to reevaluate, reframe their own roles and commitments, as well as the interpretations of their narratives. Religions need to dialogue with the other narratives of today's context. In doing so, religions can inspire, motivate, propel and model the reverence, the awe and the sense of the sacredness of nature, "to provide the transforming energies for ethical practices to protect endangered ecosystems, threatened species, and diminishing resources."²²⁷ Religions can then provide the vision, the symbols, the ethical expressions where we humans can reimagine ourselves no longer as separate from the world but as thinking within the context of the whole, in the constantly changing cosmos, conscious of our interdependence. May all beings have Life, the Fullness of life!

3.e.2 The Cosmic Covenant

Jessica Gatty, r.a.

We are in the midst of a spiritual crisis. We are not only living an environmental crisis of epic proportions, we are also in social and economic crisis, but at root there is, above all, a spiritual crisis. Western Christianity has largely lost a cosmology, it has largely lost the invisible dimension, what the tradition called 'principalities and powers', it has largely lost its Creator²²⁸. Our worldview cannot avoid being tainted by empirical materialism, reductionism and mechanism which so often engenders nihilism at heart. From this hubris come violence engendering ecocide, the poisonous fruits of our current world view.²²⁹

²²⁷ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Ibid.*, xxi.

²²⁸ 'How can Christianity call itself Catholic if the universe is left out?' Simone Weil 'Waiting for God' Fontana 1959

²²⁹ Edward Goldsmith identifies the 'secular religion of today in a talk given Feb 1998 Religion and the Environment Educational programme (REEP) Conference for Bishops and Theologians published in *Fourth World review* 1998. Edward Goldsmith 1928-2009 is an environmental scholar and green activist. He is from a Jewish background.

But this too is a great time of opportunity, a time of `great turning'²³⁰ , a time of invitation to spiritual growth and a shift in consciousness, a time to `remember God'.²³¹ Quantum physics has undermined the foundations of this materialistic deterministic world view. Matter is more a series of interconnected events than substance: the whole is found to be more than the sum of the parts. The violence of the 20th Century and our current economic earthquakes have dented the belief in linear progress and technology as savior. We question the orthodoxy of free market capitalism. We need what help we can find and a return to ancient traditions to search there for wisdom is part of this. In view of this let us look again at the ancient cosmic covenant in the Judeo-Christian tradition in order to help the search for a way forward.

There is a longing in the human heart for *shalom*, the peace and harmony of all Creation. The cosmic covenant promises this. Ancient Judaism and early Christianity were fully integrated into a world view of cosmic proportions in which the maintaining of cosmic order was the essential, with the Creator at its heart and the powers of heaven either working for or against this. Other religions too were working at maintaining cosmic harmony and order²³². Today all religions need to work together for this.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY, REDISCOVERING THE COSMIC COVENANT

²³⁰ Joanna Macy `Active Hope' Hope to face the mess we are in without going crazy' 2012 New World Library. You Tube `the Great Turning' Joanna Macy

²³¹ Levin in Tolstoy's Ana Karenina quoted in `Hell and High Water, Alastair McIntosh.

²³²²³² Mircea Eliade and other students of religion have shown that most rituals performed by traditional peoples served above all to maintain cosmic order, the Tao of the ancient Chinese, R'ta of the Vedic Indians, Ma'at of the ancient Egyptians, *Sedeq* of the ancient Hebrews, all aimed to bring harmony between heaven and earth, *shalom*, at the same time the moral law, the divine law and the law of the cosmos. By following this path one maintained harmony between heaven and earth following – the original meaning of *shalom*'. The rituals were a way of restoring order from chaos and those supreme evils which threaten to engulf our distant ancestors and as they do now us. The cosmic covenant as understood by the ancient Israelites grew out of the culture and wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia.

The reality of the destruction caused to the planet by much economic development, the extractive industries, the use of fossil fuels, the loss of species, waste and pollution etc. is dawning on us slowly, much of it beyond our imagination . It was not, however unnoticed by Christians, among others. In 1983 the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Vancouver initiated an ecumenical program to transform economic structures and personal life style choices according to the values of the Kingdom. They realized that justice, peace and the integrity of Creation (JPIC) are three aspects of one reality.²³³ This was followed by other WCC convocations and Assemblies, notably, Seoul 1990 'Between the Flood and the Rainbow' and Canberra 1998 and work with UNCED and other churches not part of the WCC.

Pope John Paul had much to say on the environment and human responsibility, culminating in 2002 on a 'Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics' jointly with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew (sometimes called the 'green Patriarch' because of his untiring work on the environment and environmental problems) They finish by saying 'it is not too late. God's world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation we could steer the earth towards our children's future. Let that generation start now, with God's help and blessing'. The link between peace, justice and care for the environment was increasingly clear²³⁴.

The Orthodox churches have held the memory of the cosmic dimension of the Christian faith rather better than the churches of the West, especially the Reformed, with their focus on personal salvation. The predecessor of Patriarch Bartholomew, Dimitrios, inaugurated the Day of Prayer for the protection of the Environment in 1989 which was later extended to a whole Creationtide time of prayer and thanksgiving from September 1st till

²³³ The Biblical vision of peace with justice for all is not one of several options for the followers of Christ but is an imperative for our times' WCC Vancouver.

²³⁴ For instance, John Paul II in his 'World Day of Peace' message of 1990 ` says, "World peace is threatened by lack of due respect for nature."

the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, October 4th. This has now spread patchily throughout the Christian world.

In the world of Judaism the link between humanity and the rest of Creation, the inner and outer world, has perhaps been better maintained, as has the sense of the holiness of God's Creation. The early rabbinic period picked up on the importance of healing. The followers of Isaac Luria and the Kabbalists emphasized the evolution and spiritualization of the whole Creation by means small acts of kindness and heartfelt prayer, co-operation with the Divine will and purity of heart. The present day movement *Tikkun 'olam* builds on this for the repair, preservation and healing of the whole world after cosmic fragmentation (*Shevirat HaKelim*) and God's withdrawal yet remaining imperceptible presence (*tsim tsum*).

Meanwhile in the world of Biblical studies the discoveries in the caves of Qumran have given impetus to look afresh at uncanonical material from the intertestamental period and earlier. This is relevant to the rediscovery of the cosmic covenant for today. What follows does not aim to negate the story of the successive covenants made by the Creator with His creatures and specifically with the people of Israel and finally with the coming of Christ, the ultimate covenant.²³⁵ It does, however, remind us of the deep roots of this idea, or 'myth,' a truth expressed in story, ritual and art almost universally.

The clearest exposition of the cosmic covenant is found in the Book of Enoch, the oldest apocalyptic writing known; this book was familiar to both Jews and Christians in the first two centuries after Christ, then lost until re-discovered in the caves of Qumran in 1947.²³⁶

²³⁵ See, for instance, Aphraates. Breviary, Lent Week 1 Wednesday

²³⁶ These texts, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, were discovered over a decade 1946 – 1956. This followed another discovery of an ancient library at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945 with much non- canonical material usually thought of as 'gnostic'. However, material such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Apocrypha of James may embody an ancient wisdom tradition quite independent of the Synoptic Gospels yet present in earliest Christian teaching. It can be argued that this tradition originated in the pre-exilic traditions of Israel's

We will first look at the extra-Biblical material and then return to the Biblical material, notably in the prophetic books and the Psalms that remain after the Deuteronomic reforms at the end of the 7th century BC, after the return from the Exile. These aimed to expunge all elements of myth, and what was presumed to be paganism, to clear the way for a cleaner, more historicized narrative. Restoration of the 1st temple liturgy was also out of order; instead, a sternly demythologized version was inaugurated.²³⁷

Enoch walked with God (Gen.5.24). According to him, heavenly bodies are kept on their course by the oath that binds them (1 Enoch 41); this `secures the order of Creation and holds the heavens firm and the earth secure.²³⁸ It keeps the sea in check with a barrier of sand. Then there is a list of all the other forces of Creation: spirits of water, winds, thunders, hail, frost, mist, rain and dew. They all function safely through the strength of the great oath and they praise the Lord of Spirits'²³⁹ The forces of Creation are bound; this is a very ancient idea.

This cosmic or eternal covenant keeps all in harmony in tune with the will of God; the power of the Name binds the unruly forces.²⁴⁰ This account is in contrast to the later and more familiar Creation story in all its serenity at the beginning of Genesis. The sea often represents the forces of chaos, power over the sea represents Divine power. Hence the importance of

Temple cult. Evidence for this can be found in the work of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil and Irenaeus who went as far as to maintain that material based on Temple symbolism was the first essential for apostolic preaching. (Irenaeus `Proof of Apostolic Preaching'.)

²³⁷ This is argued by Margaret Barker who has done extensive research into the Temple roots of the Christian Liturgy. For Josiah's purge of the priesthood and reforms see `the Great High Priest' T & T Clark 2003 p 147 -152. See also 2 Kings:23

²³⁸ This is apparently entrusted to the Archangel Michael.

²³⁹ Margaret Barker. The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin,' The Ecologist Jan 2000.

²⁴⁰ Prayer of Manasseh – God is the one who shackled the sea, confined the deep and sealed it with his terrible and glorious name. See also Psalm 18. 16-17, Psalm 24.2., Psalm 46

Jesus' stilling the storm (Matt. 8. 27) An important feature of the everlasting covenant, the eternal covenant or the *cosmic covenant*, as it can be called, is that it is not just the natural forces that are bound. Moral restraints, non-material events as well as material events, an interdependence, an all-encompassing web, familiar to the ecologically minded nowadays, are all included. When broken, this covenant demands a re-binding, a healing, a reconstruction of the web.

The cosmic covenant is also a covenant of peace and thus affects fertility. Breaking the covenant brings bad harvests, and droughts: 'The envoys of peace weep bitterly; the treaty is broken; its witnesses are despised. The land mourns and wastes away. And Bashan (smooth fertile land) and Carmel (garden) drop their leaves'. ^{Isaiah 33: 7-9}

With Enoch the breaking of the covenant is due to the evil forces, evil angels in revolt fostering war and seduction ^{1 Enoch 6-10}. Interestingly, they were made blind. Again it is important to remember that this does not necessarily invalidate the story of Adam and Eve and human responsibility for wrong but rather adds another dimension to it. As Robert Murray points out, 'people suffering torture have sometimes had an intuition that their torturers were themselves victims of something even more terrible, this realization suddenly made compassion possible.'²⁴¹

For Cosmic disorder brings social disorder ^{Isaiah 24: 1-6}. 'on earth as in heaven'²⁴². The desolation of the earth is described vividly in Jeremiah 4: 23- 27 and Joel 1:8-20 followed by a beautiful passage on restoration Joel 2:19- 27 'O soil, do not be afraid, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things, beasts of the field, do not be afraid: the pastures on the heath are green again, the trees bear fruit, vine and fig tree yield abundantly'^{Joel2: 21-22}. See also Isaiah 32: 15-20

²⁴¹ The Cosmic Covenant' p 167. Tigris 2007. The idea of forces beyond our power but still under God has obstinately remained on the fringes of Christian belief, albeit 'uncanonical.'

²⁴² 'In the ancient near east Temples represented the heavenly and were the privileged meeting place of heaven and earth.

THE ETERNAL COVENANT RESTORED

Berit 'olam. The word covenant is first used when God renews cosmic harmony after the flood, this covenant is made with Noah and every living creature. ^{Genesis 8: 7 – 16} The original blessing of fruitfulness is restored and a promise made never again to destroy the earth. The rainbow was to be the sign of this.

'As long as earth lasts, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall cease no more' ^{Genesis 8: 22}

Hosea reiterates much of this, the marriage of heaven and earth, the covenant with birds and animals as well as humans, the breaking of war with its weapons, the covenant of peace. ^{2: 18-21} The covenant is repeated in Isaiah 54: 7 – 10. The covenant of peace with paradise restored is also present in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 65.

Ritual was important to bring right order. The Temple was the meeting place of heaven and earth, and the lampstand, priestly vestments and other artefacts all had cosmic significance. It was a worldview which brought together religious belief, cosmology, agriculture, government and ethics. There was the spiritual power of exorcism, blessings and curses and prophecy. The role of the king was important, the idea of sacral kingship developed. The trauma of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians led to the development by the Deuteronomists and the Priestly scribes of a more democratized version, the awaiting of a Messiah to be anointed by the Holy Spirit who would restore the covenant.

JESUS, THE CHRIST

'In his vision Enoch saw the Son of Man restoring the great bonds of Creation, healing the rift between heaven and earth, and thus restoring the cosmos'.²⁴³ What signs were there that Jesus was that Son of Man? He called himself that. In the desert he was with the angels and the animals

²⁴³ Margaret Barker 'The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin' Ecologist. Jan 2000.

(Mark 1.13.) signs of a new Adam.²⁴⁴ He went about healing the sick, he bound the strong one (Matt. 12.29) and gave Peter the power to bind (Matt 16. 13-19) which could mean in this context restraining the evil forces to which human beings are subject. (Individual sin can be seen within a much bigger context).

The demons are subjected to the Name of Jesus (Luke 10.17) as Jesus himself performed countless exorcisms. 'Who can this be, even the wind and sea obey him' (Mark 4. 41) the disciples recognised with awe that this was evidence of a Messiah, the lord of Creation. Jesus preaches the coming of the Kingdom, the reign of God, the restored covenant, justice, peace and restored fertility. Then there was the healing of the man born blind, blind not because he or his parents sinned but so as to reveal the works of God, (John 9) 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' he was asked. 'If we read the Fourth Gospel in the light of Enoch, we realize that the ending of blindness was a sign that the power of evil was being broken and the cosmic covenant was being restored. This was the true role of the Son of Man'²⁴⁵

St Paul was very aware that sin has involved the whole of Creation in disorder ^{Romans 8. 18-23} yet no power in heaven and on earth can separate us from the love of God, implying that hostile cosmic forces are once more bound to God's purposes. In Jesus God re-establishes the eternal covenant ^{Hebrews 13.20.}

He is the Christ 'far above every sovereignty Authority, power or domination or any other name that can be named... He has put all things under his feet' ^{Ephesians 1. 21.} And of course the great hymn in Colossians is very explicit. 'He has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the Kingdom of the Son that he loves. He, the Christ, is the Lord of the whole cosmos, both things in heaven and on earth, visible and

²⁴⁴ St Ephrem 306-373 'he went about with the animals which knelt and worshipped him and the angels praised him on earth as in heaven.'

²⁴⁵ Margaret Barker 'The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin' The Ecologist, Jan 2000.

invisible. All things are reconciled through him, he brings peace.²⁴⁶ This understanding of Christ harks back to the Messianism of sacral kingship expressed beautifully in Psalm 72, and ultimately to the eternal covenant, the cosmic covenant, the covenant of peace: it was all very much part of the understanding of early Christianity.

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

`... for in him were created all things in heaven and earth: everything visible and invisible, thrones, Dominations, Sovereignities, Powers - all things were created through him and for him' Col 1. 16. Jesus came not just to reconcile people to God despite the Powers but to reconcile the Powers themselves to God.²⁴⁷ We are re-finding the idea of invisible forces determining nature and also human cultural constructs existing in our own day in the intricate fabric of power and relationships in the institutions and structures of society, the military industrial complex, for example, the multinationals, the economy, or closer to home, the parish council, and the congregation; all have a `culture', an inner and an outer aspect, an `angel' more or often less, obedient to God.²⁴⁸ When an institution exists for itself and its aggrandizement, developing idolatrous values, it is on the way to becoming demonic; when one is serving the common good and searching for the will of God the institution becomes recalled to its original vocation, part of the purposes of God. Here we re-find aspects of the world view of the ancient cosmic covenant but the heaven and earth dichotomy has shifted to a more integral understanding. Institutions, organizations and groups, great and small, have an interiority; these social structures are in need of redemption too. And the angels of nature, of which we are part, invite us to reappraise our entire attitude to the

²⁴⁶ Colossians 1. 13-20 , Micah 5.4. `He himself will be peace.'

²⁴⁷ Philo `de Confessionis. 171 -5 God is one, but He has around Him numberless Potencies which assist and protect created being' For Enoch there was the spirit of thunder, of the sea, or snow and mist; every species had its angel. The angel of water appears in Rev 16:5, the angels of wind and fire in Hebrew 1:7.

²⁴⁸ The great trilogy of Walter Wink explores this idea very fully and convincingly.

universe, to reverence the rest of Creation as an 'epiphany of God.'²⁴⁹ We are invited by the Creator to participate in a great communion with all Creation. We are invited to take responsibility.

The intuition of MME that society needs to be transformed is remarkably in line with this way of thinking. The conversion of the powers, both natural and societal, involves prayer, spiritual warfare; it is about the struggle to be human in the face of superhuman forces. It needs intercession. 'History belongs to intercessors who believe the future into being'²⁵⁰ It needs hope. It will be helped by ritual as we face the enormities of the damage done to persons and planet.^{251 252}

CONCLUSION

In the Book of Revelation, Azazel, the strong one, reappears to be bound by an angel.^{Rev 20 1.16} Azazel is described by Enoch in some detail²⁵³ The last chapters of Revelation promise a new heaven and a new earth: no more crying, the river of life, the trees of life full of fertility bearing twelve crops of fruit in the year, and the 'leaves of which are for the healing of the nations'. It is the fulfilment of God's promises which will not be thwarted by present affliction and sorrow.

God is a poet who works through Creation, human poets and storytellers. It is good that the Bible and its fringes contain a variety of images and models for our thinking about the world.' 'We may find beauty and power in our remote ancestors' understanding of Creation and the world'²⁵⁴ There

²⁴⁹ The use of the term 'angel' does not necessarily mean a personified being. It is the interiority of something or someone and at the same time an invitation to transcendence in line with its God-given inherent vocation.

²⁵⁰ Walter Wink. The Powers That Be 185.

²⁵¹ 'In this fragile world the context most suited to enacting and restoring the cosmic covenant will be worship' *The Torah's Vision of Worship* Samuel E. Balentine 1999

²⁵² Clare Teresa's Letter No 1 on the Liturgy: The Gate of Heaven and the Mystery of Faith' reminds us as Assumption of the importance of the liturgy in uniting heaven and earth, touching our inner reality and the integration of all things in Christ

²⁵³ Enoch Book of Watchers

²⁵⁴ 'Robert Murray 'The Cosmic Covenant' p 67

is a deep longing in the human heart for glimpses of paradise regained, hence the popularity of Francis of Assisi and more recently Hildegard of Bingen. Poets, in fact, were more likely than theologians to lament the destruction of Creation and to make the connections between heaven and earth as industrialization and urbanization proceeded.²⁵⁵ But we need both the critical reflection of a rational outlook as well as the ancient wisdom to find our way forward today.

There is great relevance and urgency in reviving the cosmic dimension of Christian faith today. Our efforts towards justice, peace and preserving the integrity of Creation are the very substance of the idea of the cosmic covenant. And is not the Kingdom, that peaceable Kingdom of justice, blessing, fruitfulness and variety promised to us in the cosmic covenant and embodied by Jesus the Son of Man, where all things are reconciled through the Christ of the cosmos, of key importance to us as Assumption and our understanding of the Reign of God?

Bibliography

- Barker Margaret, 'The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin', the Ecologist, Jan 2000.
- Barker Margaret and T. Clark, 'The Great High Priest' 'The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy', 2003.
- Macy Joanna, 'Active Hope', New World Library, 2012.
- McIntosh Alistair, 'Hell and High Water', Birlinn Ltd, 2008.
- Murray Robert S.J., 'The Cosmic Covenant'. Biblical themes of justice, peace and the integrity of Creation', Tigris, 2007.
- Wink Walter, 'Engaging the Powers': Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination, Fortress, 1992.
- Wink Walter, 'Unmasking the Powers': The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence, Fortress, 1986.
- Wink Walter, 'The Powers That Be': Theology for a New Millennium, Doubleday, 1998.

255 e.g. Auguries of Innocence, William Blake, 'Robin redbreast in a cage / Puts all heaven in a rage/ Each outcry of the hunted hare / A fibre from the brain doth tear/ A skylark wounded in the wing/ A cherubim doth cease to sing.'

3.e.3. Judaism and the environment.

Myriam Moscow, r.a.

Let us look at other religious traditions beyond our own to find elements which can enlighten our own behavior, especially on the vast subject of ecology. Ecology, for a believer, comes from his or her vision of the world based on his or her personal faith in God. There is a risk of using other elements from other sources without understanding or respecting them. As Christians “grafted on the olive branch” (Romans 11:17) which is Israel, perhaps we should consult our elder brother. The Jewish people have not waited for modern times to retain the practice of a respectful approach towards the earth “our common home”: the place of trees – celebrating the New Year - the sabbatical years prescribed for the fields and the concern for the well-being of animals – all are already present in the Torah as witness. From the vast field of the Torah, both written and spoken, and the observances which result from it, what can be chosen to shed light on ecology to the readers of this text, who are mainly not Jewish? The family meal offers several basic attitudes leading towards a convincing ecology.

The preparation of meals, in a strictly observant Jewish family, takes for granted that attention is paid to the spiritual and material aspects so that all may be kosher, that is to say that it is all right to eat. There are few rules about fruit, vegetables and cereals (except in cases of social injustice involved in farming methods) but on the other hand, dairy products and meat may never be eaten at the same meal nor from the same dish or plate. This prohibition is based on three Biblical texts. (Ex 22:30. Lev 11:4-5. Deut. 14:21.) and is justified by the holiness of God. Obedience to his word, freely given, links us to him.

If either meat or fish is to be eaten, care must be taken as to the type of meat or fish because not all are suitable for eating. (Lv.11:1-47.) This

restriction is important: we cannot eat **everything**.²⁵⁶ There is to be no hunting for pleasure, no free slaughtering. Be aware of the method that is used in the abattoir (slaughtering in the least painful way possible.) The rearing and well-being of the animal must be respected as well as the way in which the animal is drained of its blood. This is the only prohibition that requires an explanation: blood “is life” and the human being does not have the right to appropriate it.²⁵⁷ The sciatic nerve and certain fats (formerly offered as a sacrifice in the Temple) must also be removed. The consumption of meat is not banned but it is seriously limited.

If someone bakes bread (*challah*, a feast bread) they must put aside a piece to burn in memory of the piece offered to God in the Temple, or give it to the poor. According to Philo, these food rules “aim at teaching us to control our desires.” The time required to prepare, the delays imposed by certain rules (such as the time required between a milk-based dish and meat) helps to break the normal tendency towards wanting *every-thing, immediately*, which is the source of a lot of abuse against safeguarding the planet.

As soon as one has sat down to a meal there is a blessing. According to the Talmud it is forbidden to eat anything at all without asking for a blessing. “The generosity and the abundant riches of the earth belong to God: not to thank him for the pleasure they give us is paramount to stealing from him.” (Ber 35a) The blessings vary according to the menu. Over the bread, the wine, the fruits of the earth, the fruits of the trees, and even the delicious cakes, God is blessed for he is the origin of all things. From its early years, a child is taught to be aware of the origin of things, to bless the Lord for them, and to taste them with respect.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Which is why battery raised hens are not considered to be kosher.

²⁵⁷ The other rules are considered to be gratuitous In view of the holiness, of our relationship with God.

²⁵⁸ The habit of many Jewish grandmothers to keep back some candies so as to give them to the children later on is because it will give the little ones the opportunity of blessing God.

When bread is served, the blessing over the bread covers the other foods (but not the wine). The word used for the bread (*lehem*) takes them back to the manna and to the sacrifices in the Temple. In this way the family meal is linked to sacred history, to the providence of God; the table becomes like an altar, a holy place. All wastage of food is unhealthy. The fact of being able to have a meal – to eat until one is satisfied – takes the social dimension for granted. Hospitality is one of the works of mercy, even greater than charity (the word in Hebrew is *tsedaqah*, meaning justice.) Already the Talmud has ordered the setting up of a foodbank by all the members of the community so that the needs of each poor family may be met each week, beginning on Friday.

On an ordinary day the blessing before a meal is short. It is the prayer of thanksgiving after the meal which fulfils the commandment of the Torah: “You will eat, you will be satisfied and you will bless”²⁵⁹: it is a short liturgy. It is celebrated aloud if at least three people (including women and children) are at the table. It is God who nourishes and sustains all which is at the centre: those who give thanks do so in the name of all humanity because He takes care of all.

One sees that within Judaism the fact of preparing and eating a meal requires many presences; there is the presence of God who is recognised as the loving and lovable source of all. Attention is paid to the good things of His Creation which require us to make use of them with respect and a certain restraint; there is the duty of solidarity with the poor, with all who are in need: a solidarity which includes the sharing of material goods as well as spiritual goods. One could add, presence to oneself and the management of one’s own desires – which, in the West, in any case, have a tendency to take up a lot of space.

Readers who are the “issue of the nations” (that is to say non-Jewish) are not compelled to follow the rules of *kashrut*, since they do not form part of their way to holiness. But the attitudes of attention, of gratitude, of

²⁵⁹ Dt. 8.10.

solidarity and of sharing during a meal, of which Judaism approves, can enlighten and support the ecological component of each person.

3.e.4 Shalom in the Hebrew Bible

Mary-Cecilia Claparols, r.a.

The original social location of *shalom* is the small, well-defined community where each one knows the other even up to the fourth generation. *Shalom* encompasses multifaceted realities and embraces interrelated contexts and meanings. Here are a few meanings:

1. *Shalom as a concept* connotes the well-being of persons in the community and the community itself in all aspects of existence. The root word of *shalom* includes the notions or the condition of wholeness, bodily health, prosperity, safety or security, completeness and well-being. The well-being of a community or the persons in the community involves concerns of the present and it may also mean sufficiency and surplus, welfare and relief and intactness of a community. The Hebrew word *shalom* is formed from a verb, which means to make something complete, to make something whole or holistic. (Thus, when a person's dignity is denied, there is no *shalom*).

2. *Shalom as a greeting* is one of the most important usages in the Old Testament. The daily greeting in Israel, *šālôm 'ălêkem* is closer to "may you be well" and the well-being wished is often bodily health, but it also can wish another the physical and spiritual resources sufficient to one's needs. *Shalom* becomes the space, the sphere in which the integral community lives.

To ask about the *shalom* of a person is not so much to seek information as it is to express an involvement with the existence of the other person. It is an act of integration into the society and expresses the person's belonging to a community. It is also an expression of acceptance and hospitality rendered to a stranger (not only the family and clan); it is about embracing

the stranger into the “circle of *shalom*,” offering that person hospitality, safety, and security. Sending forth a departing person, *shalom* becomes a SPACE of security into which a person is brought or from which he or she is released.

3. *Shalom, Covenant, Truth and Justice*. *Shalom* is the relationship guaranteed by a covenant, and these relationships are based on mutually assured obligations. *Shalom* is an action and results from a deep commitment to the work of Justice. The covenant is the relationship which restores persons to wholeness of relationship with God.

4. Religious *Shalom* is a gift of God and the Presence of God is the condition of *shalom*.

A person who is upright (with the righteousness based on the covenant) will be at peace. The “peace covenant” in the context of Ezek 34:5 and 37:26 is a promissory covenant of God given to his restored people (a restoration of the old idealized condition of the people in their inherited land, where they will once again become the recipients of the blessings of the Lord).

5. Other meanings of *shalom*.

Developments in the political history of ancient Israel brought in other meanings to *shalom*, expanding it to the larger communities of people ruled by a king. Thus, from a small community, Israel is now relating to other nations. The kings become mediators between the people and the earth. They guarantee the stability of the world as a place to live in, the fertility of the earth and of cattle, the absence of war, as well as social justice, and the well-being of insecure groups such as widows and orphans, not forgetting private well-being. The range of the meaning of *shalom* has now expanded to include all peoples and the entire cosmos.

It is after the 8th century that *shalom* is used as a contrast to war. War had become a growing reality which disturbed the wholeness, health, and well-being of the community. The king played a major role in *shalom* at

this time. During the age of David and Solomon, the meaning of *shalom* expanded to include the Kingdom, the connection to political power and a standing army. With the death of Solomon, such greatness disintegrated and the *shalom* which was associated with the Israelite kingdom also broke up. *Shalom* took on a futuristic and political meaning. Peace then became synonymous with victory; among the prophets, it was paired with prosperity, a form of economic freedom.

Later on, an expectation of a final state of *shalom* grew up especially in the prophets. *Shalom* came to mean a prophecy of a restoration of Paradise or promise of *shalom* under Divine direction. It could also be an expectation of a humble king in the last age who would bring a time of *shalom*. It was a restoration of Creation to justice, truth and righteousness. Peace is a blessing and a sign of the blessed life of the new Creation just as it was the hallmark of the first Creation. Peace is both a restoration of the divine plan of Creation and the harbinger of the completion of life to come.

Note: *Shalom* is something palpable and material and denotes something that is visible. This *shalom* is a social concept used by groups rather than by individuals. *Shalom* is also described as a state wherein society and nature are harmoniously joined in covenant. In Leviticus 26:4-6, peace in the land is related to the rains, trees, food, security and prosperity. In the midst of threats due to human violence, God promises security in the land. Creation is also depicted as an act of divine completion; the order of the cosmos created harmony and *shalom*. Justice, righteousness and peace are all present in this “original state.”

In summary, the range of meanings of *shalom* in the Old Testament shows how relationship is at the core of this concept, an interrelationship with God, with other humans, and with the entire cosmos. These interrelationships manifest themselves in greeting, in hospitality, in integrating persons in community, a life of justice and righteousness, and peace and harmony in the land. Thus *shalom* includes a vision, a project of action and a manner of being in society and in the cosmos.

3. e.5. Islam

Nadia Feguri

As you know, the Muslim has two sources of Initiation and religious instruction: the Koran and the Sunna (the prophetic tradition) Together with the spiritual section, the Holy Book and the account of the life of the Prophet Mohammed – peace and greetings to him – are equally and above all a *vademecum* of temporary rules, “a practical guide” adopted daily by the Muslim with his family and his neighbours towards the environment.

MANKIND MUST NOT VIOLATE THE EARTH.

The Koran is the basis of the essential and reciprocal ties between mankind and nature. Without being the owner, man is God’s property manager. Allah has created a consistent and balanced order; order given to mankind to ensure his **survival** and his **well-being**. Therefore the human being is the trustee for this legacy which must be managed with **responsibility, altruism** and **prudence**. On the one hand he should receive benefits and satisfaction (this would be an act of adoration for the blessings of Allah) and on the other hand he should respect the needs, the development and the well-being of those around him (not to use one to the detriment of another) of plants, of nature, of water and of animals.

The mission of mankind is to manage the natural resources with restraint. This is particularly true of Islam, which wants to be, in every way, the religion of the happy medium, of restraint and of justice in everything. In this setting, one of the most recurring commandments in the Koran and in the Sunna is the **management of water**: conserving it for essential needs and cleanliness. This essential resource (above all for desert men of which the Prophet was one - Peace and greetings to him and his companions) must be used wisely and with great moderation. This command is illustrated in the following ‘*hadith*’ (reported story)

One day, the Prophet – peace and greetings to him – saw one of his companions, Saad, washing, and he asked him, “What is this waste of water?” The latter replied. “Is it wasteful to wash oneself?” The Prophet – peace and greetings to him – replied, “Yes, it is, even if you happen to be on a river bank.”

Through this short story, the idea of the wastage of natural resources is very obvious, revealed in the clear message of the Koran on this subject.

Mankind, superior to all other creatures, has the task of ensuring that all the species on the earth live together in harmony. Equally, he has the duty to **take care of its natural resources** and to conserve untapped riches for **future generations**. Let us note that in Islam nature is but a place through which we pass, a place of short stay for the believer who is bound to leave it in good condition. **Man will be judged on the use he has made of the gifts given to him** by God. Has he respected the order and the balance set up by Allah? Has he spoilt the riches of nature through selfishness?

MAN AND NATURE: THE ATTACHMENT TO BEAUTY.

The universe is created by God. It is evidence of his uniqueness and of his beauty. The established order is balanced and varied. The variety of landscapes, their differences and their beauty are a **source of wonder** and great **spirituality** for the believer. **“Allah is good and loves beauty”**. From the word spoken by the Prophet – peace and greetings to him - there follows two important precepts. The admiration of beauty (through nature) and the conservation of beauty. To begin with, the Muslim is strongly encouraged to meditate on divine Creation while contemplating nature.

Attachment to beauty is therefore characterised by consideration for the environment —as being the most perfect place in which to meditate. Reflection on the Creator is perfected in contemplating His Creation. In order to admire this divine nature, the Koran calls upon the five senses, especially on sight and hearing (which offer the clearest way by which to look at nature and its various elements.) Similarly, it is the duty of a Muslim to protect the beauty of his environment. This obligation is of such importance that it has been established as one of the seventy branches of faith. The Koran and the Prophet - peace and greetings to him - teach the Muslim to be involved in developing the earth as well as being equally involved in the well- being of mankind, animals and nature.

The following *hadith* (story) stresses this divine commandment.

Abu Houreira relates that the Prophet – peace and greetings to him – said: “While a man was walking along a road he found a piece of coal: he removed it. Thereupon Allah praised him for this good deed and forgave him his sins.”²⁶⁰

And so it is incumbent on every Muslim to **actively participate** in improving the condition of nature and the countryside. To give an example, as related by his companion Anas:

The Prophet - peace and greetings to him – said: “Any Muslim who plants a tree or cultivates the earth so that a bird, - or a man or an animal - may eat of it, is considered to be a benefactor.”

²⁶¹

Equally this *hadith* also stresses the importance of respect for animals (man may kill them in order to eat but it is forbidden to torture or to use them as a target for sport) which is broadly commanded in the Holy Book, but regretfully cannot be included here. As a general rule and beyond

²⁶⁰ As reported by Tirmidhi.

²⁶¹ As reported by Boukhari and Mouslim.

some anecdotal stories included here, the Koran in its teaching aims at maintaining harmony between man and the universe commanding him to respect species and nature.

The universe (and all that is contained in it) has been created by God and is a result of his uniqueness. And so, in respecting and honoring nature and all its components, the believer offers an act of adoration to his Creator. Through reading of the Koran, the reader would be able to understand that the ecosystem is linked: mankind and nature are united and nature is one of the signs of Truth.

3. e.6 Buddhism and the environment

Mary Cecilia Claparols, r.a.

To meet the challenges of the environmental crisis, Buddhist practitioners from different parts of the world have been engaged in varied ways of protecting the environment. For an understanding of how Buddhists have brought forth some of their teachings as resources for an environmental ethic and commitment, we will explore how they have adapted, re-appropriated and recast the Buddha's core teaching of interdependence (*Paticcsamupada*) and the Bodhisatva vow into a new language and application for today's complex situation. We will then look at a few of these adaptations, because there are innumerable creative and new forms of these environmental commitments which show how Buddhism concretely contributes to the shift towards a "life-sustaining civilization," and is a valuable resource for this time of awakening.²⁶²

²⁶² There are a lot of documents, books, internet information and experiences by Buddhist environmentalists and communities. What are mentioned in this document are a few examples.

It is, however, important to be aware that there are different schools of Buddhism: the Theravada traditions in South and Southeast Asia, the Mahayana schools in China and Japan, the Vajrayana lineages in Tibet. Each of these traditions may use different texts and rituals to express an understanding about nature and human-nature relationships; their physical and cultural geographies necessarily influence their views.²⁶³ There are many texts and aspects of the Buddha's teachings that could inspire the environmental ethic and commitment. However, in this section of the document, it is necessary to limit the focus to the Law of Dependent Co-Arising and the Mahayana Bodhisatva vow: "To save all beings."

INTERDEPENDENCE : THE LAW OF DEPENDENT CO-ARISING (PATICCASMUPADA).²⁶⁴

Buddha's enlightenment experience led him to see the true nature of things, the interdependence of all phenomena. Contrary to the thinking of his contemporaries, he saw all things in process, intrinsically connected and sustaining each other in intricate patterns of mutuality. To give social form to this reciprocity at the heart of nature, he inspired the Creation of community, or *Sangha*, for practicing wisdom, compassion, and sharing.²⁶⁵ In the light of the ecological movement, if the ecosystem relationships manifest this interdependence, protecting all life in the ecosystem therefore, would be living and protecting the *Dharma*. "Everything we do impinges on all beings."

Acting on behalf of all life and responding to the accelerating environmental crisis with wisdom and compassion is a natural fruit of the

²⁶³ Stephanie, Kaza, "Green Buddhism," in *When Worlds Converge: What Science and Religion Tell Us about the Story of the Universe and Our Place It*, eds. C.N. Matthews, M.E. Tucker, and P.Hefner (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), 293.

²⁶⁴ For this portion on "interdependence," I am indebted to Joanna Macy and to Stephanie Kaza's writings.

²⁶⁵ www.joannamacy.org (accessed Dec. 5, 2014 at 10:30 pm).

Buddhist practice.²⁶⁶ The Hua-Yen School of Buddhism, which developed in the seventh century China, used the metaphor of the “jewel net of Indra” for this principle of interdependence. “Because the jewels are clear, they reflect each other’s images, appearing in each other’s reflections upon reflections, ad infinitum, all appearing at once in one jewel.”²⁶⁷ Extending this metaphor for today, Buddhists see that the loss of species affects all in the web. If the clouded jewels (polluted air and water) are cleared up (rivers cleaned, wetlands restored), life in the entire web is enhanced. The web of interdependence includes not only the actions of all beings, but their thoughts, their intentions determine what happens. This law suggests how one can easily fall into the illusion of a false permanent self that clings because of greed, hate and delusion.

The goal of the Buddhist practice is the liberation from this self-attachment through the path of morality, awareness and wisdom. When one sees oneself as part of a mutually causal web, there is no such thing as an action without effect. (Kaza). Therefore, we are all accountable for the food we eat, what we buy, and the forms of transportation we use – in short, all the choices we make. Environmentally oriented Buddhists emphasize the common good, the practice of moderation and restraint, (“*Kan rujak pho*” in Thai means “*knowing enoughness*”), sharing and the respect of all life with compassion.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Stephanie Kaza, “To Save All Beings: Buddhist Environmental Activism,” in *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, ed.

Christopher S. Queen (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 160.

²⁶⁷ Tu Shun, in Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua Yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 66.

²⁶⁸ Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu considers these three principles to describe what he calls Dhammic Socialism. A harmonious balance is created based on limiting unnecessary accumulation or consumption of resources contrary to liberal capitalism which tends to promote egoistic interests over the well-being of society as a whole. Dr. Ingun Kang, S.J. Phd Diss “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue and Action in the Theravada Countries of Modern Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Radical Orthopraxis of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and Aloysius Pieris.” (University of London) p.97.

Since the law of interdependence means understanding the nature of interrelationships in a given situation, this also implies examining carefully the conditioned beliefs and habits of thought regarding the natural world which are alienating, dualistic and lead to the objectification of plants and animals, as well as unrestrained consumerism, and even environmental racism. It challenges us to observe the distribution of power across human relationships and in the socio- economic and political system. (Kaza)

Buddhism sees external pollution as a manifestation of the internal moral pollution (greed, hatred and delusion) in human beings. There are several *suttas* in the Pali canon that show the impact of moral degradation, the state of human consciousness (the mind), to the changes in the human body and in the environment. Therefore Buddhist activists consider Meditation as fundamental to ground one's life when one takes any form of action. The contemplative practice ensures that one lives, acts with mindfulness, loving kindness, compassion and freed (detached) from any form of ego-generating self.²⁶⁹ Meditation practice develops alertness, attention, reflective inquiry into the nature of reality, a stable non-dualistic mind so necessary to face suffering and the culture of violence and greed in our society. One needs clarity of mind-heart to make decisions that will give and sustain the life of the entire web.

The Buddhist precepts (five basic) are all based on non-harming or reducing the suffering of others.²⁷⁰ In one current interpretation, they take this form:

- 1) Affirm life, do not kill (any life form).
- 2) Be giving – do not steal (not to rape the earth).

²⁶⁹ Prof. Lily de Silva, "The Relevance of Vipassana to the Environmental Crisis." Kaza, Ibid..

²⁷⁰ In traditional terms: 1) Avoid harming any being ; 2) Avoid taking what is not given; 3) Avoid false speech; 4) Avoid sexual misconduct; 5) Avoid intoxicants that can cloud the mind. Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and Buddhist environmentalists have reformulated these precepts in an expanded context. *For a Future to Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Wonderful Precepts* (Parallax Press: Berkeley, California, 1995).

3) Honor the body – do not misuse sexuality (honor the body of nature without interfering with the natural order of things).

4) Manifest truth – do not lie (advertisements on non-biodegradable products).

5) Proceed clearly – do not cloud the mind (with greed, denial, etc.).²⁷¹

Those who take up the *bodhisattva* path vow to return again and again to relieve the suffering of all. Today, the contexts of this vow have expanded to include factory farms, pesticide abuse, genetic engineering, and loss of endangered species habitat. (Kaza).

SOME BUDDHIST FORMS OF ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

1. *Dharmayatra*: (*yatra* means: journey or walk)²⁷²This is a weeklong spiritual and an ecological walk done annually by a group of monks and lay people from Chaiyaphum, northeast Thailand, to raise the awareness of the environmental degradation in the Lampathao watershed area, one of Thailand's richest forests. Recently, more and more people from different parts of the country have come to join this walk. Rapid deforestation began in the 1960's when the government issued logging permits to the people to plant cash crops for the world market.

The group has chosen "walking" as a way to send nature's plea to the public. This "walking" is not just for nature outside of us but also for nature within us. During these days, one learns to live with bare necessities. "The less we carry, the freer we become." The walk gives

²⁷¹ John Daido Looi, "The Precepts and the Environment," in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997), 179- In www.earthprecepts.net we see another reformulation of the precepts into "The Earth Precepts (10)" and the website includes the websites that show how one can live each precept.

²⁷² Vasana Chinvarakorn, *Outlook Newspaper*, "The Journey of Life: A Spiritual walk in Chaiyaphum Benefits not Only Mother Nature but the Walkers Themselves." 26/01/2010 at 12:00 a.m.

each one many opportunities for *Dhamma* practice: to deepen mindfulness, compassion, and make choices. Ven Phaisal Visalo, the leader of this walk, gives *Dhamma* talks at certain moments of this journey. “A mind that is sensitive enough will be able to hear the wails of Mother Earth, which has long been suffering from the abuse of human hands.” The way itself is a spiritual practice while giving voice to the Earth. When the group reaches the forest monastery, *Wat Mahawan*, a traditional northeast ceremony (*bai sri su kwan*)²⁷³ is held. The end is only a beginning of the life-long *Dharmayatra* which will continue to the last breath.

2. *Tree Ordination*:²⁷⁴ In 1990 Phrakhrū Pitak, upon seeing the alarming destruction of the forest of his area, decided to visit Phrakhrū Manas of Phayao Province in northern Thailand, who was the first to perform this symbolic tree ordination to make the people aware of their responsibility towards the environment. Phrakhrū Pitak, decided to train young novices to be aware of the environment. At the same time, Phrakhrū Pitak initiated development projects for self-reliance to provide economic alternatives for subsistence for the people to ensure their cooperation to preserve the forest. He then organised a tree ordination ceremony which would become a “symbolic centre” for the forest conservation program. During the ceremony, Phrakhrū Pitak used Buddhist symbols and the teachings of the Buddha to stress the villagers’ interdependence with the forest and root the project on a solid moral basis. Through the adaptation of this Buddhist ritual, the people were made aware of the sacredness of the forest as well as the wildlife there. To cut or kill any life there would be considered a form of religious demerit (*baap*). Carefully chosen seedlings were distributed to the villagers for the replanting of denuded areas. Other aspects of the ritual have a very powerful impact on the people.

²⁷³ This is a ritual of reconnection to the life-force (Kwan) within and with the entire community of the web of life which can wander or break because of greed, hatred (violence) or delusion.

²⁷⁴ Susan Darlington, “The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand.” *Ethnology* 37 #1 Winter, 1998: 1-15.

Religion as taught by the ecology monks situates the Buddha's teachings and the rituals in an expanded context.

3. *Joanna Macy* is a member of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Her website: www.joannamacy.org, her books, and her workshops will reveal the framework (systems theory, the Buddhist law of Dependent Co-Arising and Deep Ecology), the goal of her work, the processes she uses, the spiritual practices that she has created from the Buddhist tradition, her linkages, the use of different art forms: poetry, dance, song, and the *sangha* she has created will reveal the extent of her commitment to what she refers to as "The Great Turning", a way to lead the shift from the Industrial Growth Society to a life-sustaining civilization. Joanna is also involved in creating Nuclear Guardianship communities which would provide above ground monitored storage, training and education about the full story of the nuclear fuel cycle.

These are very brief and inadequate descriptions of the three examples chosen above to show how some Buddhists have re-appropriated Buddhist teachings in relation to the environmental crisis and the forms they have created to address concrete situations.

As we live this time of the "Great Turning," the transition from the Industrial growth society to a life-sustaining society,²⁷⁵ Joanna notes three mutually reinforcing areas or dimensions where people are engaging themselves today through the decisions they have taken:

- a) "holding actions" to slow the damage to the earth and its beings in defense of life on earth;
- b) analyses of structural causes and creation of alternative institutions;

²⁷⁵ Macy, Joanna and Molly Young Broan. *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (New Society Publishers: Canada, 1998), 17.

c) shifting perceptions of reality, both cognitively and spiritually.²⁷⁶ The experience of reconnecting with the earth community arouses the desire to act on its behalf.²⁷⁷

Go forth on your journey, for the benefit of the many, for the joy of many, out of compassion for the welfare, the benefit and joy of all Beings. (The Buddha)²⁷⁸

3. e.7 Hinduism and the environment

Leela Kottoor, r.a.

When we speak about the Hindu view of the environment, we Christians need to keep in mind that we are going to deal with **two very different worldviews** and **two different streams of inspiration**. Christianity is a religion which is **Anthropocentric**, while Hinduism is **Cosmocentric**. In fact, Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. The Cosmos is at the heart of the Hindu perception of God. It brings a very different approach to the earth and to the entire universe. Hinduism is not restricted by any dogma. Each one is free to lead a spiritual path according to one's conscience and inner promptings, in the path of '*dharma*', the path of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.

Hinduism has always been more sensitive to nature than any other religion and is permeated with respect for and awe of it, as well as with a compassionate and sympathetic identification with humanity. It recognises the presence of the divine in the display of the created things. As a result, for Hindus, all created things are sacred, including plants and animals, things animate and inanimate. Nature has a message to communicate to us. George Washington Carver had a very Hindu attitude

²⁷⁶ Macy, *Ibid.*, 17-24. This book describes each dimension in detail.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

when he said, “I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour if we will only tune in.”

The sacredness of all living beings and the message about the preservation and protection of the environment are highlighted in all the sacred books of Hinduism. The plants, flowers, animals, rivers, and mountain ranges have special significance as they are the very expression of God and His reflection for the human race. They express their belongingness to the Supreme reality we call ‘God’ in hundreds of religious and cultural manifestations. In Martin Luther’s words, “God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars”. Hindus believe in ‘*Dharma*.’ *Dharma* is translated as virtue, duty, cosmic order, justice etc. It is a compound word which changes its meaning and our understanding of it, according to the context.

In the past, traditional Hindus did not see any separation between religion, ecology and ethics. On the contrary, protection and care of the environment, giving it due respect and reverence, are considered a religious duty since nature remains part and parcel of their very life. No human being can escape from this duty. Our interdependence with the rest of nature reveals to us that nature alone cannot be destroyed without seriously harming human life. When we foster the life of nature around us, we enhance the life of human beings. And this is a service to humanity and to the generations to come.

The present day situation is very different. The influence of Western thought has certainly negatively affected the Hindu/Indian attitude to nature, prompting it to forget that nature is not an object to be manipulated and kept under control for the sake of scientific and technological advancement. Mahatma Gandhi said: “nature has enough for everybody’s need but not for everybody’s greed.” In the name of development, however, great damage has been done to the environment. Once ‘greed’ overcomes ‘need,’ the balance of the earth begins to be shaken and nature becomes more violent in order to survive.

In his letter to Romans, St. Paul speaks of the guilt of humankind:

Ever since the Creation of the world His power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the universe He has made. So, they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God nor give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise they became fools. (1:20-22)

According to Swami B. V. Tripurari, in his book *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Ignorance. A Tribute to Hinduism*: "Our present environmental crisis is in essence a spiritual crisis..." Therefore it demands a spiritual response a 'reorientation our consciousness' to the original purity of its Creator when He entrusted the earth and the universe in the hands of humans to take care, to respect and to live in harmony with it in Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

N.B. The following are articles I found on the website to explain the above mentioned elements with greater clarity.

HINDUISM PROMOTES ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

by [Ajit Adhopia](#)

Hindus believed that humans, gods and nature were integral parts of one 'organic whole'. Ancient Hindu writers, later on, personified each of the divine force as a *Devata* or deity worthy of reverence and worship. The following Hindu prayer called *Shanti path*, recited to conclude every Hindu ceremony, reflects the Hindus' connectedness with nature:

There is peace in heavenly region; there is peace in the environment; the water is cooling; herbs are healing; the plants are peace-giving; there is harmony in the celestial objects and perfection in knowledge; everything in the universe is peaceful; peace pervades everywhere. May that peace come to me!

Alas! In the process of modernization and mimicking of Western lifestyles and consumerism, modern Hindus have forgotten their ancestors' view on ecology, and have acquired the Western exploitative attitude towards nature. 'Unfortunately, Hindus have forgotten this Vedic view of the earth and don't protect their natural environment. They have not added a (traditional) Hindu point of view to the ecology movement which is perhaps the main idealistic movement in the world today 'part of the challenge of the modern Hinduism is to reclaim its connection to the earth.'

THE HINDU VIEW OF NATURE

First published in Hindu Voice UK, which has published many articles of
David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri)

The Hindu approach to ecology requires that we first understand how Hindu Dharma views the world of nature, which is very different from that of the predominant western religions.

Western religious thought based upon Biblical traditions regards nature as something created by God. If nature is sacred, it is so as God's Creation.

This is the basis of the approach to ecology in western religious traditions. They ask us to protect nature as God's Creation, but do not afford nature any sanctity of its own. However, they are generally suspicious of nature Gods and regard worshipping the Earth itself as a form of idolatry. That is why they have historically rejected nature based or pagan religions as unholy, including Hinduism.

The Hindu view of nature is based upon the Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta and their philosophical views, as well as Hindu devotional and ritualistic practices. According to Hindu thought, there is no separation between the Divine and the world of nature. They are the two aspects of the same reality. The cosmic reality is one like the ocean. Nature or the manifest world is like the waves on the surface of the sea. Brahman or the unmanifest Absolute is like the depths of the sea. But it is all water, all the same single ocean.

Ultimately for the Hindu, as the Upanishads say, "Everything is Brahman," *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*. This does not mean that the informed Hindu mindlessly worships the forces of nature on an outer level out of superstition and fear. The Hindu perceives a Divine and sacred presence working behind the forms of nature as their inner spirit, which is the real object of their adoration.

The sacred presence of Brahman, or the Supreme Divine Reality, is there in God, what is called *Ishvara* or the cosmic lord in Hindu thought.

This Vedic vision of unity is the basis for an ecological approach in which we can honor the entire universe as part of our own higher Self. It takes us beyond the duality of God and the Creation. God does not create the world out of nothing. The world, God and the soul are inherent aspects of the same Eternal Being. We need not protect nature as we would an inferior creature. We can honor nature as our own greater life and expression.

Need for Hindus to Restore their Ecological Awareness

Many modern Hindus have forgotten their traditional sacred approach to nature. This is particularly obvious in India where nature is often degraded and polluted. Under the compulsions caused by overpopulation, lack of education and the need to develop the economy, nature in India everywhere is suffering. Even Hindu temples are not being kept up with proper dignity and respect. In India, the government has taken over many temples and uses them to make money, giving little back to beautify the temple or even keep them clean.

Outside of India, many Hindus have lost their ecological vision as well. They are used to the urban life and often don't move beyond the cities. It is important that Hindus reclaim the ecological vision inherent in their religion. This means bringing nature back into their lives, not only through rituals, mantras and meditation but pilgrimage to the sacred sites in nature like Kailas, Gangotri, Vaishnodevi and many others, not only in India but all over the world.

SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGY LINKS

The Key Hindu Environmental Teaching by Pankaj Jain, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor of South Asian Religions and Ecology at the University of North Texas.

The following are the ten important Hindu teachings of the environment:

Pancha Mahabhutas (the five great elements). . Hinduism teaches that the five great elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) that constitute the environment are all derived from *prakriti*, the primal energy. *The Upanishads* explains the interdependence of these elements in relation to Brahman, the supreme reality, from which they arise: "From Brahman arises space, from space arises air, from air arises fire, from fire arises water, and from water arises earth." Hinduism recognises that the human body is composed of and related to these five elements, and connects each

of the elements to one of the five senses.

Ishavasyam – Divinity is omnipresent and takes infinite forms

Protecting the environment is part of Dharma. Dharma is one of the most important Hindu concepts.

Our environmental actions affect our Karma. Karma - a central Hindu teaching - holds that each of our actions creates consequences – good and bad – which constitute our karma and determine our future fate, including the place we will assume when we are reincarnated in our next life.

The earth – Devi – is a goddess and our mother and deserves our devotion and protection. Many Hindu rituals recognise that human beings benefit from the earth, and offer gratitude and protection in response. Many Hindus touch the floor before getting out of bed every morning and ask Devi to forgive them for trampling on her body. Millions of Hindus create 'kolams' daily – artwork consisting of bits of rice or other food placed at their doorways in the morning. These 'kolams' express Hindu's desire to offer sustenance to the earth, just as the earth sustains themselves.

Hinduism's tantric and yogic traditions affirm the sacredness of material reality and contain teachings and practices to unite people with divine energy. Yoga – derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "to yoke" or "to unite" - refers to a series of mental and physical practices designed to connect the individual with this divine energy

Belief in reincarnation supports a sense of interconnectedness of all Creation. Hindus believe in the cycle of rebirth, wherein every being travels through millions of cycles of birth and rebirth in different forms, depending on their karma from previous lives.

Ahimsa (Nonviolence) - Non-violence is the greatest Dharma. Ahimsa to the earth improves one's karma. For observant Hindus, hurting or harming another being damages one's karma and obstructs advancement toward

moksha - liberation. To prevent the further accrual of bad karma, Hindus are instructed to avoid activities associated with violence and to follow a vegetarian diet. Based on this doctrine of ahimsa, many observant Hindus oppose the institutionalized breeding and killing of animals, birds, and fish for human consumption.

Sanyasa (Asceticism) represents a path to liberation and is good for the earth. Hinduism teaches that asceticism – restraint in consumption and simplicity in living – represents a pathway towards moksha (liberation) which treats the earth with respect. A well-known Hindu teaching - Tain tyakten bhunjitha – has been translated, “Take what you need for your sustenance without a sense of entitlement or ownership.”

Gandhi is a role model for simple living. Gandhi’s entire life can be seen as an ecological treatise. This is one life in which every minute act, emotion, or thought functioned much like an ecosystem: his small meals of nuts and fruits, his morning ablutions and everyday bodily practices, his periodic observances of silence, his morning walks, his cultivation of the small as much as of the big, his spinning wheel, his abhorrence of waste, his resorting to basic Hindu and Jain values of truth, nonviolence, celibacy, and fasting.

This Hindu prayer called Shanti path recited to conclude every Hindu ceremony, reflect the Hindus' connectedness with nature: 'There is peace in heavenly region; there is peace in the environment; the water is cooling; herbs are healing; the plants are peace-giving; there is harmony in the celestial objects and perfection in knowledge; everything in the universe is peaceful; peace pervades everywhere. May that peace come to me!'

Where are we now? The Indian environment-protection movement opposing this ecological destruction, is run by westernized elites, and based on western model. It has failed to become a mass movement, for it is devoid of spiritual foundation or content necessary to inspire Hindus. Prof. David Frawley (*How I Became a Hindu*), laments: '*Unfortunately, Hindus have forgotten this Vedic view of the earth and don't protect their*

natural environment. They have not added a (traditional) Hindu point of view to the ecology movement which is perhaps the main idealistic movement in the world today' part of the challenge of the modern Hinduism is to reclaim its connection to the earth.'

Our present environmental crisis

According to Swami B. V. Tripurari in his book, *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Ignorance*:

Our present environmental crisis is in essence a spiritual crisis. We need only to look back to medieval Europe and the psychic revolution that vaulted Christianity to victory over paganism to find the spirit of the environmental crisis. Inhibitions concerning the exploitation of nature vanished as the Church took the "spirits" out of the trees, mountains, and seas. Christianity's ghost-busting theology made it possible for humanity to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. It made nature man's monopoly. This materialist paradigm has dominated the modern world for last few centuries. The current deplorable environmental crisis demands a spiritual response. A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment, is very much needed. One of the measures that could help a great deal to fulfill this need is to regenerate and rejuvenate basic values of Hindu culture and propagate them. It is the harmony of humanity and nature that is the basic concept of our life and culture.

3. e.8 Shinto and the natural environment

Eugenia Nobuko Murai, r.a.

There are two main religions in Japan, one is Shinto and the other is Buddhism. Buddhism is a religion born in India, introduced into Japan through China and Korea in the 6th century. The name Shinto first appeared in 8th century in order to distinguish this Japanese religion from Buddhism. Shinto is, however, the Japanese religion that is able to be dated right back into most ancient times.

We can say that the history of Shinto is the same as the history of Japanese people. Being surrounded by the sea, most of the country consists of mountainous districts. Japan had a rich natural environment. People's daily life of agriculture and fishery was deeply rooted in nature. People collected the bounty from nature (e.g. nuts, fish and shells); later, in the following centuries they planted rice. Nature brought a lot of grace but sometimes disasters like typhoons and earthquakes which brought great damage. So people were fearful of the power of nature and prayed for good weather and big harvests. At the time of harvest they celebrated the festival of thanksgiving in their community and again prayed for the next harvest. Shinto was formed and developed gradually in the prayers and rituals of the ancient villages. Shintoism is not a religion of the individual but of the community.

Afterwards in the encounter with Buddhism, Shinto was systematized and became better organised and various elements were added; then Shinto became a greater religion. But from its beginning and until today what was passed down for generations is a kind of animism or world-view, recognizing the sacred presence anywhere in nature; this is the source of Shinto. In Shinto, nature is the manifestation and dwelling place of gods. For example, the sacred straw ropes are hung on natural objects like huge trees or rocks with mystical shapes to show people: "Here is the Holy." Many mountains are respected as the body of a god. Usually Shinto shrines are located in woods and their sanctuaries are created by the combination of woods and these shrines. The gods dwell not only in enormous natural objects but they are also considered to be the life that

dwells in a wildflower, so children are educated to feel pain when they nip it. Small wild grasses are also manifestations of gods.

In these ways Shinto is strongly combined with nature. There is an integrity between Shinto and nature. But in these days our land is developed and the natural environment has been destroyed. People are feeling a fear of science and technology such as nuclear power that exceeds the power of nature. Most people do not want to have nuclear power, but the Japanese government is trying to keep the nuclear power plants in order to give the highest priority to economic development, even after the accident of Fukushima. Despite this, it is a fact that electricity has been supplied properly without nuclear power plants since the Fukushima accident in 2011 until today. (Now all of the nuclear power plants of Japan have been closed for checking.)

According to an article in '*Jinja Shinpo*' (30 August 2004), the Association of Shinto Shrines, the largest organization of Shinto in Japan, opposes nuclear weapons but seems not to oppose the use of nuclear energy, regarding it as one of the choices to reduce greenhouse gases and having asked the Atomic Energy Commission of Japan about prevention of accidents. Since the accident of Fukushima, however, the Association of Shinto Shrines has not given an official opinion on nuclear energy. Perhaps this might be for political reasons, as it cannot oppose the Liberal Democratic Party, a conservative government party strongly defending the emperor system.

Now it may be time to hear again from the traditional religion of Japan. According to the tradition of Shinto we are part of great nature. If human beings destroy the natural environment, then similarly human beings destroy themselves. We have inherited the balanced environment from our ancestors. We should not harm it any more but should pass it to the next generation in better condition.

References

- On the Shinto religion : Association of Shinto Shrines
<http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/>
- On the opinion about Nuclear energy from the Association of Shinto Shrines: 'Jinja Shinpo' (Shinto Shrines Weekly News) 30th August 2004

3. e.9 Ecology and interreligious dialogue: what is at stake?

Dominique Lang, a.a.

In 1989, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gave an address in Laxenburg, Austria, reflecting on the “difficulties confronting the faith in Europe today.” With his precise and incisive style, the theologian identified three areas about which, in his opinion, Christian communities are surprisingly silent. As well as citing metaphysics and eternal life, Ratzinger included among these areas our connection with Creation. While not wanting to presume what analysis of the contemporary theological situation the Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI would make twenty-five years on, it is likely that his evaluation of the attention paid to Creation has changed somewhat in response to recent developments. Not least among these must be considered the announcement of a forthcoming encyclical, the first of its kind, dealing with contemporary ecological challenges.

Church historians will one day tell us how the Catholic Church gradually took this topic on board. In broad terms, it can be considered that it took around sixty years for the subject to catch the interest of those responsible for the social doctrine of the Church. The official endorsement of this concern can be found in around a dozen paragraphs in the middle of the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, as part of a wider reflection on the meaning of the international and globalised economy.

The recent election of a South American Pope, and one who, moreover, chose the name of the Poverello of Assisi, confirms on a pastoral level what had often been until then only a theological awareness.

FAITH IN THE CREATOR: ECUMENICAL GOOD NEWS

Within the Christian churches, this increased awareness, which still needs to be strengthened in many cases, has taken place in various different ways. Among French Protestants, for example, intellectual figures such as Jacques Ellul and the active presence of Christians in the charitable sphere have raised awareness of these questions quite naturally. Regarding Orthodox Christianity, Patriarch Bartholomew I has shown himself a real trailblazer through his commitment to dialogue with the scientific branch of ecology. However, the experience of dialogue within the World Council of Churches must also play some role, along with the contribution of a traditional theology which naturally evokes the relationship with the cosmos and the existence of spiritual energies penetrating the created order (compare the “uncreated energies” of Gregory Palamas).

More broadly still, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic worlds, numerous Christian groups and leaders have set in motion unprecedented action in this field, with watchwords ranging from preserving biodiversity (for example, the Protestant organization “A Rocha”) to social and economic justice concerns (for example, international petitions against tax havens, support for refugees displaced by the impact of climate change, and so on). The Latin frame of reference of Catholics is different, and even if there are numerous traditional theological resources through which nature can be understood, these often struggle to go beyond a positivist vision of reality and of God’s action. As a result, the relationship with nature is paradoxical: it is benevolent, yet distant. It ranges between fascination with technological progress as a sign of the human genius which has been entrusted to people by God, and excessively anthropocentric catechetical discourse. Consequently, Christian ecology becomes strictly “human,” and often represents above all a conservative

outlook. There is an exclusive preoccupation with the life of the human being – from its beginning to its end – but without the slightest curiosity about the communion of Creation to which we are invited along with the rest of the living world, despite the fact that it, too, is under threat at the present time.

The Ecumenical Assembly of 1989, held in Basel, resulted in recognition in ecumenical meetings of the need to reconcile our concern for justice and peace with that of environmental conservation. This should remind Christian communities that the first profession of the Creed is a conjunction which deserves greater attention for the faith of all people. The Ecumenical Assembly was also a unique opportunity to become aware once again of the link between Creation and salvation in Christian faith. Finally, it was an enthralling forum in its bringing together of Christians from different denominations in a common pastoral undertaking.

THE SPIRIT OF ASSISI

When Pope John Paul II launched the idea in 1986 of an inter-religious meeting, it was natural that it should happen in Assisi. Moreover, in the first months of his pontificate, John Paul went there himself to name St Francis the new “heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology.” This was an astonishing and prophetic intuition. Several decades later, therefore, as international summits have addressed the challenges of climate chaos and the development objectives of the poorest countries, the involvement of believers of all denominations has continued to increase.

While civil society and international groups, including anti-globalist groups, work together to decry the negative effects of globalization in the economic sphere, religious groups meet in the first place not to know each other better, but to collaborate in addressing a shared and worldwide concern. Their prayer is not disembodied: through it, they take responsibility for the cries of indigenous and poor populations who throughout the world, are the first to suffer the consequences of the

massive exploitation of all types of natural resources. They also condemn the violence which is perpetuated when armed conflicts are used as pretexts to gain access to fossil fuels or mineral resources.

As part of these instances of local action, nowadays it is not rare to see Buddhist monks and Catholic priests opposing projects which recklessly destroy the environment (for example, Jeju in South Korea). Neither is it unusual to see American religious Sisters and Canadian aboriginal people united in opposing the exploitation of North-American tar sands (for example, Keystone Pipeline).

Although these localized social campaigns are numerous and of key importance, environmental concerns also spring from a broader realization. There is a disconnection in modern life between the desirable comfort of a materially prosperous existence and the profound loss of our relationship with the earth, the seasons, living beings, and the shared goods of the planet. When the basic necessities of life such as water, air, soil and food are put at risk by the pollution from our factories or the corruption of our decision-makers, it is not surprising that opposition emerges, that revolutionary changes take place.

A fine example of this is the awakening of civil society in China to promote a healthier environment in the context of serious industrial pollution. This is a country where the prevailing materialistic culture is also giving birth to a new spiritual thirst among the younger generation. The stories of some “converts” to Christianity or Buddhism show that their path is also one of a return to a greater inner coherence, and thus to a greater appreciation of the importance of the beautiful mystery of the natural world which is our home.

A CALL TO COHERENCE

People of numerous spiritual traditions (at least, the traditions which are most open) have understood that individual and collective rootedness in the grace of this world, in the contemplation of its harmony and in the

wisdom of a respectful and prudent life is becoming a prerequisite for any further reflection on the meaning of our life and the path that we travel through it.

The disfigured and wounded earth which we inhabit – groaning in childbirth, as St Paul explained (Romans 8) – reminds each one of us that if we wish to take care of our interior life, we can no longer do so through simplistic and dualistic approaches. It is indeed the flesh of this world which is called to welcome the light of Christ's resurrection, and so we want to protect it, take care of it and cherish it, like a bride adorned for her husband.

Spirituality y environment

3. e.10 Amerindian spirituality and the environment

David Herrerías Guerra

It is a well-known fact that the cosmological vision of the native peoples of America has the germ of a conception of the relationship of human beings with nature that can provide something of value to Western culture at this time. Today we realize that our pride has led us to go beyond the boundaries of our own security as a human species. This religion continues to be practiced in the native traditional communities of America, the axis that articulates this cosmological vision and social organization of their feasts and rituals. But before speaking of the Amerindian religions it is good to make some clarifications, above all during this time where rites, beliefs, and spiritual fashions are easily mixed and confused, with great superficiality.

We have to understand that the European invasion during the XVI century destroyed the great Mesoamerican cultures; the formal religious structures in America disappeared. The religions of the actual native peoples have little to do with the rituals and the highly hierarchical

organizations of the Maya, Aztec, Inca or Purepecha religions. But parallel to these urban forms of religiosity, in the small peripheral communities - most of them subdued under the Pre-Columbian empires - they developed simpler, more familiar and communitarian forms of religiosity, which survived military and spiritual conquest through mechanisms of pretense that allowed them to maintain the depth of their beliefs under European forms.

Given that forms and material symbols are part of the content of a religious act, a syncretism developed that is still found today. The indigenous religions in America are inseparable from the Catholic Christian matrix and although in some cases one can distinguish the contributions of one or the other in the rituals and religious practices, in other cases it is hard to make that distinction. Genuine Catholicism brought by the Spanish navigators had elements that could easily fuse with the religious practices of America, or could modify them, for instance the shamanic components of the priesthood and the excessive power of mediation of the numerous saints and virgins making them like independent goddesses. Since we have difficulty in knowing the original popular religious practices of the Mesoamerican natives, in Amerindian spirituality it is not easy to distinguish which elements originate from the pre Colombian and which are the ones that were incorporated as a concession to the evangelizers, with their dissuasive capacity sometimes based on the witness of the good missionaries, or sometimes on the sword of soldiers and most common in the mixture of both.

On the other hand, it is difficult to speak of all the religious indigenous forms in America as a uniform set. These religions are by their very nature, tribal, that is to say, closely tied to a group, or a particular community.²⁷⁹ As we were saying at the beginning of this paper, religiosity

²⁷⁹ The word tribal has been used frequently derogatorily, but it simply describes the identification of the religion with its native people, a particular 'tribe', just as in Judaism. In America, for this reason, religions are called with the name of the people that practices them: the Ayuuk religion, the Ikoots religion, etc.

passes through the life of the communities, and so there are no very well structured religious institutions. There are well differentiated bodies of beliefs, rites, cults and actors, but nothing similar to a church or a body of believers: they are defined by their belonging to a community. Neither are there books or texts of doctrine, or moral compendiums deriving from those beliefs. In America there are 1000 different native languages, which accounts for the number of indigenous groups that have diverse religious forms but share some essential features.

Having expressed this complexity, we can say without any doubt that one of the features that define the native religions of America is the fusion of the sacred with nature. These religions are properly animists, although we have to make clear that the word animism, frequently used to describe these religions, is too simplistic. They are not saying that the tree is god, but that all things are imbued with a soul, understood as the Creator Spirit and Giver of life. It could be that they were perceived as different gods or divine agents, a little like saints and virgins in Catholic popular religiosity. However, more than the existence of this multiplicity of gods, we can say that the divine melts into nature, or that the sacred is a dimension of reality, of nature. The relationship with natural things is always sacred.

In the religious practices of contemporary native peoples, the experience of nature is less reified than that which we are living in our occidental tradition. Nature is imbued with spirit and has life beyond its immediate biological manifestations. This situates humanity in a more modest and reverent place with regards to nature:

Every step that you make on the earth must be a prayer.

The force of a pure and good soul is in the heart of every person

and will grow like a seed when you walk in the sacred way.

If every step that you make is a prayer, then you'll walk always in a sacred way.²⁸⁰

In pre-Columbian religions three levels of reality were recognised: the world, the underworld and the over world, which were assimilated by the Christian idea of heaven-world-hell. But the connection that exists between these levels in the native vision is much more fluid and dynamic; the three dimensions interact and communicate much more easily. This influences the benign way of looking at the deceased and death in these cultures, especially in Mexico.

In this conception, the earth is the mother who gives life and who hosts the dead in her bosom. Native religious practices seldom took place inside temples, but rather in nature: on mountains, as pyramids that communicated with the over world, or in caverns as in a uterus that communicates with the underworld. The relation that the native peoples of America established with the land is radically different from that of the West. The land cannot become merchandise like any other. The land is a living being to whom the Yuuk and other native peoples offer the first drops of beer or mezcal, pouring the drops over the land in a toast of gratitude. Before they cut down a tree in the forest or make a hole in the earth, they ask pardon, explaining the reason for their sacrifice:

"You rain, you wind, you thunder, you lighting; you owner of the night. You owner of the spirits; you mother, you beasts: I ask pardon because I cut down trees, because I had to sow. I ask you to help me, so that the animals may not harm my fields; so that the harvest may be abundant; so that I may give food to my children".²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Text attributed to the Lakota Indians

²⁸¹<http://www.pacarinadelsur.com/home/indoamerica/246-la-vivencia-de-dios-entre-los-habitante-de-las-nubes-un-acercamiento-a-los-curanderos-mixes-en-ayutla-oaxaca>. Consulted in May 2015.

Nature imbued by the Spirit, more than becoming an object of adoration, is the Other with whom one can dialogue, whom one can question, and to whom one owes respect. Nature always has something to tell us; that is why we should be interested in it and learn its language. The motivation for the study of the stars that took the Mayan to a scientific knowledge of the universe superior to that of the Europeans who conquered them, was not the desire for scientific knowledge, but rather for knowledge of what the universe wanted to say to them, just like an owl standing close to a house can announce a death, or the wind that carries the feathers of the sacrificed birds' neck predicts the success or failure in an enterprise.

This reverential position with regards to nature does not coincide with the vision of the oceanic religions, nor with "New Age" or other similar movements. This recognition of the Spirit in all things is not the same as that of Buddhism. In these indigenous American religions no ethical considerations forbid the sacrifice of other living beings for the benefit of human beings, either for ritual or nourishing purposes. Although standing in a horizontal plane with respect to the other members of Creation, the Amerindian religions continue to put men and women at the top. Perhaps this helped integrate a centric vision of men and women in the Christian theologies,²⁸² even if the position of human beings in Creation is more humble - from humus, soil - and we cannot understand the individual outside a communal space and a natural context.

The trilogy "Community - earth – custom" cannot be separated. Religion covers all spheres of community life and establishes a series of religious and civic obligations that have to be observed by everyone. These obligations, or gratuitous services, establish the right to live on the land and in the community, and they rule the use of the natural resources.²⁸³

²⁸² Clearly following this sense is Leonardo Boff. See BOFF, Leonardo (2001) *Ecology, Cry of the earth, cry of the poor*. Trotta and others.

²⁸³ The indigenous migrants get together in the US cities in order to celebrate their holidays and they have a close, strong relationship with their town of origin. Even out of their community and country, they continue participating in the religious political roles and

“Custom” or tradition, like language and celebrations, are a fundamental part of community life and they revolve around Catholic saints and virgins that hide their original association as deities within the natural cycles.

In the American religions, above humanity and nature, is the Lord who is giver of life, from whom everything comes can be recognised, although in practice He is rarely invoked. God is seen and is discovered in everything inhabited by Him.

God appears close: in the plants, in the animals and in the natural elements. Nature is the space of revelation. This relationship makes nature transcend the category of thing or merchandise that Western culture gives to natural elements. This transcendent relation gives them their own life and recognises them as subjects and not possessions.

So as not to fall into condescending positions with regards to the native peoples of America, we have to say that this vision has not always been expressed in individual and community ethics - as also happens very frequently among Christians -- nor has it always resulted in an effective care of nature.²⁸⁴ The practice of many indigenous communities is not always congruent with this worldview, but definitely the indigenous spirituality of the Americas offers a different way of being in the world, a different starting point to understand the role of human beings in relation with nature. This way of understanding can be used to enrich Christian theology, as some theologians are already doing.

many times they go back during the year when they have to perform them even at the risk of not being able to come back to the North.

²⁸⁴ It has been documented that the decline of many of the urban Mayan centers is associated with the depletion of their natural resources. Many indigenous communities have deforested great extensions of jungle to raise cattle; this can be explained under the conditions of necessity and extreme poverty in which they have been abandoned.

3. e.11. Interconnectedness of Environment and Spirituality

Therese Koottiyaniyil, r.a.

Environment is the natural situation around living beings which affects the existence, growth,

development and activities of living beings. It includes both the living and the non-living surroundings in the world. It is the physical and biological surroundings of human species. Man is the most dynamic element in the ecosystem. Spiritually is the state of being spiritual. Spiritual is anything pertaining to God, to God's spirit, to sacred matters etc. Environmental spirituality is an experience of awareness of God's presence and the experience of God's personal love and being in contact with God. This experience is accompanied by great joy, inner happiness and peace. We need a conducive, fertile, supportive milieu in order to sustain our communication with God and to lead a spiritual life for a long time. It is difficult to live a spiritual life in a milieu where no one is interested in spiritual matters. Friends, books, churches, art, music, places are part of an environment that helps us to live a spiritual life. The non-living components of environments like land, water, sunlight; heat, pressure etc. are also supportive.

Human beings are part of the environment and are influenced by it. Certain environments are conducive to the development and enrichment of spirituality. All are, by nature, spiritual. There are hundreds of things in the surroundings, which help us to discover God. Such environments are thought of as the manifestation of God, the Creator. A gigantic river that runs by ; a vast green meadow ; a huge forest with animals roaming around ; birds that sing and fly with tiny wings ; flowers that open with variety of colors ; peaceful dawn that dispels the darkness ; light emerging gradually every morning ; brightly shining sun in the middle of the day ; radiance of the calmly descending sun in the evening spreading beauty in

the horizon ; thousands of shining stars at night ; thunder that flashes across the sky ; the plants of the earth and the fishes of the sea ; cold wind in the winter and the pleasant sun in the summer ; clouds that move slowly under the sky ; the mountains, springs, trees, breeze, flood - all these enable the spiritually-minded persons to discover God in the environment. "Lord, the earth lights up as a symbol of your presence. All nature is suffused with your light and life."

For the spiritual persons, all creatures are suffused by divine love. The more they become spiritual, the more any beautiful things appear to them as symbol of God's presence. All things are mirrors of divine love and beauty. They are in reverence, adoration and awe. The beauty of environment touches them. They in turn, pervade and transform their lives, their gestures, word and dealings with others. Such persons protect the environment and keep it beautifying and enriching themselves.

Jesus often made allusion to nature to explain the mystery of the Kingdom of God. He referred to the lake, soil, field, land, farmers, pruning the plant, sowing seeds, crop maturing, harvesting, mustard seed, village, mountains, hills, fishing, asking for bread, and so on. Thus he showed how the body and spirit are interconnected.

Some Great philosophers, teachers, scientists, poets etc. were great spiritual men who discovered God in the environment. For example, the western philosopher Friedrich August Froebel believed in the law of unity that governs all things. He said that God is the ground of all things, all comprehending and the all sustaining Creator..... All things have their origin in the divine unity and the right development of religious feelings depends on the communion of human beings and realization of the metaphysical unity of the universe.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Scientist saw the Omnipresence of the divine in the 'Bread'. The Holy mass was extended beyond the cosmos. The cosmos, for him, was the physical extension of the Eucharist. God indwells in all things. He wrote, "I do indeed touch him – this God- the

whole surface and in the depths of that world of matter which confines me through and beyond...All of us inescapably exist in you. The deeper the level in which one encounters you, Master, the more one realizes the universality of your influence.

Some Indian thinkers experienced the interconnectedness of environment and spirituality. For Dr. Radhakrishnan, for example, the ultimate reality was the absolute, Brahman. He said that every human individual has in him an eternal spark, a created element. "All human beings, irrespective of their race, religion, class, caste, languages, nationality, sex, ethnicity, are sparks of the divine. Hence, service to humanity is service to God." Ravindranath Tagore wanted to establish harmony between man and the universe. He looked at 'Mother Earth' as kind, benevolent and generous. As a man develops his relationship with his fellowmen he should develop his relation with nature. God is found in the midst of nature. God reveals himself through different colors, forms, rhythms of nature, God, therefore, desires a close relationship between men, God and nature. Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda believed that God is in all creatures and they also believed in the manifestation of divine perfection in man.

3. e.12 Eco-spirituality

Isabel Hill

WHAT RELEVANCE DOES ECO-SPIRITUALITY HAVE FOR AN ASSUMPTION SISTER TODAY?

Eco-spirituality has no agreed definition, no centralized overseeing body, no universally embraced rituals or beliefs. Rather, it denotes a cluster of spiritualities characterised by an emphasis on the universe as a sacred web of life worthy of respect and reverence. Eco-spiritual perspectives can be found in all of the world's religions, while some forms of eco-spirituality are not directly connected with any specific faith tradition. Some proponents of eco-spirituality hold beliefs which harmonize easily

with Christianity, while other forms are less compatible with Christian doctrine.

Eco-spirituality is related to several other fields with which it cannot be straightforwardly identified, such as deep ecology, the Gaia hypothesis, and a strand of theology which understands the universe as God's body. It is also rooted in a number of ancient spiritual traditions, such as the strongly nature-orientated Native American religions and druidism.

The Celtic Christian Church adopted a number of druidic traditions, particularly love of the natural world. This was not alien to Christianity, since the central place of Creation themes was appreciated in the early Church, as reflected in the prayer life of that time. However, a dualistic spiritual understanding gradually took precedence, particularly from the Middle Ages, with the concept of turning away from the world to draw closer to God. Thereafter, a pervasive tendency of Christianity has been to consider Creation as the support system for humankind. In contrast, proponents of eco-spirituality recognise the inherent value of Creation. A systematic treatment of eco-spirituality would be inappropriate in a document such as this, not only due to limitations of space, but also in usefulness. Rather, my intention in this brief exploration is to consider whether reflection on any elements of eco-spirituality can appropriately enrich the spiritual life as well as the ecological outlook of an Assumption Sister.

As might be expected, the Magisterium is at pains to distance itself from anything with resonances of nature worship. In his message for the 2010 World Day of Peace, entitled *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the 'immense consequence' of respect for Creation, describing the grave implications of the ecological crisis facing our world and recognizing the benefits for the human spirit which are associated with contact with nature.²⁸⁵ However, he insisted on

²⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, 'If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation', Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1st January 2010,

the danger of spiritualities which elevate the importance of non-human Creation, since '[in] the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the "dignity" of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings.'²⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Vatican Radio criticized the film *Avatar* for promoting 'all those pseudo-doctrines that turn ecology into the religion of the millennium.'²⁸⁷ It seems that the Church has recognised the growth in popularity of nature-based spirituality, and that it is responding to it with opposition rather than with openness to the concerns which draw people away from mainstream Christianity towards more ecologically focused spiritualities.

The environmental crisis is the most obvious catalyst for ecological engagement, but there is also an increasing disillusionment with the materialism and consumerism which accompany a mechanistic view of the universe. This perception of Creation as a multitude of independent objects, which expanded massively from the 17th century onwards, is the source of a manipulative, competitive consciousness, and hence of the utilitarianism and individualistic greed which is proving so damaging to our environment. The Church, with its emphasis on personal redemption and its tendency to compartmentalize and disconnect religion from other spheres of life, can be perceived as failing to offer a clear alternative to this mechanistic viewpoint. Such an atomistic approach is insensitive to the mystery of the Incarnation, which implies an intimate connection between the material and the divine. Indeed, our faith cannot be separated from the created world. As Thomas Berry points out, if our water is polluted, it can no longer be used for baptism, since it has become a symbol of death rather than life, and if our air is toxic, it is no

<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html>, §1, 4, 13 [accessed 20th October 2014].

²⁸⁶ Benedict XVI, §13.

²⁸⁷ Adriana Barton, 'Eco-spirituality: Perhaps the Vatican should be worried about nature worship', *Globe and Mail*, 25th January 2010,

<http://www.brontaylor.com/environmental_articles/pdf/Taylor--Eco-spirituality_globeandmail.pdf>, §3 [accessed 20th October 2014].

longer a helpful representation of the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁸ I would therefore suggest that the most important insight of eco-spirituality for Christians today is the deep interconnectedness and communion of all of Creation. The insistence of the Magisterium on the 'superior role' of human beings militates against such a viewpoint, yet a shift in understanding towards a more egalitarian model can be associated with a more respectful attitude towards our environment, and more cooperative relationships with the rest of Creation. For religious, it can offer a more coherent way of living the vows, as I hope to describe.

Despite the extensive variety of scriptural texts offering insights into Creation, there is a tendency in the Church to concentrate on that of Genesis 1. This narrow focus is associated with anthropocentrism, particularly when translations of verses 26 and 28 use vocabulary of mastery, subjugation and domination. Such a perspective emphasizes the unique relationship of humans with God which emerges from being made in God's image. This outlook is certainly compatible with ecological engagement, especially as awareness increases of the impact which human activity has on our environment. However, such concern is instrumental; it is motivated by the desire to sustain human life. Other creatures are of interest to the extent that they serve this end. In contrast, eco-spirituality is bio-centric; the whole of Creation is valued in its own right, irrespective of what it might contribute to human survival. From an ontological perspective, no distinction is made between humans and other creatures; everything is formed from the same basic material, and everything makes its own contribution to the web of life.

The conviction that God created the entire universe out of a movement of love, that humans do not have a monopoly on God's love, has profound implications for the vow of chastity. Recognizing our call to mirror divine

²⁸⁸ Thomas Berry, 'Foreword', in *Earth, Sky, Gods & Mortals: Developing an Ecological Spirituality*, Jay B. McDaniel (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), p. vi.

love, we are brought into relationship with the whole of Creation, sensitive to its inherent value and its contribution to the web of life, committed to its flourishing. We appreciate its revelation of divinity, since it is not just humans but everything which in some way manifests the characteristics of God. Moreover, this outlook casts a new light on Jesus' particular care for the marginalized and the voiceless. In first century Palestine, this category included disabled people and women. The elderly and the unborn are today understood by Christians as being in special need of protection, since they cannot express or uphold their inherent dignity. Their rights are recognised, despite their incapacity to assume the responsibilities normally associated with human life, simply because God loves and cares about them. From an eco-spiritual perspective, the case is no different for the rest of Creation. The natural consequence of this inclusive appreciation of the value of all created things is a respectful attitude to their treatment and attentiveness to how their well-being can be best upheld, rather than considering them primarily as goods given by God for our use.

Understanding the universe as a sacred web of life also points towards a particular way of embracing religious poverty. Our interconnectedness means that human actions have a global impact; our behavior has implications for every element of God's beloved Creation. As already mentioned, conservation of resources is often adopted for instrumental reasons. For example, we may avoid cutting down forests in an endeavor to limit global warming. However, in this case, self-restraint in consumption will be experienced at some level as unwelcome but judicious self-deprivation. If, on the other hand, there is sensitivity to the harmony of the universe and to the complex web of interrelationships which sustains it as an organism, we will naturally embrace a voluntary simplicity which enhances the existence of all creatures. 'The emphasis will be on life, not things; in quality, not quantity; on services, not material

goods.’²⁸⁹ Rather than being a burden, such poverty is associated with a sense of lightness, spaciousness and freedom. Moreover, through this approach we will better perceive the connections between ecological choices and issues of human justice. For example, vegetarianism helps to feed the human population of the world, as well as reducing pollution, environmental destruction, and the suffering of animals. ‘A preferential option for animals is simultaneously a preferential option for the earth and the poor.’²⁹⁰

Eco-spirituality reveals the vow of obedience to revolve around a humble acceptance of our specific role in God’s Creation. We are united with all creatures in our dependence on God as well as in our fundamental interdependence. Moreover, the place of humans at the top of the scale of organic complexity is balanced by our utter reliance on the parts of Creation often considered less significant because of their relative simplicity. This general rule of inverse dependency, that more complex organisms rely to a greater extent on simpler ones than vice versa, has profound implications for our self-understanding. To the extent that we seek to impose our own wishes on the world, rather than endeavoring to discern God’s will and to act in accordance with it, we disrupt the harmony of the web of life. I have stressed that humans are part of nature, the whole of which forms a unity at a fundamental level, whether this is viewed biochemically or spiritually. However, within eco-spirituality there is equal emphasis on the distinctiveness and diversity of Creation. Every created thing plays its own unique role in the web of life, its contribution being necessary for the harmony and coherence of the whole. As far as we are aware, humans are the only form of life capable of conscious reflection on how we affect our environment. This places us in a special way apart from the rest of nature, and it is here also that the vow of obedience comes into play. Aware of the competing influences of egocentrism and altruism on our behavior, we can choose to act in

²⁸⁹ Jay B. McDaniel, *Earth, Sky, Gods & Mortals: Developing an Ecological Spirituality* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), p. 21.

²⁹⁰ McDaniel, p. 76.

accordance with God's benevolent will for the whole of Creation, rather than simply in our own interests.

The insights of eco-spirituality can encourage Christians to move beyond the speciesism which is so common among believers and non-believers alike. Since the web of life includes each created thing, we are profoundly and intimately related to everything that exists. Our appreciation of this God-given interconnectedness is naturally reflected in attitudes of reverence, respect and gratitude, and in the desire to accept our responsibility to live in accordance with God's will for the flourishing of this world. It is only by living in harmony with Creation and with God that our existence will find its true meaning.

Select Bibliography

- Deane-Drummond, Celia, *A Handbook in Theology and Ecology* (London: SCM Press, 1996).
- Gnanakan, Ken, *God's World: A Theology of the Environment* (London: SPCK, 1999).
- McDaniel, Jay B., *Earth, Sky, Gods & Mortals: Developing an Ecological Spirituality* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990).
- McFague, Sallie, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1993).
- O'Mahony, Donal, 'The Voice of the Earth: Towards an Ecological Spirituality', *The Furrow* 56:3 (2005), 152-159.
- Skolimowski, Henryk, *A Sacred Place to Dwell: Living with Reverence upon the Earth* (Shaftsbury, Dorset: Element, 1993).

Electronic Resources

- Barton, Adriana, 'Eco-spirituality: Perhaps the Vatican should be worried about nature worship', *Globe and Mail*, 25th January 2010, http://www.brontaylor.com/environmental_articles/pdf/Taylor--Eco-spirituality_globeandmail.pdf.
- Benedict XVI, 'If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation', Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1st

January 2010,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html

- Universe Spirit, 'Eco-Spirituality Definition: What is Eco-Spirituality and Why is it Important to All Spiritual Individuals?', *Universe Spirit*, <http://www.universespirit.org/eco-spirituality-definition-what-eco-spirituality-and-why-it-important-all-spiritual-individuals>

3.e. 13. Ways forward

Questions

What strikes you in this section? What do you like and what do you find difficult?

What insights can be gained from other religions? How can these help us to care for Creation? How can these help us to adapt our lifestyle? What would you like to explore further?

Some Possible actions

- Interfaith reflection or study group, + 'see, judge, act' on local environmental issues.
- Share Creation stories.
- Join any existing interfaith councils.
- Work towards an interfaith covenant, local churches, mosques, temples, etc., pledging in common to work together for the environment.
- Multi-faith liturgy around an ecological issue, including use of symbols - 'water,' say, in a drought situation + reflection on meaning of water in each tradition: harvest and fruit gathering including thanksgiving.

- Common action. Plant a tree together + seek insight from each tradition.
- Green pilgrimage in a locality – this would include elements of liturgy from all traditions represented.
- Meal together - building community and friendship.
- Pledge to disinvest from fossil fuels and/or install solar panels all round.

Fourth Part: Springboards for Action

Introduction

Ana Senties, r.a.

As we have seen throughout this document, ecology is one of the issues that affects us all today wherever we are on our earth; it is therefore urgent to think and respond to it. "If you want to promote peace, protect creation"²⁹¹ .

This is what we recognised in the General Chapter 2012, a feeling from the Assumption charism that this commitment is a way of "loving our times." We feel the call and the urgency to "develop the awareness that we are merely a part of the community of creation, we have to move from a position of dominance to a position of respect, from utilitarianism to compassionate care, and from separation to interdependence. This means a radical change of perspective." ²⁹²

²⁹¹ Message for the World Day of Peace 2010 from Pope Benedict XVI

²⁹² From the General Chapter document "Ecology and Migration"

We have allowed ourselves, throughout this document, to be illuminated by different perspectives: the diagnosis we have made has enabled us to rediscover the intimate connection between environmental destruction, migration and violence. The wisdom of cultures and religions has inspired us in this fundamental attitude of care for creation. The reference framework has also offered clues for action from the biblical foundations, the social thought of the Church and transformative education in the Assumption. We have noted, then, that this new perspective with deep religious and anthropological foundations, also springs from our charism in the Assumption.

In this Chapter 4 we offer some springboards for our educational and pastoral action, for our civic and political engagement, and, more concretely too, for our daily lives. We also present some of the many experiences that we are living throughout the world in response to all this - a problem in every Continent – here there are examples of our humble collaborative efforts using the creativity of many people and agencies working today the preservation and regeneration of the human and natural environment.

4. a1. Transformative education at the service of the Gospel

Véronique Thiebaut, r.a

A pedagogical approach

"Transformative education gives individuals the capacity to serve, to be fulfilled and to take control of their own destiny. In this way they learn to act according to their own goals, values, feelings and reasoning. Transformative education allows people to find a way to commit

themselves to transforming society "²⁹³ and to help to build a better world. It aims to enable people to become agents of transformation in their own environment, their " little sphere "as St. Marie Eugenie puts it, since they are aligned with and motivated by Gospel values and inspired by its dynamism. It is rooted in the conviction that God has put his Project for the world into human hands. So humanity delights in its beauty and, being nourished by it, watches carefully over its well-being. However, many of our contemporaries exploit creation, seeing it as a means of servicing their needs rather than as a reflection of the love of God which requires a response from them as an expression of their ultimate dependence. This response must be creative and inventive so that creation is preserved, is able to retain its beauty, and is clothed with renewed strength. This is to "give the Lord of history the opportunity to act, by offering Him our creative imagination, our intelligence and all our liberty so He can do with us what He could not do without us "²⁹⁴ This amazing potential for transformation is not feasible without another sort of transformation, which precedes and accompanies it. This is a process to which persons themselves must agree, accepting continually to question themselves, to take the risk of modifying their lifestyle and their way of thinking, in order to tend as far as possible towards the "good life," a simple life so that others may simply live, a lifestyle adjusted so others may receive Justice, a modest life so others may be lifted out of poverty.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION: THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL KEY

The mystery of the Incarnation is the theological key to understand this dynamic of transformation. Indeed, the Incarnation changes the paradigm of the relationship between humanity and God, and humanity to the world. Through the incarnation of his Son, God clearly manifests the dignity of human beings, making human life the place where He reveals Himself and declares Himself. The world, where the people of Israel

²⁹³ General Chapter 2006

²⁹⁴ C FLIPO, *Christus* no 234, May 2012, "Regarder autrement"

journeyed with their God without seeing Him, becomes the place where God lets Himself be seen, touched, and encountered. The world is no longer a place of "exile" to be endured while waiting for the joy of eternity, but it appears as a "place for the glory of God"²⁹⁵, here human happiness can be allied permanently to the relationship with God, here and now. Creation is restored to its original beauty, caught up in a movement of divine life which transfigures it and gives it a new dimension. The evangelist Mark said of Christ himself, in the story of temptations, that he "lived among the wild beasts."²⁹⁶ Following on from this, all believers are invited to reconsider their relationship to the environment and find a path to interiority within themselves. On the other hand, engaging in the search for God, the believer is somehow called to a personal involvement; the values of the Kingdom of which Christ speaks can be recognised in the images of Creation surrounding it: the little grain of mustard that becomes a great tree where the birds come to shelter, the lilies of the field, the sower and the soil, the vine etc..... Nature carries within itself something of God's Kingdom! As does the community of disciples, who were called by Jesus in a founding act at the beginning of his public life.

From this mystery of the Incarnation, the source of apostolic dynamism of the Assumption, several characteristic emerge:

- Transformative education is manifested through a genuine attention to each person, in their uniqueness, each one with their special grace. This implies a specific way of accompaniment that allows each person to become themselves, as Marie Eugenie said when she was describing the spirited children of Bordeaux, if they

²⁹⁵ 1 ST MARIE EUGENIE DE JESUS Creed, texts between 1841 and 1844 without doubt at the request of Fr Lacordaire.

²⁹⁶ Mk 1:13

are like butterflies then be careful not to clip their wings, we simply need guide their flight.

- Transformative education takes into consideration the capacity for commitment and the talents of each person. It is rooted in a pedagogy of desire "which engenders confidence and the ability of humans to shape their own future."²⁹⁷ It gives rise to a pedagogical approach which develops critical thinking, and ultimately leads to personal and collective projects, which "encourage the spirit of initiative" in a world that we must learn to know and love. In this "knowing" and "loving" the perspective of the heart is at stake. National Geographic photographer Dewitt Jones one day declared that his job had led him to accept reality as it was, not as he expected it to be, and to accept whatever surprise and dispossession he had to live, and to "celebrate what is good in the world." The teacher accompanies persons and shows them how to see what is beautiful: so it reconciles humanity to the environment as it is. It results in availability.
- Finally, transformative education necessarily has a community and collective dimension. It relies on ecological relationships and beneficial inter-dependence, lived as a sharing of wealth. For, as Anselm Grün writes, "cultivating one's own life has meaning only if we 'are growing together overall. Encourage the individual only has meaning if the community is benefiting."²⁹⁸ Thus, in the communities we form, those who exercise leadership are at the service of this harmonious coexistence, in which each gives and receives, and are deeply welcomed and known. Nature can teach us to live relationships that way. It carries within a wisdom and rhythm that humanizes our relationships: "The earth," writes Pierre Rabhi, "conceals its enduring values which are the ones that

²⁹⁷ General Chapter 2006 – Textes pré-capitulaire

²⁹⁸ A GRUN "Duruger kes ginnesm kes éveiller à la vie, Ed. Salvator, 2011

we lack most: a balanced rhythm, the savour of the seasons and the patience and hope that are always renewed because the forces of life are infinite."²⁹⁹

Care for people and every aspect of creation in its entirety, support and encouragement for the ability to initiate in a world and an environment that they have learned to know and love, the community dimension of the projects characterised by transforming education rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation, all these open point quite directly to an ecological focus. They give the basis for action and from this several educational 'springboards' can be formulated.

SOME EDUCATIONAL SPRINGBOARDS OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Desire and interiority

Schooling in the rhythms of nature

Denis Vasse has said that desire is "the mainspring that allows persons to take charge of their life."³⁰⁰ Anthropologists and philosophers, sociologists and psychoanalysts agree saying: without desire in our lives, movement and action are impossible. To spark the move towards a transformation, whether it be personal or social, educators cannot ignore the desires of the persons they are accompanying. One of their first concerns should be to provide a space for the expression of this desire. For another feature of desire is that, to come into light, it needs space and emptiness. St. Augustine already had this experience: "In making the soul wait God stretches out our desire; through desire, he extends the soul; and by extending the soul, he enables it to receive."³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ P Rabhi, *Conscience et environnement – la sympathie de las vie*, Le Relai, Essay 2006

³⁰⁰ D VASSE, *Le temps du désir*, Ed. Points 1997

³⁰¹ SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Sermon sur la Première Lettre de saint Jean* 4:6

Desire is different from need: it never totally reaches its fulfilment and it remains in a constant state of hunger. The contact with nature, welcoming the rhythm of the seasons, waiting for germination are, among the things that show people how to live with this void. They form part of a wisdom not offered by the logic of consumerism and the unbridled race to gain power. "It is perhaps, the experience of the desert, the test of time, the taste for the forest and meditation, which shapes our outlook and conforms it to Christ; it hollows out in us a desire and forms us in a specific way of living on earth."³⁰² From this perspective, the educator is like a creator of spaces bringing deprivation and emptiness to fruition: it often offers a silence where the teacher can put words, a time free where the wish to act is there in places something else, a time of expression where there is already an answer.... as summer gives way to autumn and winter, in a renunciation which one day will produce an abundance. Giving and receiving. The lesson of creation. God creates by withdrawing.

Doing this, the educator will allow the person to get in touch with himself/herself and to experience what is called "interiority," this hidden space from which every being acts and interacts, but with which so often we lose contact. This interior space allows a person to find his or her centre if they are not folded in on themselves. Desire goes beyond need: "the needy person is constantly trying to fill their lack. The person of desire meets the lack by setting out on a path. The first wants to have more. The second wants otherwise."³⁰³ By embracing the rhythm of alteration between need and interdependence imprinted by nature, persons open themselves up to something greater than themselves. Their "desire to be different," spoken of by Catherine TERNYNCK, becomes the lever for a path of personal transformation that leads to the transformation of relations with the world, with others and with the environment.

³⁰² CHRISTUS, no 234 HS, May 2012, Rémi de Maindreville, SJ, Introduction p7

³⁰³ C TERNYNCK, L'homme de sable, Ed. Du Seuil, 2011

Desire becomes an "astonishing mobilizing force that leads to choices and decisions"³⁰⁴ that are not for individual gain but take into account the good of the other, the common good. Otherness finds a space in decisions, and although eminently personal, it takes on another dimension in as much as it is directed towards care for the environment and the needs of others.

Wonder and critical regard

How to look on the world around me?

When Marie Eugénie of Jesus invites educators of the Assumption to see the world as a place of glory for God, she is inviting them to take a realistic view, vigilant and the same time hopeful. It is a matter of seeing the signs of the Kingdom today, learning to look out for every sign of life. The incarnation makes us so happy in reality. It invites us to marvel at the richness of our cultures, the wisdom of our traditions and the struggles of our peoples.

A realistic look is also vigilant, able to question contemporaries and sometimes to rebel against unjust situations. Expectation and alertness shape the way the young of 21st century see the environment: they marvel at nature, look on it lovingly, they also often take part with others in actions, raising awareness, becoming for instance, eco-delegates in school or youth establishments, or engaging with their local councils. There are also those who give time to clean beaches and rivers.... because in their own way, they are "seized with the urgency and the importance of writing the Gospel into the structures of society."³⁰⁵

The educator then becomes an educator in how things are perceived: they offer the young a space to clarify their outlook, to nourish it, sharpen it and give it foresight as there can be no solution to the ecological crisis without a clear awareness of its roots. Wonder and a critical mind are two

³⁰⁴ B FAURE, Christus,no230 HS, May 2011, "Le désir selon Ignace"

³⁰⁵ PAEA

inseparable requisites for a constructive contemplative gaze, two inseparable requirements for any education that could be called an "education of the intellect." The real question for a young person is, "what shall I do with my intelligence? Will I use it to value the beauty of the world around me, deploy it, celebrate and make it accessible to all? Or will I use it to exploit and get the greatest economic benefit, and in so doing destroying a part of the planet?" It is a big challenge to help the young to move from a predatory outlook to a more a contemplative one.

Utopia and free choice

Ecological and social questions: the same challenge

Reconsidering our place in the world and confronted with nature, means the ecological crisis challenges all of us to reconsider how we use our liberty. The crisis, somehow awakens the imagination and invites us to utopian dreams to which we can commit ourselves in order to make them a reality. "Can you imagine the beauty of a truly Christian society?"³⁰⁶ wrote Marie Eugenie in a text we usually call her Credo. This "vision" of a society regenerated by Gospel values is at the origin of her desire to act. Some may disqualify the term "utopia", but for her it is firstly a creative utopia, a horizon toward which she turns in order to hasten its realization, "I do not feel any obligation to say where I have directed my gaze (...); but it is totally on Jesus Christ and the extension of His reign."³⁰⁷ Her response to social disorder is to bring order by giving God and Christ their rightful first place.

In the spirit of Saint Marie Eugénie, we can reckon that in our time, "the ecological and social challenges are two aspects of the same disorder, the same will to power" as André Beauchamp stresses.³⁰⁸ He adds, therefore

306 SAINT MARIE EUGENIE DE JESUS, Creed, text written between 1841 and 1844, without doubt at the request of Fr Lacordaire

307 Ibid

308 CHRISTUS no234 HS, May 2012, "Création et écologie – redéfinir notre rapport à la terre", André Beauchamp

"justice with regard to other humans, starting with those that hunt their ancestral lands", "worship of the Lord, Lord of heaven and earth," "respect for a nature that proves fragile in our hands" are three inseparable processes which would bring our universe onto a more evangelical path. Marie Eugenie would have liked this association; she spoke as much of the adoration of the rights of God as of the social reign of Christ.

Utopia, passion, and vision are essential springs of transformative education. The educator, the guide, has a duty to become more aware: he/she must leave a space for growth for development of our own utopias, visions and passions, exchanging, studying, drawing from evangelical sources. In doing so they will invite the people with whom they travel to awaken these same sources in themselves, to recognize the passion that is within them and act accordingly. Utopia enables us to differentiate, to refuse to follow the moments dominant in society, to "plough the furrow" of the Gospel that inspires us. A transformative education enables this, if it does its work, through courage and commitment, first at the individual level and then by encouraging collective actions that challenge policy makers.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO REALLY LIVE

In conclusion, it can be said that the desire for transformation brings about a kind of school of realism. Realism about the world, still in process of giving birth to its beauty, realistic about itself. Utopia and passion are not creators of a fertile transformation unless they grow on soil which recognizes that one person alone has not got all the powers. Each one is only a part of the leaven of transformation that will enable the project of God to transform the world. Boldness and humility are the two sisters of the capacity for creativity and transformation, a humility that allows everyone to "accept their fragility and instability (*fragilitas*)" and

"recognizes that one is only a human being who may fall at any time and whose foundations can at any moment collapse."³⁰⁹

This awareness of our own frailty, instead of distancing us from the world, makes us integral part of it and makes humanity a part of nature. Relationships of domination or resistance can then pass to celebration and receptivity. The desire to dominate and direct can become resignation capable of receiving. Marie Eugenie expressed with delicacy this ability to celebrate all that comes to us without wanting to shut it in or possess it "in life we undoubtedly need refreshment, but as it comes, not grasping it in the palm of our hand even if it is needed to live, and not stopping there to take our joy and happiness...."³¹⁰ It is a journey towards sobriety and temperance...

It is in solidarity with God and with others that humanity can travel this road. A God from whom we receive more than we are able to make of ourselves, to quote Teilhard de Chardin³¹¹. These others, who are united with Him, share their riches "at the negotiating table for a new world."³¹²

³⁰⁹ A GRUN, *Diriger les hommes, les éveiller à la vie*, Ed, Salvator, 2011

³¹⁰ SAINT MARIE EUGENIE, *Instruction to the Chapter*, 15th June 1879

³¹¹ "Je me reçois bien plus que je ne me fais", P TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *Milieu divin*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, Ed. Du Seuil 1957

³¹² J HAERS, *Christus* no 234 HS, May 2102, "Face à la crise du réchauffement climatique

4. a.2 We are one part of the community of creation.

Marta Lorena Argüello, r.a.

*“We are one part o the community of Creation”
(Document Ecology and Migration, General Chapter
2012, p.3)*

*“This is the Covenant that I am making with you and
with all living things that live with you : I will put my
rainbow in the sky, as a sign of the coyenant with the
earth. When I see the rainbow appear in the clouds, I
will, remember my eternal covenant : The Covenant of
God with all living things, with everything that lives on
the earth”
(Genesis 9, 12-16)*

ANNE EUGENIE MILLERET DE BROU ENJOYED FEELING PART OF THE COMMUNITY OF CREATION.

Anne Eugenie loved everything that had life from the time she was a child. She felt attracted to nature and established a relationship with all living creatures, no matter the species. She loved to play outdoors with her brother Luis with everything that was alive, with the dogs, loyal companions in her adventures, and the deer with their black, compassionate eyes that she would feed by hand. She preferred all of this to dolls and inert toys. “All of this fascinated me more than dolls.”³¹³

³¹³ Quote from A. Alaejos, For a Strong Woman, Maria Eugenie de Jesus, Madrid, 1943, p.43.

From her earliest childhood with tender heart, she was totally open to the cosmos in all its different manifestations, entering into communion very spontaneously with all living creatures. She reread her childhood as a happy time when she enjoyed life in the countryside, in contact with nature. “Of all of this family who filled the corridors of the castle and the sanded poplar park of Preisch with the joyous uproar of childhood games nothing remains today except me.”³¹⁴

She valued having enjoyed the freedom of the countryside as a child, with her mother who was both tender and demanding, open to all that was beautiful, simple and pure. One day she would say, “This education in the countryside left an indelible mark on the soul; the heart becomes more sensitive to innocent joys, more porous to the beauty of order, more affable to all that surrounds one; the countryside tills nature and makes it more vigorous, less impressionable, more secure to endure the shocks of life, more and better able to undertake serious studies.”³¹⁵

She liked the things of this world and loved the century in which she lived, “her time”. Daughter of her times and the earth which she loved as “a place for God’s Glory.” As in other things, she was a pioneer of the cosmic vision where all were called to universal communion. Anne Eugenie felt herself, “a part of the community of Creation.”

Marie Eugenie founded communities that were called to live in communion with God, in harmony with self and others, committed to making of this earth a place for the Glory of God, reestablishing, and founding all things in Christ, recapitulating all things in Christ through education. When she became a foundress, taking the new name of “Marie Eugenie”, she invited the first sisters to create a community where tenderness and mutual attention reigned and love of all living things so that the earth would be a glimpse of heaven.

³¹⁴ Op.Cit. p. 42. Letter of MME to Baron de Gargan, new owner of the Castle of Preisch.

³¹⁵ Op.Cit. p.42

Just after the inauguration of the novitiate of Chaillot, a novice wrote: Blessed House! Very poor, uncomfortable, stripped of all that can flatter the senses, and pamper human pride! Souls seem to breathe only celestial breezes.³¹⁶ Therese Emmanuel spoke to the novices of this spirit: "...as we are all members of a same family, we help one another; you participate (by your work) in all of the works of the sisters."³¹⁷

For Marie Eugenie, the source of communion among the sisters and with others is Charity, which constantly invites us to tighten ties between us and renew our zeal, in union with God, source of Charity, giver of all good things and of all the gifts that we possess. Divine gifts that we need to give to God and the congregation with abnegation and generous love.

Charity is characterized by true and sincere affection for one another. It produces an intimate union of hearts. Be vigilant that nothing wounds charity which should reign among us as sisters, neither words, thoughts, or judgments which can violate charity. Marie Eugenie desired that the friendship among sisters would be established on a solid basis, zeal and Charity whose source is God.

A community that – as stars have different splendours – reflects the rich diversity of gifts received by each sister, the beauty of the universal gifts of God, each one accomplishing her mission and giving glory to God as He hopes.

"Don't ever lose this affection, this unity of hearts which makes us so happy to be together, this charity which gives so much freedom of heart."³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Op.Cit. p. 89.

³¹⁷ Instructions of M. Therese Emmanuel to the novices of the Assumption, on Humility, Volume 1, Auteuil, 1901, p.452.

³¹⁸ M.Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, Vol.1, p. 153-154. On Love in the Congregation, June 26, 1870.

Charity that doesn't stop at one's own necessities, interests or personal taste, but searches to do good and serve others in their needs, in the interest of the community and general usefulness.³¹⁹

Another great means to have good relationships among the sisters is silence. It allows us to be in a more intimate relationship with Jesus and to dedicate ourselves more to Him, cultivating our interior life, without dispersing ourselves in exterior things and useless conversations. Silence sustains Charity in mutual relations. Charity will make our mutual relations joyful and gentle.³²⁰

"I repeat it again, sisters, we are doubly obliged to work in order to acquire Charity, because it's in our Rule of Life and because it's the first commandment of the Gospel. But, sisters, if we are obliged because we are Christians, how much more those among us who have taken a vow to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in souls! And this is the objective of all of us, all of you want to profess your fourth vow."³²¹

It's about a Charity which brings about joy, and renews us in community. "Try to bring to community recreations a face which is lovable, gracious, agreeable so as to contribute to the common joy. May all your words be good, simple, I would even say, holy. Be careful that your words don't reflect self-love, discontent, ill humor or other natural dispositions. A good recreation is agreeable to God and full of His Spirit."³²² From this communion with ourselves, with Jesus Christ, with the sisters, we envision communion with all of humanity and the world. This is about "a spirit of zeal and ardour for the coming of the Kingdom of Our Lord on the earth."³²³

Our way of working for the coming of God's Reign on earth, is by being "zealous adorers of God's rights." That is to say, the Glory of God is first. Search that God's Glory would shine in the lives of men and women today,

³¹⁹ Op.cit.p.174-178 , On Charity, December 17, 1870.

³²⁰ Op.Cit. p. 245-246, On Mutual relations, May 15th (no year indicated)

³²¹ Op.Cit. p. 37-40, 2nd Instruction on Charity.

³²² M.Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, Vol.II, p.182, Recreations, November 23, 1873.

³²³ Op.Cit. p. 188, The Spirit of the Assumption, December 14, 1873.

and that God's Grace would dwell in them and that they would be restored and renewed in Christ Jesus. May our work and our efforts lead people to understand that they come from God, are of God, for God, and belong entirely to Him.³²⁴

The community opens itself to the dimensions of the world and all of creation. Marie Eugenie calls all of creation, the earth, the sea, the mountains, the valleys...to bless God, whose goodness poured itself out over all of creation.³²⁵ That the whole universe would give glory and honour to God for the harmony which reigns in it, for the marvels which it contains. That all would sing glory and adoration, even if not conscious of it.³²⁶ Communion with all that is created, the "eco-community" leads the human being to God, to perfect harmony, with and in the image of the Trinity, which was involved as one from the beginning in the work of creation.³²⁷

The Assumption today at the service of the cosmic community, dreamed of and created by God, in harmonious, respectful and loving relationships.

The whole Assumption Family, sisters and lay, each one according to his/her age and location, commit themselves to the fight for social and ecological justice which make "another world possible", a cosmic community, dreamed of and created by God, so that Mother Earth would be shared among her daughters and sons, would produce fruit of all types, and would feed every living being on the face of the earth. Biodiversity: human, animal, vegetable, and mineral, would have "rights" and joyful and peaceful coexistence would be a sign that this world born from God's heart is returning to His hands by the Son born of a woman in a concrete culture and place, recapitulating all things in Him.

³²⁴ M. Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, Vol.III, p. 367-368, Zeal for the salvation of souls which belongs to a Religious of the Assumption.

³²⁵ M. Marie Eugenie, Chapters of September 24, 1876 and July 22, 1883.

³²⁶ M. Marie Eugenie, Chapter of June 22, 1884.

³²⁷ M. Marie Eugenie, Chapters of March 10, 1878 and August 8, 1880.

- We want to promote a culture of sharing, of living simply and thus giving others the possibility of living with dignity and social and ecological justice which would lead us to feel responsibility for life, for creation and for the cosmic global community.
- We want to search for and forge a style of life which integrates ecological and social justice and thus renew ourselves in joyful detachment.
- We want to strengthen our networking and the communitarian dimension of our life and mission.
- We educate for the promotion of justice, the exercise and search for peace, the respect and care of creation and the globalization of solidarity.
- We want to be discerning in the use of goods, in what we buy and in our acquisitions following a policy of austerity, according to an ethic of solidarity.
- We affirm our option for life starting from the poorest, the most threatened, discarded and excluded.
- We denounce injustice and any form of violence which attacks life and the dignity of the person.
- We denounce any outrage against nature, Mother Earth, and we want to look for ways towards sustainable and equitable development.

As communities, we would like:

- To be a prophetic presence, active and in solidarity in the domain of Justice, Peace, Respect and Care of Creation and Communion.
- To live just, peaceful and respectful relations with all of creation.
- To help one another, sisters and lay, to live a style of life marked by this commitment.
- To correspond to the Project of God for humanity and the Cosmos, place of Glory for God and life in abundance for everyone, through our baptismal and religious consecration.

- We want to be a part of the universal and cosmic community, and we embrace the world – divinely created – which is too small for our immense desires and love.³²⁸

4.b Experiences

4.b.1 Kauswagan

Mary Cecilia Claparols, r.a.

KAUSWAGAN: TOWARDS CREATING A PEACE SANCTUARY

In May 1980, at the request of Archbishop Fernando R. Capalla, D.D., then Bishop of Iligan, invited the Religious of the Assumption to Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, Philippines TO BE A CONTEMPLATIVE PRESENCE among Muslims and Christians. In 1993, the community received the mandate from the Provincial Chapter to focus on interreligious dialogue particularly with our Muslim sisters and brothers.

In the years that the sisters lived in Kauswagan, the sisters and the people have witnessed a massacre in 1981, the war in March 2000, the fire which razed the entire school building in less than an hour in January 2, 1997; another armed encounter launched by the rebel group of the MILF (Muslim Islamic Liberation Front) last August 2008 which affected many families of our students and teachers, tidal waves which flooded and swept away several homes. Two other devastating typhoons affected this province in 2011 (Sendong) and in 2012 (Pablo). These events displaced thousands of people and challenged the Religious community to re-discern its presence in Kauswagan. After a serious process of discernment in 2003,

³²⁸ Documents of the General Chapters: 1994 ,2000,2006, and 2012.

the province decided in 2004 to continue its presence in Kauswagan. This decision engaged every sister in the province to be available to be assigned there. The contemplative presence in Kauswagan now took the form of “creating a Peace Sanctuary,” which was formally launched by the sisters together with Muslims and Christians. While the sisters come and go, and the events manifest the elusiveness of peace, the vision and the project continues through our lay collaborators in the school and those in the wider community as well as our alumnae/ alumni, scholars and students. Since 2011, this vision of a Peace Sanctuary which was begun by the Religious in this area has now become a Vision for the entire Municipality of Kauswagan.

FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

A Framework: Shalom in the Hebrew Bible.

For a deeper understanding of how to make the peace sanctuary a concrete reality, the biblical understanding of *shalom*³²⁹ was introduced as a framework to give a vision, a direction to the decisions, actions, and structures created in the school, and as a guide for the components and methodologies of the formation processes. The concept of *Shalom* involves the interrelationship with God, humans and the entire cosmos. Therefore intrinsic to the meaning of *shalom* is Justice, ecological commitment and the living of harmony and interdependence. Important in all these for both Muslims and Christians is a worldview that can recognize where God/ Allah is encountered and found.

B Methodology as a Way of Life: Live Incarnational Spirituality and Interdependence

³²⁹ This framework enlarged the understanding of “PEACE” which can sometimes be limited to “no war,” or inner peace. In the Hebrew Bible, peace as “no war” is a late development in this concept. See attached appendix.

This methodology moves us to DISCOVER GOD and RESPOND to GOD in the CONCRETE REALITY (JPIC-S as a lifestyle) as individuals and as a COMMUNITY enlightened by the WORD of GOD and Prayer. This implies on-going *BABAD*- immersion to the Reality, CONTEMPLATION - Listening deeply to God's Word in self, persons/ situation/ creation and scripture), express the response to God in reality through concrete ACTION (JPICS), CELEBRATING the experience in Liturgy and REREADING (Evaluation) the experience. This is a dynamic, on-going cycle.

The Community Project flowed from this framework and methodology, influenced the sisters how to live in these situations daily and to make appropriate decisions during the war, and the times after. This guided them how to form and accompany our lay and young collaborators to help transform Kauswagan from a "5th class town and a war zone" into a peace sanctuary" where peoples of different religio-cultural heritage can live in harmony with one another and with creation: where God, the ever Greater God, dwells among His people.

C Some PROCESSES used to form persons and communities to live and internalize the meaning, the values and the ways towards Shalom.

1). Reformulated the Vision, Mission and Objectives of the School and made a 3 year plan. Each subject area concretely integrates peace education in the curriculum through the knowledge, skills, values, and concrete behaviour/ life-style (that manifests JPICS) within the school and in the wider community. (ex. PEACEionaryo- a project to come up with a dictionary for peace in both English and Pilipino (language as a spiritual practice); curriculum webbing

2) Created structures that can facilitate a change of consciousness: (some examples)

- Transform the canteen into a learning center (no plastic, local products, learning kits...)

- Transform spaces (garbage and apparent “useless spaces” areas into sci-math garden, into organic vegetable and herbal gardens, chicken raising area; the dirty walls of pathways into Art for peace galleries, and a Peace garden...

- It is the students and the teachers who maintain the cleanliness, the beauty and the development of the school grounds (no janitors). The school adopted the slogan and policy: “*Basura ko, sagot ko.*” (My garbage, my responsibility).

- Weekly peace activities are part of the school schedule. Political events and issues are studied, reflected upon to clarify options (electoral process marred by corruption; climate change, trauma healing after the war and providing aid and rehabilitation for those affected by natural disasters, etc.) Clubs create art forms as tools for JPICS education.

- Advent Conspiracy: Joined the worldwide movement to restore the real meaning of Christmas: Christ’s birth transforms persons and situations therefore “Buy less, Be PRESENCE, Give More, Share More, Worship Fully...”

3) School Activities to transmit, nurture, deepen and sustain the understanding of shalom (JPICS) (some examples)³³⁰

a). Kapatiran for Peace (Sisterhood and Brotherhood for Peace) to provide new students and transferees an experience of being welcomed, oriented and initiated into the life in community and its Vision/Mission as a Peace Sanctuary.

b). Sharing on the WORD (BEC), Novenas, Morning Praise followed a format that led to journal writing, group sharing and a weekly action for peace applicable to both Christians and Muslims.

³³⁰ These are just a few examples as it is not possible to put down all the different activities and processes of the school community.

c). Peace Camp (a Leadership training to form officially elected and potential leaders) into the vision of *Shalom* (JPICS), the cosmic story, to understand very concrete issues (environmental, socio-cultural and political and economic) and their interconnectedness; to help them discover their own role in the work for peace in their little sphere. They are provided with skills in mindfulness and deeper listening to God in reality and in creation, the opportunity to work, live together as small communities, and to come up with a concrete plan of action in collaboration with local groups and officials (department of agriculture, barangay leaders, etc.) for the wider community.

d). DUYOG RAMADAN: A month long solidarity and spiritual renewal period with our Muslim brothers and sisters while helping the entire school community understand and live out the four main themes of this holy month: Gratitude for the Koran/the Word, Forgiveness, Zakat (almsgiving) -sacrifice to share with those in need and Celebration (Eid’l Fitr). An imam gives formation to the Muslim students. Eid’l Fitr celebration includes bringing goods from the collected sacrifices to poor Christian and Muslim families as well as a shared meal with exchanges of cultural dances and practices.

e). Other ACTIONS for ECOLOGICAL PEACE include networking with the local officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) who are mostly alumni of SVA and the village leaders as resources for the school while the students and teachers contribute to the projects of the wider community: through institutionalized Tree and Mangrove Growing, outreach to the department of education schools of Kauswagan regarding environmental care, the setting up of an organic farm, Caring for the watershed in two barangays, TLE (technical learning education) teachers network with DA, learn how to make Indigenous Micro Organisms IMO, cleaning up the coastline area, creating a compost pit (vermin). The school community is interrelated and interdependent with the wider community of life.

SVA, A NET (INTERDEPENDENCE) AND A WOMB.

A teacher who was in SVA for 5 years and is now teaching in the public school in a Muslim area says: “SVA is like a womb that has given birth to me and has sent me to continue its vision and mission. The formation I received gave me a solid foundation to live with courage (even if I feel alone), the values I learned and cherish and not to compromise these despite pressures and threats due to corruption and politics. My daily prayer on the Word of God nourishes me and sustains me in my life now.” She has initiated the peace camp in her school.

Several of our students³³¹ who were former student leaders and honor students have opted to become teachers. They shared how they have been marked by the spiritual formation especially through the BEC, Care for the environment, the PEACE camps, Duyog Ramadan etc. the different forms of outreach and community service experiences. The values and the self-confidence they have, they attribute to the formation they have received in SVA. In the absence of a public hearing, a student set up a blog to challenge the local government’s project of a coal plant in Kauswagan. They continue to live the slogan: “Basura ko, Sagot ko” as students in the state university. This same student shared how despite their own poverty, (being a scholar himself), they were able to save through “joyful detachment” to help a student pay his transportation expenses last semester. This group volunteered to give the cancelled retreat to 170 fourth year students in a public school in a Muslim area as their action for the Year of the Poor and live the Pope’s message: “go to the periphery.” They said: “we don’t have money but we can share ourselves.” Another scholar said: “The University only provides us with cognitive learning. SVA has given us a taste of the affective and spiritual learning, as well as the opportunities for outreach and service to the community. These are things we miss and long for, along with the deep sharings.”

³³¹ This data was gathered in a meeting of students and teachers who were in SVA between 2007-2015.

The Future as a peace sanctuary

SVA can indeed become a formation community striving to contribute to create a peace sanctuary that can mend the tears of the WEB and to heal and wipe the tears shed, at the same time, it is a WOMB that can form the youth (of the next generation) and the future teachers to this vision of *shalom*, so needed by our country (particularly in Mindanao) and our world today.

4.b.2 Rwaza

Marthe Marie Nzabakurana, r. a.

THE SCHOOL OF OUR LADY OF THE APOSTLES IN RWAZA: A MODEL SCHOOL³³²

The school is situated in natural surroundings conducive to the blossoming of life and all its ecological dimensions; they form part of our daily life. Humanity seems to have a symbiotic relationship with nature and with everyday life; we find ourselves continually challenged to

comply with the demands of development for an elementary survival and to suggest concrete actions in our environment to improve the things which are not helping the quality life with regard to the basic **needs of the human race** (water, food, living conditions, energy, sun, air...) ³³³

³³² Rwanda is made up of 30 districts and the Minister of National Education has chosen two schools per district commonly called 'excellent schools or model schools'. Among the various criteria used for the choices there are: excellence from the academic point of view, infrastructure in accordance with legal norms, and innovations.

³³³ The 500 young people are in a boarding school situation which offers them all favourable conditions for learning. They are therefore in school day and night except for the holidays (9-12 months.) This big community does what it can to improve the environment.

How in this context, through education, do we form an ecological conscience?

When it is a question of damage to our environment on planet earth as well as the question of climate change, and to the loss of biodiversity, of resources and local life, the sense of responsibility differs, depending on whether one lives in an industrial country or in the south.

However, humanity is exposed to certain natural risks and the infrastructures are exposed to natural catastrophes, including climate change, erratic seasons, prolonged droughts, flooding, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The school has always wanted, in a modest way, to struggle against deforestation, harmful for nature and for humanity, struggle to eliminate erosion by making radical terraces. (The school is situated at a height of 2000 m.) There is also the political will to protect the environment and to manage the forests responsibly.

The Biogas project:³³⁴ a project for a healthier and better life

It is in this framework that a project was being thought about in 2004, and since 2006 this project

is working in the school. Taking account of the assets already in place; a two hectare property, cattle breeding, a community of 600 people, of whom 500 are young people who follow courses with scientific options.

³³⁴ Biogas rests on a universal reaction to the recycling of natural waste. Three families of bacteria live in symbiosis in an anaerobic setting, that is to say that they are deprived of air and oxygen, giving off methane and carbonic gas from waste organic matter. The principle of biogas is to raise up these bacteria so that the emissions of combustible gas may be picked up

(maths-physics-chemistry: maths-physics-geography: physics-chemistry-biology.

The concrete actions are written down in the strategic plan of the school (exercise 2008-2013) and are based on the texts of the General Chapter of the Religious of the Assumption in 2012.

Intellectual formation and awakening of the psychological conscience.

Explore through film a truth which disturbs so as to increase knowledge of the relationships between people and nature and to realise the impact of human activity on the environment and on the planet.

To increase the awareness of the direct impact of the actions which we have taken on the environment, deforestation and bush fires.

Awakening our consciences with regard to the things we buy or consume.

Release the psychological curb on prejudices surrounding industrial waste and make the community aware of the benefits for people and for clearing up the environment.

Strengthen the impact which the school has by:

- The production of a biological fertilizer which has potential for agronomy.
- The production of ecological energy to counteract air and water pollution.
- The display of our innovations and the welcome to other schools when they have their class walks.
- Community work (upkeep of the road which leads to us (1 km) laying out of the garden, flower pots, care of the buildings and surroundings.
- Our contribution to the well-being of the staff and students (meals, boarding) and our

responsibility for the care of goods that are for their use.

- Our contribution to the well-being of our local people by buying and using local produce.
- Setting up a purification system and treatment of water thanks to the emissions of ultra-violet rays.
- Setting up an association of poor women by the offer of land, fertilizer from biogas so they
- can cultivate and their produce can be bought by the establishment so that their condition of life is improved.

Concrete actions and responsibilities for the vulnerable people around us.

- “Live simply so that others may simply live” (Ghandi)
- We have taken care of 15 vulnerable people: with the collaboration of the local council
- We have identified people who are isolated & without resources: every Movement of Catholic Action, and each of our 12 classes takes care of one poor person, that is to say that they visit them in their homes each week-end and supply their basic needs (food, clothing, toiletries) they do the housework and tidy up the surroundings. They contribute to the Mutual Health Society for a few very vulnerable families
- Make the students more aware of the respect & dignity due to each one in the community (the poor, the handicapped, the orphans) in collaboration with the student section of Caritas, which the students have joined & established: contributions from the parents are managed by a team.

4.b.3 Águilas

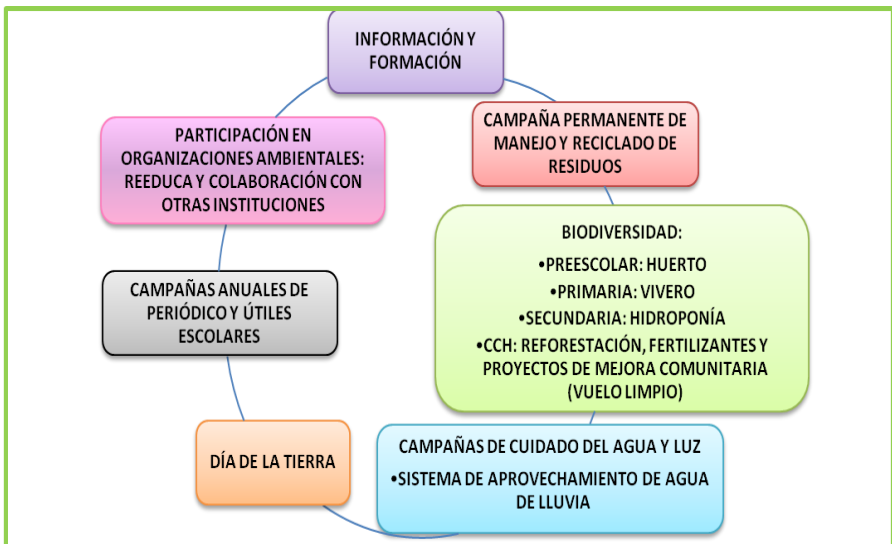
Elsa Vázquez Pérez

Projects concerning ecology and migration 2014-2015. Institute of the Assumption, Aguilas, Mexico

The Ecology Project of the Institute is more than 10 years old and at this time we continue our efforts at education and conscientization concerning ecology with all of the different groups that form the Assumption Community: students, parents, teachers and administrative personnel.

We work along two basic lines of action with the intention that during their school years, the students would be more aware of different themes about caring for the environment; some are of a more general nature and others are more specific, according to the grade or section:

Reflection and motivation Continuity and progressive growth in the following programs and activities:



Holistic Program for the Care of the Environment - Assumption 2014-2015

Grade	Project	Observations
ALL CLASSES	Sorting recyclable materials. Celebrate Earth Day Ecological fieldtrips Solidarity campaigns	Sorting into 7 categories In all of the classrooms, patios and offices there are containers that are color-coded according to classification Bags to collect the recyclable materials at home with the same color codes. The material is collected on Tuesdays and sent to the corresponding recycling centers
Preschool	Garden	Growing vegetables
1 st -3 rd Grade	Knowledge about the environment	Investigation with recycled materials
4 th Grade	Nursery	Planting seeds and taking care of the pine trees and planting trees for cutting and caring for succulents
5 th Grade	Column for the observation of predators and what they eat.	They cultivate carnivorous plants and see how they eat fruit bugs.
6 th Grade	Transversal programs	Investigation and diffusion of

	of recycling	benefits
1 st Secondary	Hydroponia	Grow lettuce
2 nd + 3 rd Secondary	Make hipertrufa pots for succulents	Coordination of Mathematics and Science
4 th – 5 th CCH	Project “Clean Flight”	Winner of the competition “Let’s take Environmental Initiatives 2014” Molino Center: Census : identification and classification of the trees in the park of Las Aguilas (species, circumference, diameter of the top of the tree, height of the tree) in order to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide captured in the park, program to benefit the neighbourhood of Aquilas
5 th CCH	Reforestation	Community of Yanhuitlan in the Sierra of Oaxaca, the trees which the alumni of the primary took care of, are planted in this zone
6 th CCH	Green Wall	Activity proposed and accomplished by the Alumni Society

Also for more than 10 years there has been the Program of School Buses in order to reduce the contamination from gases. When we started we were the pioneer school for this project and it is now part of the environmental laws of the capital DF for schools. This project requires the transportation of all of the children, from preschool to CCH, every day in the morning and at the end of the school day. The only exceptions are those alumni who live very close, not more than 700 meters away, and they must walk to school.

Finally, we have the Project for collecting rain water. This water is then used in the toilets of the school and for watering. This project has two cisterns connected to the roofs of the buildings of the school, and holds the rain water that is collected during 6 months. This reserve lasts for the whole season plus 2 months more, in dry spells, and with it we avoid using the public water system. Thus we collaborate so that someone else can have access to that water. Additionally, a part of the stored water goes back to the aquifers of our city, through injection into very deep wells, which helps in the humidification of our populated zone.

For the theme of migration, we work by networking with a project called “Las Patronas,” in the southeast of the country. We will describe our participation as follows:

“Las Patronas” is a group of 15 women who have been helping migrants, looking for a better future, going from Central America to the United States for the last 19 years. Every day they prepare about 700 packets of rice, beans and tortillas to share with the migrants who travel on the roofs of cargo train cars that go through the community of La Patrona, a municipality of Amatlan de los Reyes, Veracruz.

The Assumption School in Mexico, has been in contact with Las Patronas since 2012 when they started making the activities and work of Las Patronas known and helping to raise awareness in our community about the reality of the Central American migrants passing through Mexico, some of these actions are: volunteering in the kitchen of Las Patronas,

inviting them to give their testimony, selling their products to the schools (coffee and sauces) and reflecting in catechism classes about the prophetic work that Las Patronas are doing. This project has allowed us to collaborate in the building up of God's Kingdom, through values such as solidarity, justice, truth, compassion and courage of the Community.

Assumption Missions

The main objective of the missions, which we lead each Holy Week from the high school in Aquilas (with the participation of about 40 people: many students, parents, teachers, religious and a few alumni), is for the young people to have an encounter with the reality of our country, with people in the villages that we visit, and especially with God, who is present in them and in their history and stories.

One of the most important achievements is the sharing of faith experiences. The simple faith of the people and their sharing with the missionary groups with generosity and joy, profoundly touches the hearts of our young people and makes them reflect, question themselves and understand new forms of responsibility within God's Project. We also notice that many of them for the first time live the true significance of Christianity with its origin in the Paschal Mystery, thanks to our celebrations and catechesis. In many cases it also marks their spiritual journey with a new closeness to God.

4.b.4 Mongré

Cécile Lecocq Hubert

Notre Dame de Mongré (Villefranche sur Saône) is an environmentally responsible institution. The school at Mongré accommodates about 2,000 pupils, from nursery up to leavers, and is situated in Beaujolais, near Lyon, in wine country. Having been founded by the Jesuits, who later entrusted

it to the Assumption Fathers, the school became part of the French Assumption network in 1996. Today it is supported by the RAs and is implementing the Assumption Apostolic and Educational Project (PAEA in French)

At every stage, pupils take part in school trips to protected areas, visit local businesses involved in sustainable business, take part in panel discussions, put on exhibitions, protect the biodiversity of their school grounds, etc. At the end of each project, the pupils write articles which are initially published on the 'Green Mongré' website, and then compiled in an annual journal.

A 'LABEL' EXPRESSING THE WILL TO COMMIT TO CONSIDERATION

All these efforts are part of an **outreach programme** launched in the Rhone-Alps region. From primary school right up to graduation, all 2,000 pupils have had their consciousness raised on environmental issues. The upper school (lycée) has been involved in the project for several years and was awarded **the 'Eco-responsible Institution' label in 2008**. In February 2014 the middle school (collège) was designated as an institution involved in the process of sustainable development (E3D). This eco-label is given to primary, middle and upper schools (both technical and professional) as well as apprentice training centres (CFAs) which are taking part in the international educational initiative towards sustainability.

The initiative specifically takes into account the relationship between the environment, society, the economy, and other elements specific to sustainable development; it is presented to the school board or governing body, to be written into the educational structure and involve one of the different regional partners chosen according to criteria adapted to the needs of the school or institution. Schools and institutions which are part of the global sustainable development movement (E3D) involve the whole educational community. Obtaining the eco-label is seen as starting out on a path rather than as an achievement, because it shows willingness to commit to continuous improvement.

Encouraged by this label, for the last ten years the institution's administration has also invested in the management of buildings and resources in respect of protecting the environment (choice of heating, working closely with food producers on what is served at the school, etc.)

THE DYNAMIC OF THE PROJECT

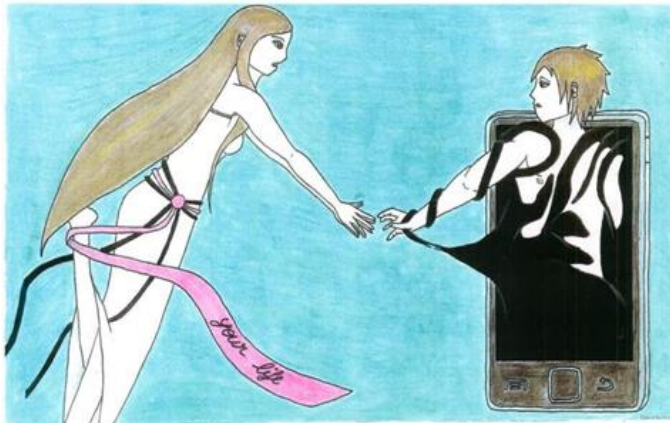
The theme of **sustainable development** first appeared in the field of National Education in France in a 1977 circular. Since 2007, more widespread attention is being paid to the problems in general.

Sustainable development is written into almost every school curriculum and across many different disciplines, particularly those that involve topics such as water or energy, so that we can expect to see it in history, geography, language classes and civic education. Numerous educational resources are produced for every level. Schools are also asked to bring these issues into specific events, such as green classes (an opportunity to look at biodiversity, or consider redistribution of resources), meetings with businesses in the context of vocational orientation, events with local partners. Several hundred national awareness campaigns have been launched, combatting climate change, encouraging fair trade, biodiversity, food, health, energy, waste sorting and recycling, etc.

Mongré aims to support its teachers in this process by suggesting they highlight and expand their teaching with meetings, conferences and outings in tandem with sustainable development professionals. Moreover, major cross-cutting projects which involve the entire institution, are thought through and organised by representatives of the wider community (eco-delegates, teachers, members of admin staff, management) brought together in a steering committee.

PUPILS PUT TOGETHER ARTICLES ABOUT ALL OUR ECO-CITIZEN ACTIVITIES, WHICH ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO GET INVOLVED.

One of the most recent activities was the planning and implementation of a 'Mobile Phone Free Day'. Posters promoting the day were created. Rhône Alpes Environmental Health (SERA) helped the eco-delegates to



L'addiction au portable l'empêche de saisir la vie.

conduct a survey among their classmates. Videos were made, based on screenplays the pupils created. All of them benefitted from mini-conferences and some got to go to the Centre Documentaire to carry out research on the harmful effect of electromagnetic waves. Local radio and newspapers interviewed the pupils. (The illustration below is one of the posters created by pupils)

STRONG POINTS IDENTIFIED

- Election of two eco-delegates from each class (CM2/last year of primary, collège and lycée)
- Multi-faceted approach to sustained development from nursery school through to school leavers
- Communications through local media
- Close working relationship with the Religious of the Assumption network, of which NDdeM is a part
- Print run of 2,000 for Green Mongré
- Green Mongré website <http://vertmongre.wordpress.com> which comprises more than 200 articles and has recorded over 140,000 visits

- Creation of an organic vegetable garden and a natural oasis in Mongré park
- International exchange programme with the community of Notsé in Togo
- Awareness campaign against food wastage
- Introduction of food from organic and/or local agricultural sources to the canteen
- Evaluation of best practice by monitoring carbon transport ‘footprint’ with the support of solar energy company HESPUL
- Car-pooling awareness campaign in every class
- Reduction of energy consumption, and recycling paper

LIVING TOGETHER IN AND OUT OF OUR SCHOOL

Hubert Reeves, scientist and director of research at CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), wrote to us on the creation of our natural oasis, saying:

“You have committed to action for biodiversity. And action is what counts! Your actions will still be evident, rooted in your Natural Oasis, when all these words have faded away. Bravo!”

Because we believe that our activity can be maximised by pooling our efforts, we have partnered with several local sustainable development activists such as the Mairie, CAVIL (an association that brings together the surrounding municipalities), regional associations etc., but also, since 2012, Hubert Reeves’ national association.

Source: Cécile Lecocq Hubert, professeur documentaliste and teacher of philosophy.

(In the French education system, a professeur documentaliste is a teacher-librarian, who works closely with the centre of documentation and information (CDI).)

4.c Advocacy and civic and political engagement

Cécile Renouard, r.a.

IMPLANTING PRINCIPLES & NETWORKING IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY.

What forms of personal and collective action will be needed to generate the institutional changes needed to achieve environmental and energy transition? In the previous section the answer is given in terms of educational commitment as a privileged way. Assumption together with laity and sisters promotes a human ecology. This includes an integral formation of the person and the community, a change of outlook, attitudes and gestures that are the expression of the search for social and ecological justice.

This educational perspective also leads naturally to the question of its social and political consequences. The following articles are testimonies, mostly from sisters from different provinces, indicating their way to meet with others, and by different types of action how they answer the injustices present in their territory.

These accounts do not provide, of course, an exhaustive list of types of civil commitments and policy options in our various provinces. Most of the actions reflect the balance of power and denounce the injustices committed by the holders of capital and political power. The two are complementary in nature. There are those who are involved within a locality, a land, by demonstrations and other civic actions: such as the commitment of the Newcastle community against the presence of a weapons factory in their town. Other examples include the actions of the community of Sister Adela against pollution caused by a mining company in Argentina, the reforestation activities promoted by associations such by

the authorities in Kenya; or support actions and training of migrants by Sisters and laity in Chaparral in the United States at the Mexican border. On the other hand, there are transversal actions, corresponding to interconnections across the planet and the interdependencies between processes. These transversal actions aim to transform unjust structures: as shown by the movement initiated by a number of American universities, churches and other coalitions of investors to divest from fossil fuels, to fight against climate change by advocating a redirection of these investments towards renewable energy, or pressure groups and associations evoked by Sister Diana, as a contribution to the transformation of local, national and international laws in defence of the rights of migrants.

These texts show the creativity with which we are all called to contribute to transformation, whether in an action or deeply rooted participation in a transnational movement. They show above all, perhaps, the passion, the inner fire that inhabits those who fight for human rights, respect for the smallest, for dignified living conditions for the poorest people today and for future generations. The last text of Sister Diana shows the intrinsic link between these actions and our consecrated life, in line with the invitation from Pope Francis to congregations in November 2014.

4.c. 1 What advocacy for what investment choices? The example of "unburnable carbon"

Pierre-Louis Choquet

Throughout the twentieth century, a particular economic activity, oil exploration, has gradually emerged as the basic model for 'globalized' development. The first extractive companies, fascinated by the vastness of the wealth of North American territories and launched in the black gold rush of the nineteenth century, were unable at the time, to design the integration of their activities so they could become part of the then local and global ecosystem flows. Since when throughout the twentieth

century, the situation has gradually changed. With mergers / acquisitions and market globalization growing, the size of oil companies has also been growing together with gigantic and very complex exploration and production projects.

ON A LOCAL CONCERN FOR ECOLOGY...

Meanwhile, ecological disasters have also begun to reach critical levels, usually in the form of oil spills (Torrey Canyon 1967, Exxon Valdez in 1989, Erika in 1998 ...) and leading citizens in westernized countries have progressively begun to understand the significant vulnerability of ecosystems to industrial pollution. To operate below these critical environmental thresholds and continue their activities, the oil companies have begun to give, in terms of environmental standards, pledges (by guaranteeing the double-hull to tankers transporting their products or improving safety around pipelines) so that their pollution is limited. These are all first realizations which lead already to a committed first systemic approach of corporate activities.

A GLOBAL CONCERN FOR CLIMATE

But since 1992 and the Rio Declaration, a new global concern, global warming, has gradually taken precedence over all others. The publications by Experts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), updated every five years, have clarified the diagnosis. Indeed, the anthropogenic global warming observed over the past century is now considered highly likely, and is largely due to greenhouse gas emissions (generated by the consumption of fossil fuels). Thus in line with previous reports, the authors of the IPCC in 2013 confirmed the need for an emissions mitigation strategy based on the concept of 'carbon budget' at the global level; this budget was estimated at a volume of emissions of about 565 billion tons of CO₂ by 2050. However, the proven reserves of fossil fuels (gas, oil, coal) if used will result in the release of 2795 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Moreover, if states, such as Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Russia, etc., hold a major share, reserves of

international oil companies still amount to 356 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

As the disastrous consequences of climate change are already beginning to be felt, an activity contributing to the conversion of carbon to 'harmless' stored in the lithosphere' as a warming agent in the atmosphere through the availability of fossil fuels to economic agents, cannot be considered ethically neutral. The overabundance of fossil fuels must be equilibrated to the carbon budget allotted to humanity so as to preserve the stability of the global climate system. Such equilibrium must be at the heart of the economic project of the oil companies and that must become the imperative in the transformation to an integrated energy transition. Of all environmental issues the one critical to human activities, and the one truly global, is that of the climatic threshold. Indeed, greenhouse gases contribute in an imperceptible way to global warming, wherever they are from.

WHAT ROLE FOR INVESTORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY?

These new geological-climatic changes have made many players in civil society actively seize on this issue in order to mobilize institutional investors (pension funds, insurance, etc.) on the need to take into account these new systemic risks linked to the extractive industries. NGOs, of course, were the spearhead of this movement; some, like the British NGO 'Carbon Tracker', chose to play the card of expertise, and have committed significant resources to support a robust case for divestment – and thus gain credibility with financial institutions. Others, like the NGO 350.org 'have capitalized on citizen mobilization to give wide publicity to the divestment movement, contributing for example, to the organization of the march for the climate that brought together 400,000 people in New York in September 2014. A growing number of universities (Stanford, Glasgow) and municipalities (San Francisco, Seattle) in Anglo-Saxon countries also pledged (although often under the impulse of their students / citizens!) in joining the divestment movement, aiming to re-allocate all of their investments held today in fossil fuels.

But the picture would not be complete if we failed to acknowledge the crucial role that religious institutions have played - and will increasingly play in the future. On this theme, the Protestant churches were precursors; the very clear stance of the Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu on the urgency to divest found a strong echo in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where many communities and churches decided to join the movement. But the Catholic Church, though more discreet, does not remain without movement. In the US, for example, many religious congregations have engaged in active advocacy against the controversial pipeline megaproject Keystone XL that was discussed in the Senate in 2014-2015. The position taken by the Bishops, and the recent formalization, beginning in 2015, by the World Catholic Movement for Climate by Cardinal Tagle and during the Pope Francis's visit to the Philippines, lets us think increasingly that this climatic plea has the aura of legitimacy as an integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel message.

CHANGING OUR CO-HABITS

Let us retrace the work achieved concerning oil companies; once criticized for the negative externalities associated more or less with their peripheral activities, they are now challenged on the extraction of fossil resources which is their reason for being. By meeting this new limit, it seems that the oil industry and, indirectly our way of carbon mediated development, has found the very limit of what can be used. This shows us how very fragile our world, far from being infinite, is, it is closing down before our eyes; it make us realise how very closely linked to our planet we are.

Take note of the fragility of ecosystems, the challenge of the energy transition: these two imperatives put the oil companies (and, in their wake, all economic and political organizations) to the need for a profound institutional transformation. Yet to deconstruct the collective belief in a universe infinitely available to us cannot be done in isolation; it is not only our habits that need to be changed but our co- habits - which shows the

importance for our institutions to mobilize citizens, associations, academics, churches, together for effective advocacy. For the image of a more sober and frugal world to become desirable, and must be widely shared! The possibility that new ways can take shape tomorrow at the heart of creation groaning pains of childbirth (Rom 8:22), relaying the unfailing promise of the Covenant, is based on an effort of conversion and an education which we need to start on today.

4. c.2 Advocacy – challenging the arms trade

Jill Gracie, r.a. y Jessica Gatty, r.a.

War is not good for the environment, nor the humans involved; there is the violence of ecological destruction, and war also makes a major contribution to climate change. War benefits the arms trade which fuels war and continuously magnifies its destructive power. BAE Systems is one of the world's largest arms manufacturers employing 88,000 at its height. It was present in Newcastle (UK) for 165 years, till 2013. It made, amongst other things, tanks, combat vehicles, combat aircraft, radar, and a range of electronic devices; it exported mainly to Australia, India, USA and, notoriously, Saudi Arabia, not known for its good record in human rights, as well as providing the UK with much of its military procurement needs. It trained young people and gave employment.

BAE Systems was investigated by the UK Serious Fraud office over huge 'sweeteners' given to individuals over the Saudi Arabian deals. In other words, there were allegations of bribery and corruption. In 2010 there was an agreement with the SFO and they were virtually let off the hook. The UK government has consistently shown political will in protecting such UK companies from prosecutions of bribery. There is a 'revolving door' between politicians and such companies. Governments, regardless of whether they are left or right, are committed to heavy spending, unquantifiable subsidies to such companies; they actively promote and support arms sales.

A small Assumption community arrived in Newcastle in 1993. Soon Sr. Jill, supported by another Sister when possible, would regularly join a small group of demonstrators at the gates of the huge factory on the banks of the River Tyne in the early morning. As workers arrived for the day's work they would be leafleted. The leaflets would aim to get the workers to lobby for a diversification, a complete change from producing the instruments of death to the instruments of life, using their skills to work on clean energy. 'The future is not orange, it's not blood red, the future is green'. 'Lobby the bosses, the foreman, your MP, protect your jobs, follow the green light. Diversify!' 'Don't be has-beens, get on the band wagon. Engineer for peace!' hands would grow cold in the early morning, the occasional car would hoot in agreement, workers would often take the leaflets as we stood under the tank guarding the entrance to the Works. BAE left Newcastle in 2013; I don't suppose it was because of us.

We continue to be involved in campaigning against the arms trade (CAAT) in whatever way possible. We petition against the use of such sites as St Pauls, the National Gallery, and Church House, for Arms Fairs. This Christmas a reflection day will include a crib with the Baby Jesus surrounded by arms and people will be asked to ponder where they are in their process of remembering the world wars. We continue to go ahead challenging this industry and other sisters may gradually begin to join in. But the arms trade continues to flourish. Recently there has been much time given to remembrance of the two World Wars. In England there was a huge installation of blood red poppies outside the Tower of London that caught the public imagination, people came for miles to see it. There were 888,246 poppies, one each for the 'fallen' (UK and Commonwealth military casualties) in the first World War. At one moment inside the Tower there was a promotional dinner costing £3,000 a table for executives and dealers in guess what – the arms trade!

Quoting the leaflets that were handed out in those early mornings:

Where have all the flowers gone? Sweetly growing.

Where have all the crop fields gone? Poisoned away.

When will we ever learn? When will we ever learn?

You do your job. You do it well but what happens afterwards?

What the hell

But when they fire you, don't expire,

Something is caught in the crossfire. It is your children...

We need to continue to say 'NO' to the arms trade, dealing in death and environmental destruction. We will have only the 'poor and powerless means of Jesus Christ' against the power of huge lobbying groups (there are for instance, 15,000 professional lobbyists now operating in Brussels for the EU, representing mainly big transnationals, 'business interests', such as Monsanto, big oil, mining, carbon trading and the arms industry.) The arms trade is thought to be responsible for about 40% of corruption in the world but it has government support politically and financially. BAE has also been found to use espionage against activist groups, 'agents provocateurs' and infiltration in groups such as Campaign Against the Arms Trade. It will take courage! Perhaps taking small actions in a locality is as good a way as any.

4.c.3 Advocacy in Argentina: Testimony of Sr. Adela

Adela Helguera, r. a.

1 - Which of the following rights are not respected in your province?

Access to water, sanitation, a clean environment, health and safety at work, the right to information and prior consent to projects by

multinational companies that have an impact on the province (e.g. displacement, destruction of ecosystems), etc.

In my province there was suspension of the distribution of running water last summer.

- The nearby river is permanently contaminated
- We suffer from lack of medicines and of medical equipment in the local Hospital.
- People who are beneficiaries of PAMI (Public Health Insurance in Argentina), the health system of retirees, also suffer frequent postponement of the dates set to give a medical appointment or to schedule surgery.

2 - Which of these rights are not respected in your country?

- In Argentina, the exploitation of open pit mines does not respect the need to save water in desert regions such as La Rioja, and pollutes rivers from all regions.
- The proliferation of dams causes flooding of land and displacement of populations that are often the poorest.
- The privatization of seeds to farmers steals the ancestral ability to select their grain (Monsanto owns the GM seed).
- A toxic-agro technique pollutes the land and water. For example, forcing farmers to use a product known as "Roundup Resistant" to sow soybeans, or spread this toxic product via airplanes on tobacco plantations.
- The government plans to use fracking to extract gas and oil in the territory of "Vaca Muerta." This land is occupied by the "Mapuche", native to this area; they will be moved elsewhere.
- In Salta, in the northwest of the country, the deforestation of forest is going ahead regardless of the resistance of the inhabitants.

A - Have you ever participated in a civic or political protest movement on these issues?

In La Rioja I participated in the movement against the mining operations of the Famatina. It is a popular movement that managed to stop two

international companies from mining at El Famatina. The local government encouraged the movement to the cry El Famatina *NO SE TOCA!* (Do not touch!). Two other Sisters continued participation after me, blocking the access road to the mine in 2014 once a week.

B- Have you been able to follow these issues in one way or another? Was there a particular method or way that helped you?

Yes, through the following links:

www.biodiversidadla.org/activismo@infogreenpeace.org.ar

kate@walkfree.org

mail@change.org

news@grain.org

sitiobiodla@gmail.com

C - What are the challenges to educate the Sisters and to participate in such actions?

My sisters are already sensitized. One of them takes part in the pit mine action open to La Rioja. Others respond by adhering to previous campaigns that are shown in the above links. We all seek to build with our neighbours links of mutual solidarity and make our homes places to exchange and listen.

D - How can we engage as congregation against climate change?

The people's summit meeting from 1 to 12 December 2014 in Lima requested a change of the system and not the climate ("*cambio de sistema y no del clima*"). We are committed in our congregation for systemic change when sharing our experiences in our international and South American Assemblies.

4. c.4 Ecology Issues in Kenya and Tanzania : the testimony of Sr Cecilia

INTRODUCTION:

Since October 2010 the people of Kenya have a new constitution. It took 20 years to achieve it. We demanded a new constitution because the previous one had been made by the colonial government before Independence in 1963. Though the presidents were elected by the people, they used the constitution to intimidate their people till the people of Kenya felt 'enough is enough'!

The main problem with the constitution was that it gave the president too much power: in fact he was above the law. The presidents gave powerful positions to the people of their own tribes and not out of merit. So our big issue until now is tribalism. Tribalism gave birth to corruption and insecurity among others. It is not easy to heal these deep-rooted vices. Given this kind of leadership we have tribes and places which are marginalized and so underdeveloped. We have a region where the first caesarian section was performed for the first time last year 2014! This means that many woman and children have died during delivery.

With the new constitution there is what we call 'Devolution': power is devolved to the grass-roots. This gives hope but it will take time. For the ordinary citizen to get services means the government has to employ more people and that needs more money.

The Church and civil society have tried for decades to defend the marginalized and some have lost their lives (e.g. Fr. Kaiser, the Mill Hill priest who was murdered in 2003). The Association of the Sisterhoods of Kenya- Justice and Peace Commission (AOSK –JPC) of which I am a member has been in the fore-front to fight for the voiceless.

ECOLOGY:

Each year the Association has celebrated Environmental Day by planting more than 3 million trees through women's groups and schools. In Tanzania one cannot fell a tree without Government permission. In our

schools there is a lot of emphasis on planting trees with each student being responsible for one.

Locally in Kenya we have been trying to fight 'noise-pollution'. Poverty has led many Kenyans to start their own Christian sects. Though they will not say so openly many of these churches are avenues for getting rich. People who are hungry for God and their basic needs join these sects only to be frustrated.

One of the characteristics of these sects is preaching and singing using loud instruments throughout the night from Friday to Sunday inclusive. We have visited some of these churches with local government leaders to complain and it is bearing some fruit though gradually. The problem is that the local leaders do not reside in these poor areas so they are not affected and one has to drag them to do something. It is also hard to fight against noise pollution as the majority of our people seem to enjoy it so they don't understand why we complain. Silence scares people!

Last year I attended a number of workshops organized by AOSK-JPC. People were trained on:

- Paralegal issues
- Child-rights
- Devolution
- Planting of trees in Nairobi
- Forum on Social Transformation (organized by the Episcopal Conference of Kenya)

I also participated in training the Catholic Women's Association (CWA) on Paralegal and Devolution. There is hope of a change of attitude if people are made aware of their responsibility in building their country. It has not been easy to involve other Sisters because it means creating time outside our busy schedules. One has to have a passion for JPIC-S to get time. The journey is long but it has started.

4. c.5 Responding to Concerns About Ecology and Migration - Our Way of Loving our Times

In his letter for the Year of Consecrated Life 2015, Pope Francis says he counts on us, religious, *to wake up the world* since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. *A religious must never abandon prophecy* (29 November 2013).

In the first part of this paper I would like to share our way of living out the orientations that were given to us concerning ecology and migration. They are limited to a specific place (Chaparral, New Mexico) and time (2007 – the present). In other places and times migration could be more linked to environmental destruction, but today, here on the US/Mexican Border it is largely due to violence, drug cartels, corrupt security forces, impunity, extortion, kidnappings... For example, it is reported that 90% of the women and children who had crossed the border in the summer of 2014 and were being held in a detention center in Artesia, NM “passed” the credible fear interview. That is, these asylum seekers were afraid for their lives. This is very different from the immigrants whom we met in Chaparral 15 years ago who had mostly come for economic reasons and to give more educational opportunities to their children.

How we work with immigrants

One of the basic ways that we work with Immigrants is through personal accompaniment of persons and families in the concrete situation in which they find themselves. It takes the form of spiritual accompaniment (prayer, comfort, direction, visiting the sick) or material accompaniment (resource information, helping gain access to the resources, etc.). Over the years the immigrants (with or without documents) know that they can trust us to do what we can to find solutions with them to their problems.

Prison ministry: Sisters and lay leaders work to bring the Good News to the prisoners or detainees above all by sharing their own faith experience. All the ministers feel the missionary call to bring the hope, healing and joy found in God’s Word and Sacraments. (Pope Francis’ understanding of the New Evangelization in his recent Apostolic Exhortation) The lay ministers

invest time in their own faith formation either with Sr. Chabela (Prison) or Sr. Tere (Detention Center). The prison ministers all express also how they are evangelized by the many ways that the prisoners, detainees live Gospel values in the detention facilities. Ex: helping the recently arrived to find their way around, get what they need (blankets etc.) befriending and consoling. The overwhelming majority of these men and women are immigrants whose only “crime” is coming into the country without authorization i.e. being undocumented.

I think that we can see these “facilities” as among the “alternative spaces” which Pope Francis evokes in his letter on Consecrated Life: *So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternative spaces” where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences and love of one another can thrive.*

Faith formation: Formation of Base Christian Community leaders who in turn help their neighbors develop an understanding of God’s Word and the social consequences of the Gospel in their small neighborhood community. (All immigrants)

We advocate for the immigrant population and become involved in community groups who work for empowerment (*Vecinos Unidos, Mujeres de Yucca, Otero Democratic Party meetings*) and getting people who respect the immigrant population and are willing to work towards favorable legislation into positions within the government, at all levels, county, state and national.

Networking within the Chaparral community (making needs known, sharing resource information) as well as with NGOs and organizations outside of Chaparral : DMRS (diocesan migration services), Southern Border Coalition*, ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), an organization which documents abuses or human rights violations in the immigrant population so that they can be denounced and appropriate action taken at a State or National level; Catholic Charities; CAFÉ (An interfaith advocacy group), Colquitt community meetings, work with Doña Ana Health and Human Services which provides information in many areas but especially in the area of health services, Medicaid, health insurance.

The AMAs' (Assumption Mission Associates) work with Hispanic youth gives them a positive experience with youth from other parts of the United States -- "Anglo youth." They tutor as well as mentor youth at all levels: elementary, high school, Doña Ana Community College and New Mexico State University. They work with youth groups at the parish and in our own center, Casa Maria Eugenia. They are also involved with youth in other parish ministries...confirmation class, choir. Through these contacts the young people can experience respect, appreciation and encouragement from other young people. Our current AMA [2014-15], Kevin, spends a lot of "informal" fun time with the young people as well as teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) in Chaparral Middle School. The work of the AMAs is made possible and funded mainly by the Provincial program of AMA.

The second part of this reflection is about how migration got to be a priority in US Religious Congregations as well as in ours. And what it means for our lives and understanding of vows. The paths are similar.

In an address to Major Superiors, Brother Philip Pintom CFC, had an interesting way of asking some questions that flow from gazing with Christ at what is happening in our world today:

"What do I notice happening in our world today that is changing the way I live my life? That is changing the way I think about vows and the accents that we now give to our vows? What do my brothers and sisters say to me that make me question the beliefs by which I have lived in the past? What is energizing me and giving me hope in the midst of all the negativity around me? How am I naming the way I love, the meanings I make, and my and the world's needs?"

"Naming the way I love". That expression caught my attention. For me it a description of our vowed life, our way of loving. We might ask ourselves how our vows are expressing themselves in relation to the issues of migration and ecology. How do our vows "inform" and "form" our response to these questions? Once I heard that there are as many ways of interpreting the vows as there are theologians. But I think all would agree that there is definitely a shift in emphasis today.... obedience is less about

“obeying the superior” and more about discerning God’s project for humanity and our planet earth; chastity less about how we live our sexuality and more about building loving relationships with people and all of creation; poverty less about “permissions” and “ownership questions” and more about simplicity of lifestyle and combating consumerism where a “more is better” mentality is depleting our natural resources. In general I think that the concrete consequences of our vowed commitment in the social order are receiving more attention. Perhaps Marie Eugenie added a fourth vow, To Extend the Kingdom of God, to the other three vows precisely because she felt this societal understanding of vows was missing in 19th century.

Our Chapter document of Ecology and Migration traces the Assumption prophetic response to the large paradigm shifts that are happening today. It shows us the value of our internationality which can give witness in a world where globalization tends either to the exclusion of those who are different or to the promotion of a monoculture that simply eliminates all differences, flattening the variety and beauty of the real world.

Pope Francis’ expectations from the Year of Grace for Consecrated Life also intersect with our Chapter documents. He says: Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless; they will become “experts in communion”; they will go out to the existential peripheries; and the laity who share the same “charismatic grace” as a particular religious congregation (Friends of the Assumption) would become more aware of the gift they have received and respond together to the prompting of the Spirit in society today.

I’ll end this reflection on a note of hope. It’s the third aim for the Year of Consecrated Life: “To embrace the future with hope”. We need to inspire hope. Focusing our attention can help. How? If our brains, as neuroscience now suggests, take whatever we focus on as an invitation to make it happen, then the images and visions we live with matter a great deal. So we need to actively engage our imaginations in shaping visions of the future. Nothing we do is insignificant. Even a very small conscious choice of courage or of conscience can contribute to the transformation of the whole.

Save water. See God's image in the face of the immigrant. It might be, for instance, the decision to put energy into that which seems most authentic to us, and withdraw energy and involvement from that which doesn't. This kind of intentionality is what Joanna Macy calls active hope. It is both creative and prophetic. In this difficult, transitional time, the future is in need of our imagination and our hopefulness. In the words of the French poet Rostand: "It is at night that it is important to believe in the light; one must force the dawn to be borne by believing in it."

Transformation of society through Gospel values. Halting the exclusion of the poor immigrant; halting the destruction of the environment. Sounds overwhelming and it is! But as a young sister answered me when I teasingly said after a long conversation about transformation of society, "Do you think that we can solve all the problems of the world?" "No, she answered with much conviction, but we can try!!"

Let's embrace the future as Pope Francis urges: This hope is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (cf. 2 Tim 1:2), the One for whom "nothing is impossible" (Lk 1:37). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us.

All quotations of Pope Francis have been taken from his Letter for the Year of Consecrated Life. 21 November 2014, Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

4.c.6 Ways Forward

We can take some of the issues cited by Sister Diana and extract consequences for our civil actions:

- How do ecological issues around me / us and in the world today change my / our way of life?

- How do they modify my / our way of reflecting on the vows and the wishes and actions that arise from these vows?
- What gives me / us energy and hope in the heart of negativity, and difficulties surrounding me?
- How can I (can we) give a name to my / our way of loving the world and meet the needs of the world?
- To what specific civic actions am I (are we) called to commit myself? locally? in networks with others? What are the skills and beliefs that I can (we can) share with others and receive from others in the service of social and ecological justice?

4.d Lifestyles

At the end of this study towards an Eco-Assumption, we understand that a reflection so urgent and necessary around the care of the planet, should lead us to very specific commitments. That each and every one of us assumes an "emphatic and positive action, even in her small radius of action." Through the length and width of the world, millions of initiatives are taken to make our common home more livable, and to leave a legacy and a future to those who will come.

This section shows us simple - and bold - experiences of persons and communities that have made this loving communion and coexistence with all creation a life project. From the USA, France and Ecuador we get these testimonies which tell us "another alternative way" of life is possible, that this requires conviction, decisiveness and perseverance. And that this way of acting affects others and generates personal choices that slowly descend to smaller and more specific details of our daily lives. Let us also allow ourselves to be affected and to look for these big-small initiatives that make a difference!

4.d.1 Experiments in alternative lifestyles

Anne Catherine Soley, r.a.

“Following Jesus Christ in the 21st century involves the call to ecological conversion.”³³⁵

The *lever of action* that I would suggest is authentic “conversion to the earth,”³³⁶ grounded in our charism of education and Assumption spirituality. As educators, we need to find ways to guide our Sisters and lay friends into an understanding of not only the material dimensions of this ecological crisis, but also the theological, spiritual and social justice implications. As daughters of Saint Marie Eugenie, we have a particular understanding of the transformative power of education and prayer. It will be in contemplating what science is telling us about the nature of our universe, its history and current reality, and opening ourselves to how that affects our relationship to self, to other and to God; that will lead us, through love, to action.

We have reached a moment of crisis in our evolutionary history. The very life of our planet is threatened and the time to act is now! Unlike the earlier days of the environmental movement, we can no longer simply focus on specific issues, such as saving the rainforest. While saving the rainforest is essential to the survival of the planet, today we are called to understand the role of the rainforest within the larger web of life. We have to understand that there are both material and spiritual causes and effects at work. It is complex; as complex as life itself. The level of conversion demanded by the magnitude of the ecological crisis is deep and broad. It involves opening ourselves to the wonder of ALL of creation and to AWE of the Holy Mystery that sustains it. It calls us to rethink our understanding of ourselves, how we came to be, our place in the world we inhabit; to ask again who we are in relationship to each other, to the Earth, and to God.

Science is hinting at an almost unimaginable vastness, reaching beyond our galaxy and stretching between subatomic particles. Cosmic history is

³³⁵ Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*.

³³⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 461.

measured in billions of years; distances, in light years. We find ourselves new kids on the block, confined to a small piece of the visible universe. Our concept of life can no longer be confined to humans, animals and plants – the earth herself is alive!³³⁷ Physics speaks of the yearning for relationship among particles. The human being is unique, but not above or separate from the rest of creation. “We are the universe, conscious of itself.”³³⁸ Made in the image of God, we reveal one facet of a limitless Creator. Holy Mystery reveals itself as it will, in all of creation.

“At the most basic level...the ecological crisis requires us to rethink our idea of God and God’s relation to the world in order to direct our action aright in harmony with divine care.”³³⁹

Our approach must be holistic, as diverse and inclusive as our subject. Much has already been written about the causes, extent and effects of this ecological crisis. Likewise, there is a growing body of work on the relationship of science and theology, integrating recent scientific discoveries into our understanding of God and creation. Following 3.2a in our general chapter documents, we can selectively use these materials to form a basis of study. We must also encourage a range of experiences that can engage our sisters first hand with the splendor of the natural world, where and how they are able. Be it encountering the fragile beauty of Nature or delving into recent discoveries in astrophysics, such experiences can lead to a sense of awe, of wonder, and to what Elizabeth Johnson calls “a religious sense of the loving power that quickens it.”³⁴⁰

Taking the fruits of these experiences to contemplation will in turn lead to deeper and deeper understanding of the sacredness of ALL that surrounds us and our intimate connection to it. From this will spring the desire to protect and preserve not only our own kind, but ALL of Creation. Our life style choices and our projects will then respect, reflect and support a

³³⁷ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 32.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 40.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 63

growing understanding “...that the Body of Christ, rather than simply being a group of like-minded human beings, includes all of life.”³⁴¹

“What is crucial is that cultivating and caring for creation are based on the conversion implied in the model of kinship, a conversion in which human beings come to see themselves as interrelated in a community of life with other creatures, a community in which each creature has its own unique value before God.”³⁴²

Within the environmental movement there is a great need for increased and bolder spiritual leadership; for religious voices of all persuasions to enter more fully into the debate. The language, values, traditions and stories of the world’s religions offer a prophetic dimension to the discussion.

Our religious life has within it the same potential.

“A fundamental faith in the power of the prophetic imagination for effecting positive planetary transformation...”³⁴³

In her book Green Sisters, Sarah McFarland Taylor writes: “To re-inhabit, a phrase used by bio-regionalists and environmental philosophers, to signify a process of relearning how to live in a place.” It has to do with “staying where you are, repairing the damage and devising new ways of being.” It speaks both of how to *green* one’s own reality and the choice of religious women to remain within a patriarchal Church. It speaks of reexamining our religious practices, giving new forms to old traditions that still carry meaning. It also speaks of an expanded, ecological understanding of our vows. Poverty would also be concerned with reduced consumption, simple living, and voluntary simplicity; with “prudently using and preserving earth’s resources.” Chastity, with a “desire to relate to all life as sacred, freeing one to love all beings in the life community.” Obedience, with “listening to the needs of all life.”³⁴⁴ Our vows, freely taken, bring us in a

³⁴¹ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement* 62.

³⁴² Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*.

³⁴³ Sarah McFarland Taylor, “Green Sisters”, 61.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

radical way, into communion with God and with each other; in these, our times, we are being called to expand that communion to include ALL.

***“Contemplation
is way of seeing that leads to communion”³⁴⁵***

As contemplatives, we have a much needed and especially apt perspective. Our sensibilities are formed by time spent looking deeply and listening intently. In quieting our own thoughts and inner voices, we allow the silence to open within us. In turning that contemplative gaze to creation, we recognize the hand of the Creator. Breathing in the breath of God, a God *that* close, we find God everywhere and in all things. Expanding that awareness of presence, into recognition of the sacredness of ALL, is the work of prayer.

It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray. Vivifying, sustaining, embracing, enabling the new; drawing us forward into a new future is the work of the Holy Spirit. Denis Edwards sees the Spirit as “the power of God at work in evolutionary emergence...companioning creation in its groaning...the unspeakable closeness of God in creation.”³⁴⁶

“...Prophecy converted to the earth sees that making a preferential option for the poor includes other species and the ravaged natural world itself. Healing and redeeming this world, this intrinsically valuable matrix of our origin, growth and fulfillment, has the character of a moral imperative.”³⁴⁷

Just what happens in the garden, how the garden “heals and redeems this world”, is difficult to articulate, but undisputable. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus likens the Spirit to the wind, which blows where it chooses, and is known by its effect. Writing about the ecological work of North American women religious, Sarah McFarland Taylor found that as the Sisters kept coming back to talk of gardening, of composting – she began to see how the language of gardening helps to articulate the Sisters’ philosophy and world view: “how practicing sustainability has become a rich medium for contemplation, communion and a daily creation-centered

³⁴⁵ Elizabeth Johnson, “Women, Earth, And Creator Spirit”, 63.

³⁴⁶ Denis Edwards, *Ecology At The Heart of Faith*

³⁴⁷ Elizabeth Johnson, *ibid* 64

practice.”³⁴⁸ Her research revealed “dynamic correspondences between the spiritual and biophysical landscapes which green Sisters seek to harmonize.”³⁴⁹

When I joined the Worcester community in 2009, I met Fr. Aidan Furlong, A.A. We share both a love of gardening and an awareness of the sacredness of the place and of the work. What follows is the fruit of a recent conversation we had, trying to speak to this elusive truth of being in the garden.

Everything is different: different than in the city or on the bus or in the church. There is a deep difference when I am in the garden; especially when I am alone. No machinery, no T.V., no traffic. The garden is silent; yet, it isn't. Insects, rain, wind enhance but do not break the silence. In the garden, I find solitude; and yet, I am not alone. In the garden I experience the absence of ugliness, and become aware of incredible beauty through encounter – even with what I might not have readily recognized as beautiful. The body, often restless, uncomfortable; in the garden, the body feels wonderful, blood pulsing in the fingers. In touching the sacredness of the soil, I touch a deep peace.

Through time in the garden, I experience the closeness of God. Most of the time, it is something known by its effects. Nevertheless, there are precious moments of awareness, startling in their intensity: light filtering down through a canopy of pole bean leaves or the blaze of orange on a Brazilian Eggplant! All of these encounters inspire awe and wonder, evidencing a life force greater than ourselves. God's presence “flash[ing] out from the simplest natural phenomena.”³⁵⁰ It is an experience of God's providence, of God's gratuitousness. Nothing is earned, all is gift. As with God's love, there is abundance, always enough. It is simply a matter of distribution.

³⁴⁸ Sarah McFarland Taylor, *ibid*

³⁴⁹ *ibid*

³⁵⁰ Elizabeth Johnson, *ibid*, 63

In that living Silence, I am in the transcendent presence of God. Fleeing sheer noise that so often surrounds me, I sometimes sit in my plot, on my chair; no words with God. God speaks in the silence.

Not having some contact with the earth is actually depriving oneself – no mud, no rain, no manure – it is becoming less than human. It is depriving oneself of our human roots; of our relationship, of our community with each other, the plants and the animals.³⁵¹

“In the face of Mystery words are smothered, images fail, and reference points expire. What befits us is silence, reverence, adoration, and contemplation. These are the stances appropriate to Mystery.”³⁵²

As an advisory body, we can offer broad models of action and examples of works already undertaken. We can also encourage the Provinces to look at their own realities, and base specific actions in the life they are living as individuals and as sisters in community, and within their broader communities.

“Participating in the compassion of God, the prophetic community enters into solidarity with the suffering creation and exercises responsibility for a new project of eco-justice.”³⁵³

SEMILLAS DE VIDA

A Project of the U.S. Province, the Worcester Community and our lay friends Located at Assumption Center, 16 Vineyard St., Worcester, MA, U.S.A.

Begun by an AMA and a few of her ESL students, our community garden has grown over the past six years. The original two, 4' x 8' raised beds have become eight. As a community, we share the work and the harvest. The children maintain the compost, collecting food scraps from the Center and our neighbors, as well as refuse from the garden. They facilitate the entire process, from turning the pile to distributing the finished product.

³⁵¹ I have transformed our dialogue into a monologue.

³⁵² Leonardo Boff, *Christianity in a Nutshell*, 7

³⁵³ Elizabeth Johnson, *ibid*, 64

They learn to appreciate the roles of even the humblest, and often the least attractive, creatures. This also accomplishes another important part of our work, enriching the depleted soil and thus contributing to healing the Earth.

We grow a variety of vegetables: Peas, lettuce, leeks, spinach, carrots, cabbage, different greens & herbs, root crops & flowers. We always try to grow something new to us, like Brazilian Eggplant or peanuts; and vegetables specific to the cultures of our workers, such as tomatillos and habanera peppers. We have strawberries, blueberries (a gift from my final profession), and two apple trees, planted by the children from seed. In all of our efforts, we try to model respect for all the abundant and diverse life in the garden.

Located in an urban setting, the garden has become both a classroom and a melting pot. Workers from diverse cultures, classes and ages rub elbows and get their hands in the dirt. Older children explain to younger the workings of the compost; adults pass on how to carefully drop seeds into neatly drawn furrows, how to gently pack the earth around a seedling. We have welcomed gardeners from Mexico, El Salvador, the Philippines, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Fiji, as well as different areas of the U.S.A.; recent immigrants and long-time residents. We work with people from the more affluent West Side of Worcester to the working class, immigrant neighborhoods Main South. Working side by side, gardeners are able to bridge differences as they discover their common love of the garden.

Last year we expanded our efforts to begin a Butterfly Garden. This is developing into an area devoted to providing food and habitat for pollinators, such as butterflies and bees. Here again we accomplish the twin goals of healing the earth and passing on an appreciation for the intrinsic value of every creature.

The celebration that ties all this together is the annual Garden Blessing, held in October. Circling round the garden, in a combination of English and Spanish, we pray and sing our thanksgiving to the Earth and to the Creator Spirit who sustains and breathes life into us all. The children plant garlic, which will lie dormant in the earth until spring, as a sign both of our faith

in an unseen God and of our hope for growth in the next year. Led by Fr. Aidan, we all help cover the beds with a warm blanket of straw, inviting our garden to take a well-deserved rest. Joined by Sisters and friends, we all share a meal prepared by and reflective of our garden community.

CONVERSION. CONTEMPLATION. COMMUNION. ACTION.

Marie Eugénie loved her times and found ways to respond to the reality in which she lived. Guided by her broad vision, we must find ways to respond to what is clearly the most pressing and pervasive issue of our day, this ecological crisis. Our times are calling us to listen deeply to and engage in a radical way with her words:

¡The Earth is a place for the Glory of God!

Bibliography and Further Reading:

- Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books 1988.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Christianity in a Nutshell*. New York: Orbis Books 2013.
- *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. New York: Orbis Books 1997.
- Cannato, Judy. *Radical Amazement*. Indiana: Sorin Books 2006.
- Edwards, Denis. *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*. New York: Orbis Books 2006.
- Johnson, Elizabeth. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*. New York: Paulist Press 1993.
- *Johnson, Elizabeth. Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. 2007.
- *Johnson, Elizabeth. Ask the Beasts*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.
- Taylor, Sarah McFarland. *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2007.
- Swimme, Brian. *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos: Humanity and the New Story*. New York: Orbis 1996.

4.d.2 ‘Being responsible for our waste’

Sandra López

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CENTRE FOR ENCOUNTER WITH NATURE, GARUPAMBA, ECUADOR

Language is the clearest and most direct expression of our view of the world; it reflects our deepest thoughts, our identity, our dreams and aspirations, our prejudices and our frustrations.

Our language reflects the separation we have set up between ourselves and nature. For hundreds of years human beings have placed nature in the third person, and not only do we talk about it in the third person, but we also say, ‘This must be done.’ or ‘Something different must be done.’ We avoid involvement: ‘The cup fell on the floor,’ we say, instead of, ‘I dropped the cup on the floor.’ In this way words reflect our lack of responsibility as a species for everything that is occurring on our planet: ‘The earth is heating up,’ ‘Climate change is getting faster,’ ‘Water is running out,’ all in the third person.

Just as we were wondering what we could do to speed up the changes we were trying to bring about, realising that the situation of our planet cannot wait, we met Alan Bolt, from the Centre for Reconciliation with Nature in Nicaragua.

Alan’s experience encouraged us to go a step further in what we had been doing so far as an organisation. We had started in 1994, and then officially in 1996 with a formal programme, but nevertheless we continued to feel that our work was not having a big enough impact, and we were starting to feel powerless and frustrated. Then Alan suggested that we take on the challenge of building a Centre in Ecuador like the one in Nicaragua. In the words of the Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana, the Centre would be a place for creating new networks of conversations whose content would help us to establish relationships of confidence, affection, solidarity, responsibility, and of course make a new start in our relationship with

nature, no longer from outside but as part of it, to reconnect, re-create ourselves, renew ourselves, to make the 'butterfly effect' a reality.³⁵⁴

We started to look for a site to build the Centre. The aim seemed very distant, but we had the decisiveness, resolve and company of Alan in our whole process. The Centre, he said, is not a geographical place. The Centre is in you, in your everyday lives, in your words, your habits; that's where we have to start.

Ten years on from starting the work, we shall try to put into words what this decision has meant for us. We started with a therapy group. We had weekly meetings in which we all learned emotional memory massage, an ancestral method used by the Nahuatl people that we have adopted and integrated into our activities as a mechanism for changing the habits produced as the results of violence and to reconnect with the planet and its elements. As part of the process we jointly planted a tree of the genus *polilephys*, which is native to the Andean uplands, to watch it grow as the Centre grew in us. While we trained as social therapists, we took the practical steps to get a space that could support all the work and house other people who wanted to become part of the process.

By the year 2008 we were able to open the Centre for Encounter with Nature and Social Therapy, in a part of the Andean uplands called Garupamba, 'the distant pampa', a building of adobe, wood and tiles that provides accommodation for people in the mountains, on a site in the Western Andes with a marvellous view, from which one can see extraordinarily beautiful sunsets. They are overwhelming, and force us into silence and contemplation, they force us to feel part of nature and then accept and take into our own hands responsibility for each of our actions.

The Centre invites us to look at ourselves and to look, beginning with those facts that are part of our physiology but which we generally don't think about. At the Centre everyone 'is responsible for his or her waste':

³⁵⁴From the image used to illustrate chaos theory: 'A butterfly flapping its wings in China can cause a hurricane on the other side of the world.'

this phrase sums up the ideal of life we are creating and to which we commit ourselves every day.

Our food and its physiological processing in our bodies is a fact that is completely in our hands. It depends on no-one but each one of us, and that is why at CEN, to help people to recover an awareness of these facts, our menu consists of foods connected with our need for natural healing, without artificial colours or preservatives that alter our chemical processes, without saturated fats that place undue stress on our livers and prevent us from freeing ourselves from the rage and pain produced by violence. We encourage a healthy diet, vegetarian, light and sensitive to our planet. The areas for food preparation at CEN are not a place for exploiting or overworking women; there all of us do everything, because food is the basis of life and is the responsibility of men as well as women. In the CEN kitchen we laugh, learn, cry, and invent; we see the mountains, the clouds and the sunsets. This is where the new network of conversations starts up, where the new paradigm comes to life.

The Centre invites us to concentrate on what we are doing, to observe the workings of the forest and remember that we are part of a network and that everything is connected. We are part of a system, a network that cannot be healthy if its parts are victims of violence, a network that cannot be strong if its components are weak (through poverty, exclusion, violence or sexual abuse). We need to remember that we are bio-electric creatures: our physiology and chemistry are the basis of our functions, and of our energy and our light too. Everything, absolutely everything, is connected.

The Centre is a space for observing the sun, the moon, the sunrise, the sunset, the forest, the mist, the tiny orchids, the deer, the rabbits, the planets and the Milky Way. We learn and feel the movement of the planet and are now certain that we are not the 'navel of the world', and that the human species is one more species.

The areas for the elimination of our waste are clean and their wide windows allow us to look at the forest in its splendour, at the moon and the stars. The system of dry latrines is ideal for getting us to take back our

responsibility for our acts. In the town, in the ordinary sewerage systems, we just press a lever and the water does the rest; we don't have to do anything else and we don't ask questions about the process. In contrast, the system of dry latrines is a permanent reminder that 'No-one else can be responsible for our waste,' and so this act becomes completely conscious from beginning to end. Using the latrines, care in separating liquids and solids, cleaning the area, using soil for fertiliser and then taking the containers to the central compost heap, where with the help of the earthworms (extremely generous creatures), this waste is transformed into fertiliser for our vegetable garden, the permaculture project, and the cycle starts again.

Wind energy, solar energy, a low-energy stove, care for the uplands and the water that springs from the hidden depths of the mountains, these are some of our dreams that have come true, but are also our life commitment.

People come, women and men of all ages. CEN is a permanent invitation to live a life free from violence, to rebuild habits of trust and affection in human relations, to care for the water and the forest to learn and produce changes in our ways of doing things and so contribute to evolution.

CEN is a space for happiness, learning, investigation, natural healing and permanent renewal. It is a space for the production of new knowledge. But, as Alan says, CEN is not the physical space. CEN is a way of life, which means creating centres in each of our lives, in town and country. We need the will to change those habits that are part of the old model that has brought us to this point in history and the firm resolve to accept our responsibility as a species.

I shall end this report with a saying of Ghandi's: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' It is an invitation!

4. d.3 Testimony on the transformation of our Western lifestyles

Emmanuelle y Alain Dieudonné

WHAT WILL WE CHOOSE TO BECOME REALLY HAPPY?



Emmanuelle and Alain are married and have three children: William (9 ½ years), Simon (8 years) and Maylis (4 years). They bought a farm in late 2007, a beautiful testimony on the origin and the reasons for their choice.

We were both executives in Human Resources and were dismissed for economic reasons. We then decided to make new choices and look at our

lives in a different way. Our first choice was to work together on the same project. Our second choice was to work in agriculture to get closer to nature and live with more authenticity. Such a choice allowed us to distance ourselves from the market society. Indeed, money in a market society should be a means to promote social prosperity of everyone. In reality, in our view, market society has a political purpose to bring the benefits only to a few people.

The choice of growing vegetables came to us quite naturally. Alain has always been interested in food and life hygiene. He decided therefore, after his dismissal, to get a one-year training in agriculture. As far as I am concerned I am a philosopher by training with no experience of rural life. However, growing vegetables is the agricultural activity that I can see and understand best. It moves us in a promising direction. Indeed, seeding, watching plants that grow and protecting them to maturity means something to me. A crop of vegetables then comes followed by the pleasure of cooking and tasting.

However, what looks apparently simple to achieve is liable to meet a number of obstacles. These obstacles, such as bad weeds, climate change, diseases, slugs, moles, mice, insects, repeatedly discourage us. Biological solutions which are best for the earth and for humanity need to be used but require more work and tend to reduce production. These problems are in addition to the buildings of the place and tools needed to work: that includes the acquisition of equipment and changes of tools, setting up two greenhouses and an irrigation system that needs to be continuously improved, creating a henhouse and the acquisition of two donkeys, who maintain the place and provide fertilizer.

After 7 years already, we are still sometimes overwhelmed by feelings of absurdity at the huge task that brings us to the very limits of our strength. What has allowed us not to lose our footing is our research into the meaning of it all through faith and philosophy. Through faith, we learn to look at our limits with kindness and humility. We are indeed creatures and not "The Creator"! On the other hand tradition says that the Creator promises, despite our limitations and imperfections, happiness.

Through philosophy, we understand that this pursuit of happiness is a fundamental notion, contrary to the prevailing culture that does not take this prospect seriously. Even the realistic philosophy that begins by chasing illusions puts the pursuit of happiness in the middle. The question of ethics could simply and justly be expressed by:

WHAT WILL WE CHOOSE TO BECOME REALLY HAPPY [X / SE]?

What will I choose: to better work¹, better share², and better live³? And so, if I chose these, what will I give up? With these few sacrifices the overwhelming needs fade and what is possible reappears. The feeling of absurdity leaves a place for hope.

(1) **Working Better:** Working the land is a cooperation between humanity and nature that needs understanding and respect. Working better means developing one's conscience and the exercise of one's freedom. Too often, if one is dominated by certain tasks, it is easy to become a slave to one's project.

For the past 2 years we have decided to reorganize our business and place according to the principles of permaculture. ("Permaculture is an approach to designing human settlements and perennial agricultural systems that mimics the relationships found in natural ecologies". [wikipedia.org. https://justlists.wordpress.com/2010/01/14/principles-of-permaculture/](https://justlists.wordpress.com/2010/01/14/principles-of-permaculture/))

(2) **Improved sharing:** to date we shared our vegetable production. For the past 3 years, we have welcomed people interested in this type of project and shared our experience in two forms: the woofing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms – WWOOF, www.woof.net) and organization of permaculture courses (see our website below).

(3) **Living well with our 3 children,** we rejoice in seeing our children grow in their own way. Improve our home, install family rites, observe the Sabbath.

There is a web site to discover the farm of Emmanuelle and Alain Chestnut and suggestions as to what we are doing throughout the year.

www.panier-bio-buxeuil.over-blog.fr

4. d.4 personal options and Community consumption

Maryse Desplain, ANDP

Here is the testimony of Sister Maryse, of the Augustinians of Notre Dame of Paris, who has been engaged for several years in the search for a greener lifestyle. She gives us actual examples of transformations involving her community in France and its daily life.

Having had the opportunity and the joy of participating - some years ago – in Saint Etienne at the First Christian congress on ecology and the following year at First Christian Focus on FASTING - I quickly became focused on ECOLOGY in daily life.

Purchasing and provisions

This means for me, paying strict attention to prevention of waste and the way of buying. For example, favouring products that are grown locally and not those that come from the other side of the world! ... And also buying "recycled" materials such as paper or other products so as not to destroy trees and nature. This also means eating vegetables and fruits in season, which has a double advantage: not damaging our planet and at the same time staying healthy ... so both our body and the environment are "winners"!

Retreats "prayer and fasting"

For over the last 20 years, I have also had the chance to animate retreats, "Prayer and Fasting" each year, and for me these go in the same direction as Ecology, towards LIFE! At the end of the Retreat, a basket is offered to each person to give "alms" of what they would have spent during the retreat and that sum is then sent to those who would not have had enough to eat such as children in Madagascar or another known group!

After the retreat "Prayer and Fasting" each participant tells us what they have gained from this beautiful experience: a new relationship with food, or the possibility of fasting once a week.

Experiences shared

Moreover, in the various meetings, when I feel that people are "open" to exchanges we can discuss and have very positive and enriching exchanges for everyone! I have also noted for some time, a very positive movement; I am delighted by this and hold out great trust and hope for all generations in the future....

"The Lord has entrusted us with the Earth"We and everyone else need to be good stewards and to share this concern with others in the simplicity of daily life!

4-d. 5 Internet: learn and act

Catherine Sesboué, r.a.

Several documentaries alert us to the environmental issues in information and communication technologies. We tend to believe that we are low energy consumers because we deal with apparently dematerialized related activities. The following documentary shows us how this little this is true!

INTERNET: THE HIDDEN POLLUTION

Documentary - Length 52 minutes

Writers-directors: Coline Tison and Laurent Lichtenstein

Production Camicas Productions, with the participation of France Televisions, 2014

Clean in appearance, the virtual world is much more polluting than we imagine. Its voracious electricity consumption runs contrary to any reduction in the use of energy resources. By exploring the datacentre world, this film points to the question of the future of the Internet, perhaps originally thought of as a third industrial revolution.

This is the story of Rebecca and her digital double. This little girl just born already has a virtual identity. This is the theme of the documentary, she embodies the beginning of the twenty-first century that saw the internet invading our lives: the least of our business, like paying our taxes, buying a book, ordering flowers, is digitized, computerized and circulates through the network. Today, 247 billion emails pass through the web every day. A more economical and less polluting way to communicate, one might think, yet it is not so! "The Internet is primarily a heavy network infrastructure, says Jean-Luc Vuillemin, Network Director at Orange. It involves millions of kilometres of copper, fibre optic. "The cornerstone of the system, the data centre is the centre that can process the data, store it, and then redirect it to its recipients. But the electricity needs of this nerve base that works day and night are enormous, sometimes as much as those of a big city! This is the only way to ensure both ventilation for thousands of overheating servers and the power generators that protect against power cuts ...

A PARTICULARLY HEAVY ENERGY ACTIVITY

Between 1990 and 2003, our virtual world produced five million gigabytes of data. In 2011, it took forty-eight hours to generate the same amount. In 2013, it takes only ten minutes. What are the consequences for energy of such production?

To grasp this dimension in full, we must travel to the United States, to North Carolina, where the majority of datacentres are located, such as those of Facebook, Google and Apple. These three, themselves, are consuming 5% of all the power of the state. "The North Carolina authorities have done everything to attract data centres. "These are big customers," says James McLawhorn, Director of the N.C. Energy Utilities Commission. They are at it seven days a week, and the only way to meet their electrical requirements is to supply them with energy from nuclear

or coal plants. "Those of neighbouring West Virginia generate 12% of US coal production. But over the years, their use has polluted rivers and transformed hundreds of mountains into desolate landscape. "This is where the cloud, the Cloud becomes reality: it touches the ground," Gary Cook, technology specialist for Greenpeace, alerts us. It was he who, last year, during the Green Grid, a green forum which brings together IT companies annually, released the report classifying them according to their use of fossil fuels. Targeted companies responded by making innovations: Google has since opened a data center in Finland that works thanks to cold and hydropower and Apple has built the biggest solar farm in the country. But renewables pose the problem of intermittency, that is to say, they do not guarantee a stable distribution, which is essential for data centers. Is it possible that new energy-consumption technologies carry with themselves the solution? This is what is believed by the American economist Jeremy Rifkin: "Convergence between new means of communication and renewable energies completely changes the situation. It is a revolution that will completely transform the economy, culture, politics and even the power relationships. " *Anne-Laure Fournier*.

To find the article on the Internet:

<http://www.france5.fr/et-vous/France-5-et-vous/Les-programmes/LE-MAG-N-25-2014/articles/p-20415-Internet-la-pollution-cachee.htm>

To view the video on the Internet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtPMXrRG8kg>

(Comments are also great!)

SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

Some small things which will help to save the planet are within our power.

- Send an attachment (document, photo, or slide show.....) to several people, place it on virtual storage, called "cloud", such as Dropbox, Google drive, Orange Cloud, or Apple i cloud..... and send them the address to access the material.

- In your message box choose the option `text` rather than `html`. Certainly it is less pretty, but it uses less energy!
- Instead of using the search engine put the site most frequently used by you in `favourites` or `mark` the pages. This is because the many requests accessing the search engines, then `crunch through` an enormous number of servers which use a lot of energy when you add up all the requests coming from all over the world!
- Regularly clean up your mail account: delete all the unnecessary messages
- Shut down your computer instead of leaving it on `stand by`. (This also includes TVs and other screen equipment).
- Unplug the adaptors when telephones and other objects have been recharged.

4.d.6. Ways Forward

We are all called to orient our lifestyles in relation to ecological issues. But priorities are surely very different from one community to another, depending on geographic location (whether we are in town or countryside, a very well connected place in a context of over-consumption or in a poor enclave), it will depend too on the mission of the community and how old we are.

It is through concrete action that we will deepen our relationship with the earth, our common home that lodges us. All these gestures are at the service of a just relationship to ourselves, to others and to the cosmos.

We may share about our different relationships with nature, and about our different rhythms and lifestyles within our communities. What are the means used by each one of us to live more in harmony with nature, to cultivate a relationship of contemplation and gratuity to the world around us and to others?

About our concrete choices, each community can develop a list of priority actions for the following areas:

- Accommodation: is there over-consumption of electricity, gas, heating, water, etc.?
- Food: what are possible choices in terms of shopping, cooking and food consumption? Are we avoiding waste? Do we choose to consume local and seasonal produce?
- Clothing: what clothes do we choose to buy, do we avoid being complicit in violations of fundamental human rights? What criteria are needed to shop responsibly and in solidarity: do we check to see if our clothes are manufactured respecting social and environmental standards?
- Transport: what choices for transportation? Do we offset our carbon footprint when we take the plane? Can we, in some cases, make a preference for the use of video-conferences or go by train rather than by air?
- Informing ourselves and communicating: are we responsible users of the Internet?
- Re-use, recycle.... How do we deal with the life cycle of products?
- Share: do we share some of our equipment / machinery / objects so that they are better used? Is there a place for giving, lending, and an exchange knowledge?

Let us invent and disseminate good practices and so know more about our questions, our tips, and the initiatives that help us and lead us on.

Suggested documentaries to watch as community:

http://www.france5.fr/emissions/le-monde-en-face/diffusions/24-03-2015_311309 on packaging and its effects on the environment and health

http://www.france5.fr/emissions/le-monde-en-face/diffusions/28-04-2015_322149 on economic issues of recycling in France and health challenges

Autores

Marta Lorena Argüello, r.a. Nicaragüense

Provincia de América Central – Cuba

Marta Lorena Argüello Terán, r.a., nací en la cuna de la Asunción en América: León, Nicaragua. De familia católica y asuncionista. De ambas aprendí el amor a la verdad, la pasión por los pobres de mi tierra y el compromiso abnegado en la búsqueda de la justicia, la igualdad y la paz, junto a Jesús, mi amor y mi esperanza. De ahí mi pasión y compromiso solidario por la Justicia, la Paz, el cuidado y respeto por la Creación.

Pierre-Louis Choquet

France

Diplômé d'école de commerce et ingénieur agronome (HEC et Agro-Paristech), licencié en philosophie, Pierre-Louis écrit actuellement une thèse de doctorat à Oxford sur la responsabilité politique des compagnies pétrolières face au changement climatique.

Mary Cecilia Claparols, r.a. Filipina

Provincia del Sur Este Asiático

I was a missionary in Thailand for 18 years and have been involved in interreligious dialogue for JPICS in Thailand and in the Philippines. I have also participated in the RA work on the peace sanctuary in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte (among muslims and Christians) and two years among the indigenous people in Kibangay. At present, I am working in the Institute of Consecrated Life (ICLA), in the formation work on cosmic spirituality modules and retreats through the resources of Assumption Antipolo, and continue as a spiritual director for lay and religious.

Lucia Del Carlo, r.a. Argentina

Argentina. Provincia Atlántico Sur

Nací en Salta, provincia del N.O de Argentina, en el “interior” del país. Mis raíces culturales se hunden en la cultura incaica de amor a la Madre Tierra y de estabilidad en ella. Soy también nieta de inmigrantes europeos.

Actualmente vivo en la ciudad de Puerto Iguazú, al N.E del país. Siento que “estamos sufriendo dolores de parto” y, como en un holograma, nuestra vida en la inserción esta sacudida por la impotencia frente a tanto

agravio a nuestra “Casa común”. Que el Dios Amor, energía de Vida, nos sostenga y acompañe y nos haga resilientes en la esperanza del Reino.

Maryse Desplain, ANDP

France

Sr Maryse Desplain, religieuse augustine. Au long des années j’ai l’occasion de parler de l’écologie et de l’environnement aux personnes rencontrées et d’animer des journées de retraites dans ce sens dans notre maison d’accueil à Combloux. J’ai eu la chance de participer aux « Premières assises chrétiennes d’Ecologie », ce qui a inspiré mes gestes quotidiens et mon action pastorale.

Emmanuelle y Alain Dieudonné

France

Emmanuelle et Alain Dieudonné (France), après avoir travaillé tous deux en entreprise, dans le domaine des ressources humaines, ont choisi de devenir agriculteurs et habitent une ferme dans la Vienne, en France.

Mercedes Escobedo

México

Lic. en Sociología y Lic. en Teología. Exalumna de la Asunción. Profesora y acompañante en temas de reflexión y servicio social. Actualmente en pastoral. Experiencia y gusto por la educación formal y no formal, así como proyectos de desarrollo humano y comunitario que abran caminos para imaginar y generar mejores mundos para todos.

Nadia Feguri

France

Je suis enseignante d’Histoire-géographie en lycée professionnel : je partage un domaine qui me fait vibrer avec des élèves de tout horizon. Musulmane de naissance, de croyance et de pratique, ma foi est au cœur de mon quotidien. Le vivre-ensemble et le partage d’expérience sont mon leitmotiv. Membre fondatrice de l’association *Un Regard sur l’Autre*, j’espère y appliquer mes principes de solidarité et d’entraide au-delà de toutes autres considérations.

Anastasio Gallego Coto

Español, viviendo en Ecuador

Nací en España y viviendo desde 1967 en Ecuador. 9 años de ejercicio presbiteral en la Orden de los Carmelitas Descalzos. Vinculado al movimiento ecuménico latinoamericano, inicialmente en ISAL. Actualmente, Pro-Rector del Campus Guayaquil, de la Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María de Chile. Participante del movimiento cristiano-católico del Continente. Me considero asuncionista de corazón.

Jessica Gatty, r.a. Inglesa

Secretariado Internacional JPIC. Provincia de Inglaterra

Born in London in 1938. Entered the Assumption in 1976 after working about 10 years with refugees and concentration camp survivors with the Sue Ryder Foundation. I was 10 years in the Hengrave community of reconciliation, and 12 years as provincial of the English province, with a few years in a poor area in Newcastle. I have been involved with JPIC throughout, one way or another.

Jill Gracie, r.a. Inglesa

Provincia de Inglaterra

Born in 1934 in Pakistan. The family moved to Ireland when Jill was 11 where they had a small farm and Jill had her own animals. She went to Maria Assumpta Teachers training college and entered age 23. She was in community in Sidmouth and Richmond, teaching and then in administration but her main apostolates have been at Hengrave and then more recently in Newcastle where she looks after the gardening at Kids Kabin. She has always been interested in green issues and campaigning against the arms trade.

Ascensión González Calle, r.a. Española

Provincia de Ecuador – Chile

María Ascensión González Calle, Religiosa de la Asunción. Nace en la Provincia de Palencia, (España). Licenciada en Teología Dogmática en la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca. Desde 1986 presente en Latinoamérica donde dedica su tiempo y su vida en la formación de la vida religiosa, de laicos en trabajo pastoral y de jóvenes. Su lugar de residencia actual es Guayaquil (Ecuador).

Isabel Hill, r.a. Inglesa

Provincia de Inglaterra

The created world fills me with wonder! My desire is to live in harmony with the whole of creation, respecting the value and distinctiveness of every animal (human and non-human), plant and mineral. To this end, I try to be conscious of the impact my existence has on the world and to minimise the damage I cause, and most of all, I try to be attentive to the image of the divine reflected in all things. In all my endeavours, I'm a hesitant and stumbling beginner!

Laure Homberg, r.a. Francesa

Provincia de Francia.

Sr Laure est née en France en 1970. Professeur de physique chimie, elle enseigne actuellement au collège Assomption Bellevue (Lyon) et travaille avec le diocèse dans la pastorale étudiante.

Marie Claire Isifi, r.a. Nigeriana

Provincia de Africa del Oeste

Sœur Christian ISSIFI Marie Claire, née le 10 mars 1972 à Niamey, nigérienne d'origine, j'ai fait mes études secondaires au Niger et universitaires en Côte d'Ivoire je suis titulaire d'un master II en philosophie option Métaphysique. Je suis présentement Directrice du collège Ste Monique de Koudougou au Burkina Faso. Je suis aussi coordinatrice de l'équipe éducation dans la province d'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Adela Helguera, r.a. Argentina

Provincia de Atlántico Sur

Mi nombre es Hermana Adela, tengo 78 años, después d haber girado por el "mundo Asunción" he recalado en San Miguel, Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina donde un grupo de 6 hermanas mayores estamos viviendo en un barrio popular y animamos grupos diversos: Asunción Juntos, Salud Mental, Talleres de Espiritualidad, Red Sanar...

David Herrerías Guerra

Mexicano

Esposo, padre de una hija y tres hijos, abuelo de una nieta y dos nietos. Diseñador gráfico, con maestría en educación, académico de la

Universidad Iberoamericana y del Instituto Superior Intercultural Ayuuk. Activista social, en temas de democracia, educación y desarrollo comunitario. Mis herramientas son el diseño, la escritura, la educación, la esperanza y el buen humor. Mi sueño es dejar construido, cuando me vaya, un pedacito más del Reino de Dios.

Therese Koottiyaniil

r.a. India

A.B, BSc, and B.Ed in Mathematics and Psychology from Assumption College , Illoilo City ; M.S. in Guidance and Counselling from the Central Philippine University and Ph. D in Guidance and Counselling from the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala. I worked as High School Teacher, Aided School Headmistress in Thelpara, Principal of St.Clares's Girls's High school in Pune, as Visiting Professor both in Kerala and outside Kerala, as Lecturer in the M. Ed Department of St. Thomas College of Teacher Education in Pala, as Associate professor and Guidance-counsellor in Vimal Jyothi Enggineering College, Chemperi in Kannur District and as Director and Guidance -Counsellor in Marie Eugenie Center for Human Development, Calicut. Now I'm having a retired life from my professional duties.

Leela Kottoor, r.a. India.

Provincia de India

EN 1966 je suis entrée à l'Assomption. Après mes années de formation religieuse à Paris, j'ai fait mes études de théologie à Rome. En 1974 je suis rentrée en Inde, en et un an après, j'ai été envoyée, pendant 9 mois, pour suivre une formation" Sadhana ", à Poona. J'ai été au service de la Province comme Maîtresse des Novices, puis comme Provinciale jusqu'en 1999.

Hervé Lado. Camerunés

Viviendo en Francia

Hervé Lado (Cameroun), consultant, docteur en économie (Paris 1), a écrit sa thèse sur la responsabilité sociétale des pétroliers au Nigeria. (herve.lado@yahoo.fr)

Dominique Lang, a.a. Francés

Francia

Dominique LANG, religieux assumptionniste, journaliste à Pèlerin. Il a cofondé une revue d'écologie avec Fabrice Nicolino, les Cahiers de Saint Lambert. Prête accompagnateur de Pax Christi France, il intervient régulièrement sur les questions de l'écologie et de la foi chrétienne.

Sandra López

Ecuador

Sandra López, terapeuta social, aprendiz/educadora sobre la neurofisiología humana para el desarrollo de la conciencia y la recuperación del vínculo como especie, con las otras especies, el planeta, el universo y el cosmos para aportar a la evolución.

Amparo Marroquín Parducci

El Salvador

Es exalumna del Colegio la Asunción de San Salvador, El Salvador desde 1991. En la actualidad trabaja como profesora e investigadora del área de comunicación y cultura en la Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas". Se ha especializado en investigar acerca de migraciones, identidad, cultura y discursos sobre violencias.

Mercedes Méndez Siliuto, r.a. Española

Provincia de España

Soy española, de las Islas Canarias, que tras sus estudios de teología y espiritualidad ha trabajado mucho como profesora y delegada de pastoral en diferentes colegios. Siempre formando parte de los equipos pastorales parroquiales, y diocesanos (Vicaria IV de Madrid y León). Soy una convencida de que la colaboración con la Gracia en la transformación personal tendrá una influencia decisiva en la transformación de nuestro mundo según el Plan salvador de Dios.

Claire Myriam Milanese, r.a. Italiana

Provincia de Francia

Sr Claire Myriam Milanese, de la communauté de Paris-Auteuil, italienne, maîtrise d'histoire, depuis 2012 responsable du Bureau de la Solidarité

(BGSD) de la Congrégation. Expériences précédentes dans le domaine de l'enseignement scolaire et de la formation d'adultes.

Miriam Moscow, r.a. Norteamericana

Provincia de Europa del Norte.

Est religieuse de l'Assomption, née à New York en 1948. Elle a fait ses études à Columbia University, à l'IET à Bruxelles et à la faculté de théologie de l'Université catholique de Lille. Appartenant à la province de l'Europe du Nord, elle est actuellement en communauté à Tournai, où elle enseigne à l'Institut supérieur de théologie du diocèse de Tournai.

Eugenie Nobuko Murai, r.a. Japonesa

Provincia del Japón

I was born among a very traditional Japanese family and was baptized at the age of twenty-one. It is a great joy for me I could become a Catholic and even was called to be a religious. But the Japanese spirituality including Shinto religion and Buddhism exists deeply in my heart. My spiritual journey is to integrate those elements to be one and still on the way.

Cecilia Ng'ae, r. a.

Provincia de África del Este

Nacida en Kenia, misionera actualmente en Filipinas. Cecilia es enfermera. Con una preocupación grande por las causas de la Justicia y de la Paz, ha formado parte de las comisiones de JPIC de su provincia, por varias ocasiones.

Marthe Marie Nzabakurana, r.a. Ruandesa.

Provincia de Ruanda – Chad

Marthe a été longtemps chef d'établissement à Rwaza, dans le Nord du Rwanda, dans un projet scolaire très engagé dans le domaine de l'écologie, pionniers dans le pays du bio gaz et d'une éducation environnementale. Actuellement est supérieure Provinciale des communautés du Rwanda – Tchad

Michel Nyamba

Togo

Professeur des Sciences Sociales dans l'Institut Technique Assomption a Sokodé, au nord du Togo. Membre tres engagé dans le projet éducatif Assomption.

Silvia Oseguera, r.a. Mexicana

Provincia de México

Mujer de Dios con raíces campesinas, formada por una gran familia fruto de diferentes razas y culturas; cobijada por la Asunción desde mi nacimiento, Religiosa de la Asunción desde hace 20 años; Licenciada en Ciencia Religiosas y misionera de corazón.

María Eugenia (Mayi) Ramírez, r.a. Ecuatoriana

Miembro del Consejo General, r.a. (Paris)

Ecuatoriana, ex alumna del Colegio de la Asunción de Guayaquil. Ha vivido también varios años en América Central y Chile y ha colaborado con la Iglesia y la Vida religiosa latinoamericana como parte de la Confederación Latinoamericana de Religiosos (CLAR) y de la Conferencia de Religiosos de Ecuador (CER). Ha sido responsable de la Provincia Ecuador – Chile y actualmente la Congregación le ha confiado la misión de Consejera General.

Cécile Renouard, r.a. Francesa

Secrétariat International JPIC. Province de France

Elle est Religieuse de l'Assomption, Professeur de philosophie au Centre Sèvres (facultés jésuites de Paris), Directrice du programme de recherches (CODEV – Entreprises et développement) à l'ESSEC Business School. (renouard_cecile@yahoo.fr)

Ana Sentíes, r.a. Mexicana

Secretariado Internacional de Educación y JPIC. Provincia de Francia

Nací en México. Estudié pedagogía y he trabajado como profesora, miembro directivo y formadora en Pedagogía Asunción en varios países, especialmente en México, Chad, Camerún y Francia. Desde 2010 coordino el Secretariado Internacional de Educación Asunción.

La gracia de acoger el envío a *desplazarme*, primero a un medio campesino e indígena, luego en tierras africanas y finalmente a un medio de gran riqueza intercultural e interreligiosa en Bruselas y en Lyon, ha ido transformando profundamente mi visión y mi vida. Deseo que a través de lo que somos y hacemos nuestra tierra siga transformándose en un lugar de gloria para Dios.

Catherine Sesboué, r.a. Francesa

Provincia de Francia

Tombée dans l'internet en 1996, j'ai suivi avec un intérêt professionnel et personnel l'évolution numérique que notre société génère. Les impacts sur l'être humain, la société, notre terre sont multiformes et nécessitent qu'en amont information et pédagogie soient mises en œuvre. Comme journaliste, je m'y efforce.

Catherine Anne Soley, r.a. Norteamericana

Provincia USA

I have the joy of sharing my life with four other Assumption sisters in Worcester, MA. Ours is a very diverse city, with many opportunities to witness and experience God's loving presence throughout creation. Our ministries include after school programs, English as a Second Language classes, work with our AMAs, and our community garden: Semillas da Vida.

Veronique Thiébaud, r.a. Francesa

Provincia de Francia

Je suis un « papillon », comme dirait Marie Eugénie... puisque je suis bordelaise, née entre les vignes et l'océan, dans un environnement qui invite à célébrer et à goûter la création. J'ai enseigné les Lettres pendant 15 ans et je travaille maintenant au service du réseau des 16 établissements de l'Assomption en France, comme directrice de la formation.

Le charisme d'éducation de l'Assomption me passionne, en particulier la « pédagogie du désir » qui ouvre un espace à la créativité.

Irene Cecile Torres, r.a. Filipina

Provincia del Sur Este Asiático

She studied in University of the Visayas. Was director in the Assumption Antipolo Institute. Participates as a trainer in various forums of the province, in the spiritual and educational level. Is a member of the team of trainers and facilitators "CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES National Capital Region »

Diana Wauters, r.a. Norteamericana

Provincia USA

Sr. Diana is originally from Allentown, PA. She studied at the University of Pennsylvania. She is from our North American Province and is at present the Superior of the Chaparral community in New Mexico. She lived for many years in West Africa as a missionary and councillor in the West Africa Province. She has also served in the Philadelphia area communities.

She was General councillor from 1994-2000 & Superior General from 2006-2012. (She is now living in the Chaparral community, in the United States.)

Diseño de la portada: **Karen Yuleen Banchón**. Ex alumna de la Asunción de Guayaquil. Diseñadora gráfica y Comunicadora visual

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIRST PART: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO	1
LAUDATO SI FOR THE ECO-ASSUMPTION	1
A FEW WORDS ABOUT LAUDATO SI.....	2
<i>EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED</i>	3
<i>THE BROAD VIEW</i>	3
<i>Less is more</i>	4
TOWARDS AN ECO-ASSUMPTION	5
SECOND PART:	7
DIAGNOSIS.....	7
2.A THE STORY OF THE UNIVERSE. A LONG LOVE STORY	9
<i>The scientific point of view</i>	10
<i>All life forms one community</i>	12
<i>The completeness of Christ is the whole of humanity</i>	14
2.B. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL CHANGE	17
1 - <i>Structural problems</i>	20
2 – <i>Springboards</i>	25
2.C. AN ENDANGERED PLANET: DIFFERENT CASE STUDIES	30
2.C.1 BIODIVERSITY IN DANGER: THE CASE OF THE KAUSWAGAN COAL POWER PLANTEL	30
2.C.2 DESERTIFICATION: THE AFRICAN CASE	36
1. <i>The extent of the problem</i>	36
2. <i>Reforestation, a local and a global issue</i>	38
2. C.3 WASTE: TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY?	40
1. HOW MUCH WASTE DO WE PRODUCE?	41
2. WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS WASTE?	41
3. <i>Nuclear waste - the hidden waste our electricity habit produces</i>	43
4. <i>What good practices are there?</i>	44
2. C.4. EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES: THE CASE OF OIL IN NIGERIA.....	46
<i>Introduction: Oil or Social Link?</i>	46
<i>The Resource Curse in Nigeria</i>	46
1. <i>Nigerian Context</i>	47
2. <i>Damage caused by oil activity</i>	48
3. <i>Some recent advances</i>	50

2. D ETHICAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES	51
<i>Global tendencies</i>	52
<i>Renewing the natural contract with the Earth</i>	54
<i>New ethics for a new age</i>	56
2. E MIGRATION AND ECOLOGY: LOOKING AT THE COMPLEXITIES	59
<i>Changes in migration: the current situation</i>	60
A. <i>Migration: faces and routes</i>	61
B. <i>Migration: old causes and new dangers</i>	62
<i>Migration as a result of environmental damage</i>	63
<i>Strategies</i>	66
2.F. WAYS FORWARD	69
THIRD PART :	69
3: FRAMES OF REFERENCE.....	69
3.A BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ECOLOGY	73
<i>Biblical Texts and the Natural World in our Tradition</i>	74
<i>Rooting our Ecological Commitment through Some Biblical Texts</i>	75
1. <i>Genesis 1: A resource for eco-sensitivity</i>	75
2. <i>The Book of Job 38-42: Transformative Encounters through Creation</i>	79
3. <i>John 1:14: Where is God/ Wisdom to be found?</i>	81
4. <i>Pauline Epistles and the Letter to the Hebrews: The Cosmic Christ</i> ...	84
3.B THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ECOLOGY	85
3.B.1 THE ESCHATOLOGY OF CREATION	85
1 <i>The incarnation, the event that inaugurates the restoration and the</i> <i>divinization of humanity and Creation</i>	86
2 <i>Creation in the light of the Cross, the death and resurrection of Christ</i>	88
3 <i>Temporal involvement: a collaboration with the final destiny of Creation</i>	89
3.B.2 THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION, HOPE	90
3. B.3 WOMAN AND ECOLOGY: A QUICK LOOK AT WHAT ANTHROPOCENTRISM FORGOT	100
<i>Ecology</i>	100
<i>A few anthropocentric traditions and interpretations</i>	100
<i>A paradigm shift requires a transformation of our way of seeing things</i>	102
3. B. 4 AN APPROACH TO A THEOLOGY OF CONSECRATED LIFE.	104
FROM AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE. A NEW POSITION EMERGING OUT OF SELFLESSNESS	104
<i>The ecological perspective: totality!</i>	104
<i>If there is a Creator, we are all creatures</i>	105

3.c. THE SOCIAL THOUGHT OF THE CHURCH	114
3.c.1 AN APPROACH TO ECOLOGY FROM THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.....	114
<i>Introduction</i>	114
<i>A look at reality</i>	116
<i>Criteria which enlighten</i>	118
<i>Project of Action</i>	120
<i>Conclusions</i>	121
3. C.2 THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING :	121
THE EVOLUTION OF ITS THOUGHT IN THE LIGHT OF DIFFERENT ETHICAL VIEWS OF NATURE AND OF DEVELOPMENT	121
1. <i>The Catholic Church and the bio-centric and eco-centric ethical views: is there incompatibility or convergence?</i>	123
2. <i>The Social Teaching of the Church on development that lasts, and on ecology: its thinking is dynamic, not set in stone.</i>	125
3.D MARIE EUGÉNIE AND THE CHARISM OF THE CONGREGATION	128
<i>Introduction</i>	128
3.D.1 MARIE EUGÉNIE AND CREATION.....	130
<i>The Principal Traits of Marie Eugénie's Thinking on Creation</i>	132
3. D.2 MARIE EUGÉNIE AND THE KINGDOM: SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE GOSPEL..	142
3. D.3 ECOLOGY IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE ASSUMPTION.....	148
<i>At the root of the problem</i>	148
<i>The Adoration of the God's Rights</i>	153
<i>Joyful Detachment</i>	154
3. D.4 ECOLOGY AND LITURGY	156
<i>Introduction</i>	157
1. <i>Insertion</i>	158
2. <i>Religious Life in Latin America as seen by the Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR) and the Argentine Conference of Religious (Confar)</i>	159
(3) <i>The Word of God</i>	162
3. D.5 TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION AND JPIC-S COMMITMENT IN THE ASSUMPTION: TWO CLOSELY RELATED THEMES	165
<i>Marie Eugénie and transformation</i>	166
<i>An urgency that springs up from her own experience</i>	167

<i>How does Marie Eugénie put into words this transformation in the educational domain?.....</i>	<i>170</i>
<i>Education in the assumption and the transformations it generates</i>	<i>172</i>
<i>SOME challenges for the assumption's transformative education.....</i>	<i>173</i>
3. D.6 WAYS FORWARD	175
3.E RELIGIONS, SPIRITUALITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT	177
3.E.1 RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENT	177
3.E.2 THE COSMIC COVENANT	182
<i>Yesterday and Today, Rediscovering the Cosmic Covenant.....</i>	<i>183</i>
<i>The Eternal Covenant Restored</i>	<i>188</i>
<i>Jesus, the Christ</i>	<i>188</i>
<i>Principalities and Powers.....</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>3.e.3. Judaism and the environment.....</i>	<i>193</i>
3.E.4 SHALOM IN THE HEBREW BIBLE	196
3. E.5. ISLAM.....	199
<i>Mankind must not violate the earth.....</i>	<i>199</i>
<i>Man and nature: the attachment to beauty.....</i>	<i>200</i>
3. E.6 BUDDHISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT	202
<i>Interdependence : The Law of Dependent Co-arising (Paticcasmupada).203</i>	
<i>Some Buddhist Forms of Action for the Environment.....</i>	<i>206</i>
3. E.7 HINDUISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT	209
<i>HINDUISM PROMOTES ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION.....</i>	<i>212</i>
<i>THE HINDU VIEW OF NATURE</i>	<i>212</i>
<i>SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGY LINKS</i>	<i>214</i>
3. E.8 SHINTO AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	217
3. E.9 ECOLOGY AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: WHAT IS AT STAKE?.....	220
<i>Faith in the Creator: Ecumenical Good News</i>	<i>221</i>
<i>The Spirit of Assisi.....</i>	<i>222</i>
<i>A call to coherence.....</i>	<i>223</i>
3. E.10 AMERINDIAN SPIRITUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT	224
3. E.11. INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ENVIRONMENT AND SPIRITUALITY.....	230
3. E.12 ECO-SPIRITUALITY	232
<i>What relevance does eco-spirituality have for an Assumption Sister today?</i>	
<i>.....</i>	<i>232</i>

3.E. 13. WAYS FORWARD	239
FOURTH PART:	240
SPRINGBOARDS FOR ACTION	240
INTRODUCTION.....	240
4. A.1. TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION AT THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL.....	241
A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH	241
<i>The Mystery of the Incarnation: theological and anthropological key..</i>	242
<i>Some educational springboards of transformative education</i>	245
<i>What is needed to really live</i>	249
4. A.2 WE ARE ONE PART OF THE COMMUNITY OF CREATION.	251
<i>Anne Eugenie Milleret de Brou enjoyed feeling part of the community of</i>	
<i>Creation.</i>	251
4.B EXPERIENCES	257
4.B.1 KAUSWAGAN.....	257
4.B.2 RWAZA.....	263
4.B.3 ÁGUILAS	267
4.B.4 MONGRÉ.....	271
4.C ADVOCACY AND CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT	276
4.C. 1 WHAT ADVOCACY FOR WHAT INVESTMENT CHOICES? THE EXAMPLE OF "UNBURNABLE	
CARBON"	277
4. C.2 ADVOCACY – CHALLENGING THE ARMS TRADE.....	281
4.C.3 ADVOCACY IN ARGENTINA: TESTIMONY OF SR. ADELA	283
1 - <i>Which of the following rights are not respected in your province?..</i>	283
2 - <i>Which of these rights are not respected in your country?.....</i>	284
4. C.4 ECOLOGY ISSUES IN KENYA AND TANZANIA : THE TESTIMONY OF SR CECILIA	285
INTRODUCTION	286
4. C.5 RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT ECOLOGY AND MIGRATION - OUR WAY OF LOVING	
OUR TIMES	287
<i>How we work with immigrants.....</i>	288
4.C.6 WAYS FORWARD.....	292
4.D LIFESTYLES	293
4.D.1 EXPERIMENTS IN ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES.....	293
4.D.2 'BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR WASTE'	302
4. D.3 TESTIMONY ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR WESTERN LIFESTYLES	306
4. D.4 PERSONAL OPTIONS AND COMMUNITY CONSUMPTION	309

<i>Purchasing and provisions</i>	309
<i>Retreats "prayer and fasting"</i>	309
<i>Experiences shared</i>	310
4-D. 5 INTERNET: LEARN AND ACT	310
<i>Some small things which will help to save the planet are within our power.</i>	312
4.D.6. WAYS FORWARD	313
TABLE OF CONTENTS	325

