

Cry of Earth, Cry of the Poor **Dialog**

INTRODUCTION

Let's go. We don't need to know the way. it is enough to know we will find it on the road.

The quote above graces the agenda of each of the LSAP Committee meetings. All of us rely on Spirit and on each and every one of us who are together committed to walking the journey to sustainability and transformation.

The Committee offers the following materials for your personal and communal reflection.

We ask for your Feedback on the last question concerning *intersectionality*. Please send in your responses to Sr. Jean Patrice sjp@marianchs.com by January 6th. They are an integral part of the preparation for our Community Day in February.

Thank you!

PERSONAL REFLECTION IN PREPARATION FOR DIALOG

1. You may wish to begin with this prayer:

Creator God, I thank you for the gift of life which you lovingly wove into being. I confess I have not cared for your creation. Your world grows hotter, hungrier, sicker, and the people and planet call out for hope. In your love, Lord, I answer, for I know that things can change. Give me the courage to bring Laudato Si' to life, to care for all communities and species suffering from environmental harm. Bless us as we labor for an Integral Ecology that we might inspire others to discover your face in our suffering and beautiful world. I ask this in Jesus' name.

2. Reflect on the attached excerpts from *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.

3. Formulate a personal response to the dialog questions (1-6) listed below.

GATHERING FOR DIALOG

Opening Prayer: Prayer of The Seven Laudato Si' Goals

1. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, working towards protecting our Earth

Response: For the life of the world

2. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, standing with Earth's poor

Response: For the life of the world

3. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, upholding the dignity of workers' rights and building sustainable economies
Response: For the life of the world
4. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, living simply
Response: For the life of the world
5. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, committed to teaching and modeling sustainable living
Response: For the life of the world
6. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, praying in solidarity with the entire Earth community
Response: For the life of the world
7. Our sisters, Nuestras Hermanas, working with others to advocate and take action for Earth's rights
Response: For the life of the world

Dialog

Please share your reflections/insights to these questions:

1. What does the Laudato Si' Action Platform mean personally to me?
2. What does it mean personally for me?
3. How might I make the commitment a reality in my own life?
4. The Platform is a 7 year commitment to achieve sustainability, but it is meant to live long after 2028. With that in mind, how do we move into this future?
5. How has your reflection deepened your understanding of our **Public Commitment Statement**:

The Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois, in the United States and Peru, recognize the urgency of the ecological crises facing our planet.

We live in common with all creation.

We acknowledge the need for our personal and collective transformation.

*Responding to the cry of Earth, we commit to participation in
Laudato Si Action Platform.*

This seven-year journey to achieve sustainability is for the life of the world.

Please send your communal responses to the Questions below.

6. What have I gleaned from my reflection on the excerpts from *Laudato Si'* that points to the *intersectionality* of the whole of life on Earth? How does this growing understanding enhance my spirituality and challenge my behaviors?

Definition: *Intersectionality* refers to the reality that all things are interdependent, intimately connected to each other. Everything contributes to everything else. No one issue is separate and apart for any other.

It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.” Pope Francis

Closing Prayer

You draw us into our interconnectedness with the Cosmos
in solidarity with the *rostros concretos* --
those of our sisters and brothers who are kept at the margins --
yet are united with us in prayer for the life of the world.

Make us mystics and pilgrims ~
Poets and artists ~
Lovers of the humble and the poor ~
Caregivers of Creation's every blessing.

Grace us with awareness of integral ecology
that enables all of us -
every person, every creature, every holy gift of Your making --
to journey together
In the fullness of Your creative mercy. Amen.

Reflections

Excerpts from *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*

§3 More than fifty years ago, with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis, Pope Saint John XXIII wrote an Encyclical which not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace. He addressed his message *Pacem in Terris* to the entire “Catholic world” and indeed “to all men and women of good will”. Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet. In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.

§6 My predecessor Benedict XVI likewise ... observed that the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”. Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. We have forgotten that “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature” ... Benedict urged us to realize that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves”.

§9. At the same time, {Patriarch of the Orthodox Church} Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion”. As Christians, we are also called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet”.

§83. “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us toward a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.

§92. Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is “contrary to human dignity”. We can hardly

consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually...” Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.

§102. Humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads. We are the beneficiaries of two centuries of enormous waves of change: steam engines, railways, the telegraph, electricity, automobiles, aeroplanes, chemical industries, modern medicine, information technology and, more recently, the digital revolution, robotics, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. It is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities which they continue to open up before us, for “science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity”. The modification of nature for useful purposes has distinguished the human family from the beginning; technology itself “expresses the inner tension that impels man gradually to overcome material limitations”. Technology has remedied countless evils which used to harm and limit human beings. How can we not feel gratitude and appreciation for this progress, especially in the fields of medicine, engineering and communications? How could we not acknowledge the work of many scientists and engineers who have provided alternatives to make development sustainable?

§139. When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem. It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Paragraphs 156, 158, 159, 160, and 204 all refer to the Common Good

§156. Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”.

§158 In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world’s goods, but, as I

mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good.

§159. The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. The Portuguese bishops have called upon us to acknowledge this obligation of justice: “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next”. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision.

§160. What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

§204. The current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty, which in turn becomes “a seedbed for collective selfishness”. When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality. In this horizon, a genuine sense of the common good also disappears. As these attitudes become more widespread, social norms are respected only to the extent that they do not clash with personal needs. So our concern cannot be limited merely to the threat of extreme weather events, but must also extend to the catastrophic consequences of social unrest. Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction.

§195. The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources

or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved. Yet only when “the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources are recognized with transparency and fully borne by those who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations”, can those actions be considered ethical. An instrumental way of reasoning, which provides a purely static analysis of realities in the service of present needs, is at work whether resources are allocated by the market or by state central planning.

§197 What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis. Often, politics itself is responsible for the disrepute in which it is held, on account of corruption and the failure to enact sound public policies. If in a given region the state does not carry out its responsibilities, some business groups can come forward in the guise of benefactors, wield real power, and consider themselves exempt from certain rules, to the point of tolerating different forms of organized crime, human trafficking, the drug trade and violence, all of which become very difficult to eradicate. If politics shows itself incapable of breaking such a perverse logic, and remains caught up in inconsequential discussions, we will continue to avoid facing the major problems of humanity. A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture. A healthy politics needs to be able to take up this challenge.

§198. Politics and the economy tend to blame each other when it comes to poverty and environmental degradation. It is to be hoped that they can acknowledge their own mistakes and find forms of interaction directed to the common good. While some are concerned only with financial gain, and others with holding on to or increasing their power, what we are left with are conflicts or spurious agreements where the last thing either party is concerned about is caring for the environment and protecting those who are most vulnerable. Here too, we see how true it is that “unity is greater than conflict”.