

Promotio Iustitiae

A SPIRITUALITY THAT RECONCILES US WITH CREATION

The future we want requires “reconciliation with creation”

Xavier Savarimuthu SJ

Contemplation to attain on love and ecology

José Alejandro Aguilar SJ

Interplay of faith and justice in environmental issues

Prem Xalxo SJ

Ecology and consolation

José García de Castro SJ

The four week dynamic: The spiritual basis for reconciliation with creation

James Profit SJ

The dream of an older Jesuit

John Surette SJ



**Social Justice and Ecology
Secretariat**

Editor: Patxi Álvarez, SJ
Consultant Editor: Suguna Ramanathan
Publishing Coordinator: Concetta Negri

Promotio Iustitiae is published by the Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) in English, French, Italian and Spanish. *Promotio Iustitiae* is available electronically on the World Wide Web at the following address: www.sjweb.info/sjs

If you are struck by an idea in this issue, your brief comment is very welcome. To send a letter to *Promotio Iustitiae* for inclusion in a future issue, please write to the fax or email address shown on the back cover.

The re-printing of the document is encouraged; please cite *Promotio Iustitiae* as the source, along with the address, and send a copy of the re-print to the Editor.

Contents

Editorial	4
"The future we want" requires "reconciliation with creation".....	6
Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ	
Contemplation to attain on love and ecology.....	10
José Alejandro Aguilar, SJ	
Interplay of faith and justice in environmental issues.....	15
Prem Xalxo, SJ	
Ecology and consolation	22
José García de Castro, SJ	
The four-week dynamic: the spiritual basis for reconciliation with creation	27
James Profit, SJ	
The dream of an older Jesuit.....	32
John Surette, SJ	



Editorial

Patxi Álvarez, SJ

We feel today the pain of the planet. We once thought that its resources were unlimited and that it had boundless ability to recover from the damage we inflicted on it, but now we have discovered that our beloved blue planet is fragile and vulnerable. For millennia we have been transforming its physiognomy, destroying its species, and transforming its natural spaces. Ever since the industrial revolution two centuries ago, however, the pressures we have been putting on the ecosystems and climatic conditions have increased enormously. The result has been the massive extinction of species and a dramatic transformation of climatic patterns. None of us human beings can hope to escape the dire consequences of these changes, and those who will suffer the most severe repercussions are the poor and the marginalized peoples of the earth.

We cannot continue treating the earth this way. We need to change, and we need to change at every level—personally, institutionally, nationally, and globally. The challenge is tremendous for it affects the way we consume goods, the technologies we use to produce them, and the cultural values that underlie our nations and their policies.

We have all played a part in causing the ecological crisis with which we are now faced. In order to change our practices and our habits, we must recognize that the very way we live directly affects the health of the planet. In working to change our style of living, we will be helped by sincerely expressing gratitude to the Creator for the gift of creation, that is, for the whole natural world and all the beings that dwell in it. At the same time, we should design policies and make decisions oriented to the protection of the environment in our communities and institutions. We must resist the temptation to become discouraged in this struggle which often appears already lost since we feel so small and the challenge seems so huge. We are being called to stay strong in the struggle and to be ever hopeful in the face of the inevitable failures and tragedies.

The themes we address, therefore, are acknowledgment of the evil done, gratitude, commitment, contending with temptations and failures, and hope. In other words, we are dealing with themes where spirituality is especially able to help us. Ignatian spirituality above all offers us ample motivation for getting involved in the defense of creation and for contributing to the “reconciliation with creation” to which General Congregation 35 summoned us.

In this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* we have asked a number of authors to help us find in Ignatian spirituality, and in Christian theology more generally, the inspiration we need to develop new and better ways of relating to the natural world so that we are able to love, respect, and protect its integrity more effectively. We present five different perspectives which explore the spiritual roots of our commitment to the environment. This exploration

will hopefully stimulate us to become more decisively involved in the human task of “reconciliation with creation.” We hope that reading these pages will assist us in this undertaking.

Original Spanish
Translation Joseph Owens, SJ



“The future we want” requires “reconciliation with creation”

Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ

St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, India

“The future we want” and “reconciliation with creation” were the two key themes of Rio +20 summit and General Congregation 35 respectively. “The future we want” for our well-being is going through a sea-change due to human and natural activities. The humankind has not paid heed to the Lord’s request of “till and take care”. Humankind has turned the lands toxic by indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers, depleted our ground water resources, pillaged the wombs of mother earth, destroyed the fragile ecological balance and even polluted the space with our debris. The earth is groaning and calls for reconciliation with creation.

God’s Promise for “wholeness” and Human “Brokenness”

“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (Genesis 8:2) were God’s first words to Noah after the great floods had receded and God had restored life to the wasted Earth. God promised the faithful, never again to curse the natural world because of man’s actions. The basic cycles and rhythms of nature will remain steady and their steadiness will testify to His faithfulness in creating the world and making covenant with humans, despite our inherent inclination to evil.

In Noah’s time, men were hunter-gatherers, at the best primary agriculturists. Yet, we know how their sins had attracted the wrath of God. Today by comparison, we have turned the lands toxic by indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers, depleted our ground water resources, pillaged the wombs of mother earth to meet our greed for mineral resources, destroyed the fragile ecological balance with the toxic fumes of our industry and even polluted the space with our debris. If Noah contemporaries were mere sinners, then we are the living dead, condemned to eternity.

All this has come about because we did not pay heed to the Lord when He said, “Till and Take care”, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s” (Mark 12:17). In our hedonistic quest for conspicuous consumption, we have chosen to ignore God, to give back to him, in terms of “environmental dividend”, what He gave us in the first place to enjoy. We have deviated from the path shown by him, have coveted and committed the cardinal sins and have not absolved us of our sins.

Acts of God and the act of playing God

First there were the Acts of God – natural disasters: floods, droughts, pestilence and the like – calamities that cowered mankind to submission. Calamities that belittled man, are leading him to pray before the Almighty, seeking the Arc of redressal. Then, aided by the lamp of science man set out to conquer the elements, to subjugate nature and play God. He thought in his blind haste that he can not only replicate what God has created, but also harness the forces of His benevolence to stretch the horizons.

The disastrous consequences of this desperate gambit are for all to see. The polar caps are melting. The sea levels are rising. Climatic conditions are becoming extreme with the summers becoming harsher, winters colder and the monsoons erratic. Droughts, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes are murmuring in protest, their frequencies becoming increasingly regular. A benevolent God telling his errant child to mend his ways, angry, yet unwilling to meet out the justice that is bound to be harsh.

The Call for Reconciliation- Ignatian Way

Saint Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises invites all of us to contemplate creation and to see in it the Creator: dwelling in all creatures and labouring for us in each particular reality and in all of history (SP. Ex., nos. 234-236). Jesuit commitment to the defense and protection of the nature and environment was realized already during the General Congregation 34 (GC 34, 1995) preparations. In 1999, under the responsibility of Michael Czerny, the team prepared the document entitled “We live in Broken world” (*Promotio Iustitiae*, April 1999, no. 70). This document has, for many years, accompanied the reflection and the work of many Jesuits and lay partners involved in ecological and environmental issues. GC 35 highlighted that the Jesuit ministries should be developed “at the frontiers” and answering to a “call for reconciliation”. It decided to incorporate the environmental and ecological challenges at the core of the mission of the Society. The call was to establish right relationships and the apostolic response was to build right relationships with God, with one another and with creation (GC 35: Dec 3, No33-34). The spiritual exercises emphasizes God’s immanence in all the created world, and invites the exercitants to find God in all things. A concept similar in the Chapter 4 of the Isavasya Upanishad, “Isavasyam idam sarvam ...” the whole universe is pervaded by the Lord, whatever is moving and not moving in this world. By such renunciation enjoy or protect.

The Future We Want: Rio+20 Initiatives

Over 2,000 participants, representing business as well as investors, governments, local authorities, civil society and UN entities attended the UN forum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012 was the biggest of its kind forum till date. Issues of the day were discussed, lectures delivered, roadmaps charted. But will it lead us on to ecological deliverance? The answer is not far to seek.

“Seek First the Kingdom”

People are more likely to cry out to God when they are in need than when they have plenty. Too often, the wealthy become complacent and self-satisfied and ascribe their riches to their own efforts instead of acknowledging that every good gift comes from God. The easier our lives become, the more enjoyment we derive from our wealth, the greater the temptation to

store up treasures on earth, instead of in heaven. If we focus on earthly things like material wealth and possessions, then we fail to give God the glory and worship He deserves. We are to serve God, not waste our time trying to become rich (Proverbs 23:4). Our heart's desire should be to store up riches in heaven and not worry about what we will eat or drink or wear. "But seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:25-34).

Need Vs Greed

The rich of the world: people, nations have become philistines in their worship of Mammon. Their actions are forcing them away from the path of righteousness, their actions often creating irreparable damage to Earth – consequences of which have to be suffered by all, especially the weak and the poor.

Jesus said it is very hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. When a rich young ruler asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. "When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth" (Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 10:17-31). By instructing him to give up his money, Jesus pointed out the young man's main problem: greed. The man could not follow Christ because he was following money. His love of this world interfered with his love for God.

Global Climate Change and Climate Refugees

Today, as we talk of a "future we want" we are faced with a similar predicament: we cannot hope to accomplish the greater goal of an ecologically balanced, sustainable future world order by reversing the trends of global warming and climate change, with greed in our hearts.

Take the glaring example of the climate induced refugees of Bangladesh. On the one hand, as a direct fallout of the industrial revolution, the sea levels are rising threatening to inundate vast tracks of coastal land, turning millions of poor, God forsaken people into climate refugees. On the other hand, the "civilized", "advanced" and "prosperous" world is yet even to coin a term for these people, leave alone take concrete steps to address their plight and apply balms on their plight. It is no coincidence that the countries that are the worst polluters, countries that contribute the most to the menace of climate change are also the ones with the most stringent immigration laws. Where is the compassion "He" taught us? If we do not strive for a "just" world order, we stand the risk of facing the wrath of Nature, for, as things are today, the poor and the children of future world order stand to suffer the most from our follies.

This ecological and environmental crisis that stares us in the eye today is not something that is location specific or confined within man-made boundaries. It is a disaster that is on the slow burner of global and epic proportions. And it will be "equal" to all in meeting out its judgment.

Science may well tell us how to put a cap on global green house gas emissions and how to optimally use the earth's finite resources but till such time we put a cap on our lust for more and our greed and attachment to earthly things, we can scarcely achieve the lofty talk.

We have to admit that we have miserably failed as custodians, like in the parable of talents and ask God to show us the way forward. He has given us this earth; let Him show how best we can nurture it for His children of tomorrow!

From Chaos to Cosmos

As a Jesuit and a child of God, I am hopeful yet. In the words of Holy Father we must be “hoping against hope! (Romans 4:18). Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope”. Yes, we have created chaos. Yes, I am sure God will take this chaos and create His cosmos out of it. But for Him to do so, we have to prove our honest intentions. We have to embrace a sustainable lifestyle. We have to revert back to the path of *tantum quantum* and live a simple yet meaningful existence. We have to cleanse our souls of greed and destroy the urges of conspicuous consumption and instant gratification – the twin scourges that have given rise to the two menaces that threaten all His creations – global warming and climate change.

Conclusion

The answers are deeply ingrained in our Jesuit traditions – in our deep rooted understanding of the ecology and the need to lead a life that is in harmony with the world at large, with a compassionate heart and a vision to endure. The wellbeing of life is assured by the qualitative and quantitative elements of the environment. When the Creator, at the end of creating the Earth and different form of life, expressed his awe and wonder at His creation “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Gen1:31).” He wished “let all be well”. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen 2:15). Come let us, by our examples, spread the light of awareness and bring them, those are sinning, back from condemnation so that the Earth may see a new dawn. Let us pay heed to the invitation of our Holy Father “let us be “protectors” of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment”. We need to move from self-centeredness → human-centeredness → life-centeredness → ecosystem-centeredness → Earth centeredness.

Original in English



Contemplation to attain love and ecology¹

José Alejandro Aguilar, SJ
Programa Suyusama, Colombia

Contemplation to reach in the spiritual exercises

To situate Contemplation to Attain Love (CAL) within the spiritual exercises, we should be aware of what we could call the movement of the spiritual exercises. A *motion* presupposes a special representation in which movement takes place; it has a beginning, middle and ending. A motion of consolation or desolation is a movement which takes place within us, which begins, reaches a middle point and ends. It is like a journey.

In the various descriptions St Ignatius makes of this motion, the word which sums up consolation is love. For St Ignatius love is a movement that takes me out of myself, a departure from my own love. Movement in reference to love means the totality of being. It is about letting love overcome egotism, frenzied attachments, so that you can embrace love in all things and creation.

For St Ignatius, motion is not only important because it is pleasant, but because to the extent that it is the action of God, it shows what can become the truth of my life.

Within the mission we find the objectivity of motion and that which distinguishes it from emotion. When we look more at the needs of others and of creation than our own desires, we transcend satisfaction and we position ourselves in the mission. To the extent that the action of the creator of God and the redemptive life of Christ are a calling for me, they become a question about my own life.

It is about the gift we seek to continue in the direction of that which gives meaning to our existence, contributing towards building pathways of reconciliation for all disputes, to overcome all inequalities and injustices; so that our hearts become full with God's love, the only way to counter the deep void behind the voracious appetite of wealth, power and pleasure; the chaos of meaning that today is dramatically expressed in the death and poverty of millions of human beings, as in the deterioration of our natural heritage.

As we discover that God gives us free will, we can do what we choose². If we do not listen to this message, our options, as noble as they may be, for peace, justice, the environment, will last for as long as the reasons which brought us to them, or our emotion, lasts.

¹ This article could also be entitled "Conversations with the text of Ulpiano Vásquez: *Contemplation to attain Love* (published in Portuguese by Edições Loyola, Sao Paulo in 2005) as key to ecology and the environment". I was impressed by the clarity and depth of knowledge that Ulpiano has of Ignatian spirituality and his ability to communicate it.

For St Ignatius the relationship with God is two directional: the creator acts in the created and the created acts in the creator. Ever since the first steps of the revelation, God appears as someone who is affected by humanity. God rejoices, is angered, repents, is affected by our love or lack of love; love or lack of love for others, for the marginalised and for creation.

The goal of the CAL, meaning of words and notes

Contemplation can be considered, at the same time, as a summary of the spiritual exercises as a way of giving life to them.

Contemplation: In the text of the CAL, we find a form of contemplating which corresponds in part to contemplation and in part to mediation.

To attain: When the grace that one asks for is very important, St Ignatius recommends doing a triple colloquy: one colloquy to Our Lady, another to Her Son and a third to Her Father. *"The first Colloquy to Our Lady, that she may get me grace from Her Son and Lord for three things..."*; all the intercessors and much grace are needed to obtain love.

Love: A word that St Ignatius uses little in the text of the Spiritual Exercises. It appears in the annotations, speaking of the embrace of God to the created and of the created to the Creator³. It also speaks of love in the rules of discernment, as fundamental characteristics of consolation⁴. In the rules on discernment, in which the causes of desolation are identified, it describes how in the last explanation which is *"so that we truly feel and know entirely that it does not depend on us, nor it is in us to have grown in love"*. In addition to the rules on discernment, to speak of love, it speaks of the movements of the soul by God *"bringing it all into love"*⁵.

The importance of the issue is corroborated by two notes from the CAL. Before speaking of how to attain love, he says: *"First, it is well to remark two things"*⁶. Pay attention to two things:

The *first* is that love must be put more into deeds than words.

St Ignatius did not say: love should be put into deeds and not words. He says *love should be put more in deeds than words*. More does not mean only. It does not mean we do not need words to nourish our love for God, for others, for creation. It means that our actions of solidarity for the poor, especially for the most vulnerable are more important, including our acts of taking care and restoring creation.

The second note is that *"love consists in interchange between the two parties"*. There is no love without reciprocity. Ignatius calls for communicative reciprocity. Communications at all levels: of the beloved in relation to the loved one, and of the loved one in relation to the beloved.

For St Ignatius there is no love without communication. Even in the case in which inequality is clear, if the person that has less to communicate does not communicate anything, there is no love, there could be social assistance, or something else. This is the deep sense of participation and democracy, inhibited by authoritarianism, partial democracies,

² John 15, 16.

³ Spiritual Exercises 15.

⁴ Spiritual Exercises 316.

⁵ Spiritual Exercises 330.

⁶ Spiritual Exercises 230 and 231.

'assistencialismo'. Participative democracy must stimulate all the capabilities of human beings, in such a manner that they can totally express love for the care of others and of creation.

The preludes of the CAL

*The first prelude*⁷ is the *Composition of place*. If the first composition of place of the spiritual exercises were to see myself as exiled, far from the Lord, this composition brings me to an extreme place, in the fullness of time: "to see how I am standing before God our Lord, and of the Angels and of the Saints".

We can perceive, despite all limits, that in Christ we have already been "reached by love", that in Christ we are missing nothing, or that in Christ hope is realized. This which is the meaning of the first prelude is transformed by St Ignatius into a petition in the second.

In the second prelude, San Ignatius places the petition of the CAL: "interior knowledge of so great good received, in order that being entirely grateful, I may be able in all to love and serve His Divine Majesty"⁸. This Knowledge is also experience, that deepens to the point of having knowledge of the heart. For me, this means the degree in which I perceive and experience how I am loved, as well as I want to and can love. So that there is no possibility of interpreting love as only feeling, to love and serve are put together, and in all, which include the victims of injustice and wounded creation.

Building a new society must make it possible to see the true face of God. "In all to love and serve" means making faces of God from the cultural, economic, environmental, political and social mediations, faces of goodness, life, justice, kindness, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The adoption of alternative lifestyles, based on fundamental cultural, environmental and social justice values⁹, demands intellectual rigor more than detailed descriptions of challenges and difficulties. We are being asked to penetrate these values and transform them and recreate them patiently.

First point

The first point "is to bring to memory the benefits received". St Ignatius proposes an order: "the benefits received, of **Creation**, Redemption and particular gifts..."¹⁰.

The particular gifts, in addition to the qualities with which we have been blessed, include the sanctification or the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gifts received of Creation, Redemption and particular gifts, through the experience of love received, "pondered with much feeling", make it such that my capacity to be moved situates me within the dynamics of co-Creation, co-Redemption and co-Sanctification.

In the CAL, St Ignatius wishes that by recognising redeemed and sanctified **creatures**, we can recognise what the Father did, what His Son told us and what, through the Holy Spirit, God wants to do which is "give Himself to us".

⁷ Spiritual Exercises 232.

⁸ Spiritual Exercises 233.

⁹ *We live in a Broken World. Reflections on Ecology*, Promotio Iustitiae 70, 1999, 17.

¹⁰ Spiritual Exercises 234.

St Ignatius sees the difference, between offering and giving, where there is progress. There is a difference between giving something and giving oneself or giving up oneself. This is the specific place of the prayer "Take Lord and receive..." It is the human response to the gifts of God, to the gift that God makes of Himself. In the sense of reciprocity the response is not only to offer what I have, but to offer myself.

Not able to give our life to God in the way in which He gives Himself to us, frequently this has its origins in ignorance or failure to recognize what God has done for us, giving us life, to others and to Creation; so we do not have freedom, courage to try respond to this act of God by giving our life in the construction of harmonious relationships with Him, with others and with Creation.

Every one of the points of the CAL is written and structured in order to reply to love as communication. It is about seeing the basis of the reciprocity in giving and in the gift. The CAL cannot be reduced to contemplation on the beauty of nature. This exercise, which forms part of the spiritual experience, should help us to appreciate the gift of creation, bringing us to the work of redemption and of sanctification, including reconciliation with others and with creation.

Second point

Bring to mind all the gifts received that allowed us to "Look at how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them being."

In general, the CAL could be used in any place, in any situation, in marginalised districts, in suburbs, at borders, because it is about seeing things from the point of view of Redemption.

To reduce the CAL to seeing God only in just or beautiful things, or in suffering of creation is to deprive ourselves of seeing, preparing and making things become beautiful, just. Therefore, it is also important to do the CAL in contexts in which there is no beauty, in which there is injustice, poverty, environmental degradation to help ourselves to discover beauty, where we believe there is none and above all answer the call to contribute to justice and beauty.¹¹

However, where God is in the world, that God is ecology, in the deepest sense, the meaning of home, does not mean that God should be confused with the earth.

Third point

Scholars consider the third point to be the most controversial. It says: "*to consider how God works and labours*".

In Ignatian terminology the word *work* always refers to a certain suffering. St Ignatius would like us to see the action of God in all our worldly tasks, in everything in the world in course, or incomplete, that is being done. God, for St Ignatius, is worker. The presence of God in the world is hard working.

Before our solidarity with victims of injustice and with degraded creation can be effective, we need to make a gigantic effort to design and implement alternative societies. And this

¹¹ *Healing a broken world*, Promotio Iustitiae 106, 2011, n. 7.

effort, more demanding that a diagnostic analysis implies selfless work, suffering, additional suffering that comes from incomprehension or persecution for having chosen this life path.

One of the dangers that we have to take into account is that we are facing enormous challenges, like those of social and environmental justice, or when we ignore these challenges, it is like turning spirituality into a refuge. But if God works, if God suffers, this flight is not of the world, it is of God's. Wishing to flee the world, in reality we separate ourselves from or create a God which is a projection of our perplexity, of our scepticism, and deep down of our indifference. It is the narrowing of a heart which can no longer connect to the suffering of the world, or to those who no longer care about the pain of others, nor the wounds of a broken world.

Fourth point

The vision that Teilhard de Chardin has of the world that comes from God and comes back to God is certainly characterised by the CAL. This contemplation puts the grace of God, which is like the light that at all times illuminates us, or the giving of oneself that God gives to humanity, as the source from which all waters come.

Conclusion: Contemplation happens in restored action

Contemplation may exist in action, in such a way that I see that it is God who acts, who works in the world, and I would like to be His collaborator.

This type of action, is only possible living in contemplation. And contemplation, to be true, happens in action. In the first place, that is in the action of God in the world. Collaborating with God is to find where He wants to be found.

“Loving God in all things and all things in God”. For St Ignatius there is no love of God that is not also the love of all things, there is one absolute with the world, no world without God. The love of all things is only real in God. It is about joining the two paths: *the path that goes from all things to God, and the path that descends to God from all things*.

The direct relationship of God to the person, is found in the vision of the 35th GC, as motion, as an invitation to establish harmonious relationships with the Creator, with others, especially the most fragile and with creation, where the care of others and of conservation are most crucial.

*Original Spanish
Translation by James Stapleton*



Interplay of Faith and Justice in Environmental Issues

Prem Xalxo, SJ

Università Gregoriana, Roma, Italia

“Too often we are insulated from any real contact with unbelief and with the hard, everyday consequences of injustice and oppression. As a result we run the risk of not being able to hear the cry of the Gospel as it is addressed to us by the men and women of our time. A deeper involvement with others in the world will therefore be a decisive test of our faith, of our hope, and of our apostolic charity”¹.

The 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus had already envisaged the need of inculcating a mutually enriching bond between our life of faith and our involvement in the works of charity and justice. Without a genuine life of faith, our involvement with others in the world will be more for our own glory, rather than for the greater glory of God. This interplay of faith and justice offers new hope to understand current environmental issues and also provides some plausible answers to protect, conserve and maintain the beauty, harmony and integrity of the entire creation.

In 2012, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace convened two brain-storming sessions to explore glaring issues pertaining to environment and social justice, and to prepare a paper for R+20 Earth Summit to be held later that year in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June, 2012. The group consisted of the persons who were experts in various fields – professors, scientists, engineers, biologists and researchers. Each session was presided over by Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. During one of the interventions, I presented the question of sustainable development from the perspective of faith and morality emphasizing a changed human attitude toward natural resources as God’s blessings to all. This could enhance the spirit of sharing and justice to all as far as the basic human needs were concerned, for the present as well as future generations. An engineer from NATO was struck by my observations because in their discussions they never analyze these issues from the angle of faith and morality. What matters most to them is the scientific inquiry into the root causes of every environmental issue and its impact on human life situation *hic et nunc*.

Can we indeed talk about the current environmental issues from a faith perspective? The immediate response can be found in the words of John Paul II, who, in his message for the

¹ 32nd General Congregation, d. 4, n. 35[84]; cf., John W. Padberg, ed., *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st – 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, Saint Louis 2009, 306.

World Day of Peace *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* (1990), has underlined, “Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith”. Faith serves as a lens through which we visualize the whole of the universe as the handiwork or the creation of God. It was John Paul II, who, in the same message, described the ecological crisis as a moral issue. Visualizing the prevalent glaring environmental issues from the faith perspective can, therefore, shed light on our relationship with God, with our fellow human beings and with the entire creation; and thus lead us our way towards building a more humane, just and equitable society.

Contemporary situation

The world-wide scenario is undergoing a rapid socio-cultural, religious and political transformation. Materialism, consumerism, individualism and radical secularism seem to have taken centre stage in day-to-day life for a large proportion of the world population pushing the sense of religiosity, faith and morality to the backstage. The predominant consumerist attitude fuelled by an economy based on market and profit is causing enormous damage to the environment. “That which is good and useful to me, is good; otherwise it is bad”, seems to be the prevalent moral axiom. Propelled by such an axiom, the unbridled exploitation of natural resources to satisfy the insatiable human thirst for more and better has a visible damaging impact on the environment in the form of global warming and climate change, and pollution of land, water and air. In exploiting natural resources to satisfy our greed and inflated needs, we forget that, instead of fulfilling our role of being collaborators with God in the work of creation, we act independently of God. Thereby we provoke the revolt of nature, which we dominate rather than govern. (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 37).

Although environmentalists are making every effort to generate awareness of environmental issues, many scientists deny the urgency or the gravity of the problem. It is interesting to note that classical modern science has viewed creation as “a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly”². On the other hand, our Christian faith teaches us the opposite, that creation is not a dull affair. Creation, as the handiwork of God, holds a profound meaning and importance for our life and dignity as human beings as well as to our life of faith as Christians. In and through creation, we reach out to God and realize His loving, creative and saving presence amidst us. During every Eucharistic celebration, we proclaim with joy, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory”, because the Creator of heaven and earth is worthy of praise of the glory of his wonderful creation.

Lynn White, Jr., who had stated already in 1967 that the Christianity bears “an immense burden of guilt” for our present ecological concerns, also underlined that we can search for possible and appropriate answers to such concerns by going back to our faith, “Both our present science and our present technology are so tainted with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be

² Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, MacMillan, New York 1926, 80. See also, David Toolan, “The Voice of the Hurricane: Cosmology and a Catholic Theology of Nature” in Drew Christiansen – Walter Grazer, ed., “And God Saw That It Was Good”: *Catholic Theology and the Environment*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C. 1996, 77.

essentially religious, whether we call it that or not”³. And therefore, all environmental issues can be seen and addressed from the perspective of faith to search for the appropriate answers to such issues⁴. Our life of faith, which must inspire us to work for human and environmental justice, invites us to take up the responsibility of being the stewards of creation, to cultivate and care for it (cf. Genesis 2:15).

Faith that does Justice

Our faith in Christ Jesus and our mission to proclaim the Gospel demand of us a commitment to promote justice and to enter into solidarity with the voiceless and the powerless. This commitment will move us seriously to verse ourselves in the complex problems which they face in their lives, then to identify and assume our own responsibilities to the society⁵.

It is evident that one of the complex problems which humanity faces today springs out of the continuous assault on the environment. In the name of development, the poor are being displaced, their land is being acquired forcefully – legally or illegally-- and sold to the multinationals, forests are depleted and the natural resources are exploited without proper care for the environment. Water, air and soil, which are the lifeblood of every form of life, are being polluted and contaminated – all in the name of development. Unfortunately, the current concept of development is defined and driven by a market and profit-oriented economy, in which the entire creation and its resources are viewed merely as commodities. It is a system of economy that strives to exploit everything for the betterment of life without any concern for future generations. The words of the Prophet Jeremiah seem to explain this dramatic situation, “When I brought you into the garden land to eat its goodly fruits, You entered and defiled my land, you made my heritage loathsome” (Jer 2:7).

Unfortunately, the current form of development does not trickle down to the majority of the world population – the gap between the rich and the poor has been constantly and steadily widening; those who are rich are becoming richer and the life of the poor is becoming more wretched and harrowing. Those who are rich seem to hoard everything possible and thus deprive others of the basic necessities of life. Jesus warned us against such attitudes, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Mt 6:19-21). For those who are busy hoarding riches his warning and condemnation seem to fall on deaf ears.

In the parable of the rich and Lazarus, Jesus does not seem to condemn the rich man for what he possesses; rather, he condemns him for his passivity and indifference to the poor man Lazarus. A perfect example of an unjust situation, which is not unfamiliar in our current situation! Those who are rich seem to close their eyes and refuse to see a vast majority of people who lack the basic human needs – food, drinking water, proper facilities for education, sanitation, health care and other essential amenities. They are the objects of exploitation and victims of injustice and discrimination. Ironically, they are often blamed for

³ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis”, in Mary H. MacKinnon – Moni McIntyre, eds, *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City 1995, 34. The article was first published in *Science* 155 (1967) 1203-1207.

⁴ Cf., Prem Xalxo, “God-Centered Approach to Creation: A Need of the Hour” in *Jeevadhara* XLII (2012) 252, 464.

⁵ 32nd General Congregation, d. 4, n. 42[91]; cf., John W. Padberg, ed., *op.cit.*, 308.

the current environmental degradation. In such a scenario, our faith in Jesus Christ must propel us to action – to work for human and ecological justice. St. James writes in his letter, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well’, but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:14-17). Therefore, as “the decisive test of our faith, of our hope, and of our apostolic charity”⁶, we must live our faith authentically to bear desirable fruits of charity and justice.

Our adherence to faith in Jesus Christ will bear fruit only in the concrete works of charity and in a clearly spelt out, justice-oriented attitude toward our fellow human beings, especially the poor, needy and marginalized of society. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World invites every faithful person to make the pain of the poor and suffering his or her own because that is the mission Jesus Christ gave to his disciples, “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (Gaudium et spes, n° 1). The greatest commandment of Jesus is the commandment of love, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Mt 22:36-40). Love of neighbour does not exclude our responsibility toward the environment, which is indispensable for human wellbeing, survival and continuity. Together with our commitment to justice for the less privileged people of the society, our faith must guide us to care for, preserve and maintain the harmonious order and integrity of creation. We cannot but place creation in the context of the mystery of the Incarnation, because the salvation offered by Jesus is the cosmic salvation, which includes the restoration of broken relationships – with God, with fellow human beings and with the entire creation.

Addressing the gathering at the opening of Arrupe College, Harrare on 22 August 1998, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach beautifully summed up the interplay of faith and justice on environmental issues, “[...] we must defend the rights of the poor because they suffer the most from the ecological crisis; we must bring to light the ethical values of the communion between people and their environment, and educate young people in these values; we must help the discovery of the aesthetic values of the environment so as to be able to sing with Francis the glory of God and to discern prayerfully with Ignatius the love of God shining through the environment”. By putting his thoughts under the title Our Responsibility for God’s Creation, Kolvenbach showed the way to two-fold justice – justice to fellow human beings and justice to the environment. The old and unequivocal definition of justice is to render to each what is his or her due. Is it viable in today’s context? Yes, because our work for justice inspired by faith inevitably includes our commitment to propose and to promote an authentic development which guarantees the dignity, wellbeing and prosperity of not only every human being as the child of God, created in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27), but also that of all creation.

⁶ 32nd General Congregation, d. 4, n. 35[84]; cf. *ibid.*, 306

Faith that kindles multiple reconciliations

John Paul II, in his message for World Peace Day (2002), had appealed for peace and justice through reconciliation saying, "There is no peace without justice and there is no justice without forgiveness". What is needed today is forgiveness for all the wrongdoings of humanity against creation, plundering its resources and damaging the future prospect of human survival and continuity. Reconciliation with God, with oneself and with one another is at the heart of our Christian faith. In today's context, the growing awareness of various disastrous impacts on the environment resulting from human folly has forced us to reflect on the need for reconciliation with creation. The unbridled exploitation of both human and natural resources often manifests the human selfishness, arrogance, violence and greed for more and better, which ultimately results in the destruction of the beauty, integrity and harmony of creation. These actions "degrade the earth and thereby threaten both human and non-human lives and interests"⁷. According to *Gaudium et spes*, "Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things" (*Gaudium et spes*, n° 13). Reconciliation leads us to step forward to mend our ways and to establish peace with one another and with creation. St. Paul emphatically mentions that everything was reconciled to God in Jesus Christ, "whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2Cor 5:17-19).

Reconciliation implies the restoration of a ruptured relationship. Reconciliation with creation would mean restoring the interdependent human relationship with creation, reaffirming the will to use everything on the face of the earth for human wellbeing and the wellbeing of the whole of creation, setting aside hostile and aggressive attitudes and actions towards the created order. Reconciliation is both a gift and a task, and its preeminent mark is love, respect and commitment to justice. The God of the Holy Scriptures is the God of love, mercy, compassion and justice. He is the source and measure of mercy, love and justice. In his mercy and love, he makes his justice prevail and reconciles everything to himself in Jesus Christ, who is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [...] For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross (through him), whether those on earth or those in heaven" (Col 1:15; 17; 19-20). In other words, our faith in Jesus Christ, if lived faithfully and authentically, has the potential to kindle multiple reconciliations to re-establish peace and harmony with one another and with all of creation.

Hope for the Future

Apart from the relentless efforts of some of the scientists and the environmentalists to create ecological awareness amongst people, a great sign of hope for the protection and conservation of the environment has come from Pope Francis. From the moment of his election as the successor of St. Peter, he has repeatedly challenged all to take care of God's creation. He chose to be called Francis to rejuvenate the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, who loved and protected creation. During the Inaugural Holy Mass of his pontificate, Pope Francis invited people of all faith to become the protectors of God's gifts and reiterated that

⁷ William C. French, "Ecological Security and Policies of Restraint" in D.T. Hessel – R.R. Ruether, ed., *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Wellbeing of Earth and Humans*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2000, 476-477.

the vocation of being a protector means “protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world”. He almost indicated a point of convergence of human wellbeing and the wellbeing of the environment, and underlined the responsibility for “protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about”. Indeed it is our collective responsibility to build “friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness”.

Contemporary realities and necessities indicate the need of adopting a holistic approach to environmental issues through which faith may kindle the hope of restoring interdependent relationships with fellow human beings and with creation. Those realities also demonstrate that the current environmental issues cannot be addressed as isolated issues separated from the hopes and aspirations of day-to-day human life. What is needed is the re-evaluation and re-examination of human choices and behavioral pattern. The 32nd General Congregation had rightly underlined that “it is now within human power to make the world more just [...]. Our new mastery over nature and man himself is used, often enough, to exploit individuals, groups, and peoples rather than to distribute the resources of the planet more equitably”⁸. The question arises, “What can we do or contribute to keep our hope for the future alive and active”? The answer is simple: “We can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work cannot be found in science or technology, [...] it can still be found in the traditional wisdom of mankind”⁹. Therefore, hope for the future lies in going back to the roots – socio-cultural and religious roots, which can explain our interconnected relationship with one another and with the whole of creation. It is rightly observed that “environmental concerns will be taken seriously as a matter of faith only if Catholics and other faith communities see this concern as deeply rooted in Scripture and theology, spirituality and worship, and moral and ethical norms”¹⁰.

Today, it is not enough to repeat the moral axiom, “Everyone has right to live and right to natural resources”. Faith must encourage the faithful to fight against injustice, corruption, malfeasance and greed for more and better; fight to achieve equity and social justice, and maintain the integrity of creation. Care for the environment affects the quality of our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation itself. It touches the core of our faith in and love for God, “from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying”¹¹. We have to care for, respect, protect, conserve and make equitable use of both human as well as natural resources. We have a collective responsibility towards one another and towards creation. However, too much emphasis on the conservation of the environment tends to ignore the real suffering of the people in need. Without a radical change in our consciousness and readiness to be available for the victims of injustice, exploitation and discrimination, and without a plan to salvage the harmony and beauty of creation, our efforts will remain as the never-ending lists of reminders, dos and don’ts. However, if “we clean up a little internally as well as externally”, we can hope that our efforts will be “more of a renewing and joy-creating movement”¹². After all, as the Psalmist says, “The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who live there” (Ps 24:1). We must not forget that we need to maintain the integrity, beauty, order and harmony of creation for our own wellbeing and survival; the earth will continue to live and evolve even without us.

⁸ 32nd General Congregation, d. 4, n. 27[76]; cf., John W. Padberg, ed., *op.cit.*, 304.

⁹ E.F. Schumacher, *Small is beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Abacus, London 1976, 250.

¹⁰ D. Christiansen – W. Grazer, ed., “And God Saw That it Was Good”: *Catholic Theology and the Environment*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C. 1996, 6.

¹¹ 35th General Congregation, d. 3, n. 32[76]; cf., John W. Padberg, ed., *op.cit.*, 751.

¹² Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, 91.

Therefore, taking recourse to faith, we can study, research, reflect and implement ways and means to live in harmony with one another and with creation. In the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, “man fully alive is the glory of God”. We can be fully alive and be God’s glory by living in harmony with one another and with the entire creation motivated and inspired by faith and the spirit of justice.

It will be apt to conclude the interplay of faith and justice in environmental issues with the words of Pope Francis, who washed the feet of the twelve young detainees of the Juvenile Detention Centre of Casal Del Marmo in Rome on Maundy Thursday (28 March 2013) and encouraged them saying, “Don’t lose hope, with hope you can always go on”. And that is the hope for the future!

Original in English



Ecology and Consolation

The Ignatian mystical foundation for our option of ecology

José García de Castro, SJ

Universidad Comillas, Madrid, España

The experience of Ignatius Loyola and the spirituality that flows from it make it possible for us to interpret the world and history as places of God's revelation. Ignatius's experience on the banks of the Cardoner River, his understanding of consolation, and his objective in proposing the "Contemplation to Attain Love" can help us to understand the holiness of things. Consolación, el sentir mundano del don de Dios.

Consolation as the worldly sensing of God's gift.

I believe that the most important clue for understanding and justifying our option of caring for the natural world is to be found in what is the hermeneutical center of Ignatius' system of discernment of spirits and the keystone of his anthropology: CONSOLATION.

As is well known, Ignatius defines consolation in no. 316 of the *Exercises*; this is the third rule for discernment, though it was perhaps not the first one he worked out.

The first part of the definition of consolation states what I take to be the definition of Consolation without Prior Cause, that is, the most direct, natural, and desired way that God has of communicating with his creatures: giving himself essentially in Love that "is" rather than just "gives" – it involves "being inflamed with love of one's Creator and Lord."

Thus in 316.1 Ignatius links this direct experience of God (an interior movement that inflames the soul with *love* of its Creator and Lord) very closely with the orientation toward *creatures* because of the love received, which "descends from above," for he states: [in the experience of consolation the soul] "can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself but only in the Creator of them all."

For Ignatius direct experience of God (that is, of God in us) is the unifying experience that creates a religious subject, but that same experience is also an experience of the world, a way of *feeling* the world to be a creature like myself. Ignatius does not want to diminish the importance or the density of the human being's intimate experience of the Creator or of the Creator's intimate experience of the creature, for to diminish it would be to destroy the heart of Ignatius' intention and the originality of his contribution to the spiritual tradition of the West. What is marvelous about this experience is that it finds its authenticating element in

the transformation that takes place in the “spiritual” subject [SpEx 336]; the ultimate test of authenticity is in the way the subject beholds the world and, beholding it, *feels it*. Such feeling or “feeling perception” of the world cannot be understood except in terms of *creatureliness*, a quality to which I have access by the love that is conceded to me.

Consolation is therefore (*consequenter*, [SpEx 316]) the experience of God (possessive genitive) which, passing through me, flows toward the world and senses the world as Creature, that is, as existing in absolute relation with its Creator. Consolation reveals to me the profound identity of the world as creaturely, as always relative by definition, as existing inevitably in reference to its Creator. If we expand logically the terse expressions characteristic of Ignatius, we might say that in our mystical experience of being indwelt by God (cf. Contemplation to Attain Love [CAL]) and our *feeling* this to be so, we also experience the world itself as “inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord’ just as we ourselves become inflamed in the deep, inalienable part of our religious experience.

Consolation experienced *in this way* (for it can also be experienced in other ways, as explained in [316.2] and [316.3]) is therefore an experience of universal fraternity, of the close relation of all of nature to what I feel to be the same ontological status as I have myself: a *creature* and therefore a lovable receptacle of the divine presence. Thus the Holy Spirit through consolation “draws me” toward the world, and I feel irretrievably linked to it by the one love that grounds all being. The creation and I ... we are much more alike than we might suspect.

It is worthwhile to observe two nuances of special importance for us.

- a. One is the *consequenter* (therefore) to which we have already alluded: “...and *therefore* since [the soul] can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself ...” The term refers here not to a temporal consequence (first one thing, then another) but to a semantic consequence, that is, one concerned with meaning; this is proper to the dynamic of the experience of consolation, which necessarily implies being attracted by the love of creatures. But I think that Ignatius wants to refer to just a single mystical instant. Sensing God is inevitably sensing the lovable condition of all reality that lives with me on the face of the earth.
- b. The second consideration concerns the *in itself*: “since [the soul] can love no created thing on the face of the earth *in itself*.” A careful reading shows us that this phrase can be interpreted in two ways. It may refer to the *subject* of the sentence and thus would mean: “When the soul experiences consolation, it cannot love creatures *in itself* [by itself], but only in the Creator of them all.” But the *in itself* can also refer to the creatures, and then the phrase would be interpreted thus: “When the soul experiences consolation, it can love no created thing on the face of the earth *in itself* [for itself], but only in the Creator of them all.”

We will never know where Ignatius intended to place the accent (whether on the subject or on the creatures), but what is important is that in both cases *the source* of love is in neither the subject nor the creatures. Neither is the soul capable of loving the world this way by its own strength, nor are things of themselves or in themselves lovable in that way, but only because they are referred to the Creator whose goodness dwells in them.

Creatures “for me,” the living reality of God

In the First Week of the *Exercises* we find an image that has not had the benefit of good theological interpretation and translation in our times. It has therefore often been neglected in both the theological and pastoral commentaries on Ignatius’s manual. I refer to no. [60], the fifth point of the second exercise of the First Week.

Given the spiritual nature of angels and saints, we can quite easily understand why they react to my sin by “interceding and praying for me.” But what we perhaps find more difficult to understand is how these functions of prayer and intercession can be attributed to creatures such as “the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements; the fruits, birds, fishes, and animals—and the earth, how is it that it has not opened up and swallowed me?” [60]. What was in Ignatius’ mind when he wrote this? How did he conceive nature and its relation to human beings? What kind of life did he attribute to it? And above all, what role did he see it playing in the religious experience of the one making the Exercises?

In this point, Ignatius makes creatures that are apparently spiritless part of the retreatant’s spiritual process, thus foreshadowing the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the Exercises. But the creatures are not spiritless: they become present to me in the process of conversion and take on an active function. They react with solidarity to the malice and seriousness of “my sin”; they bear it, they suffer it, they respond to it in the only way they can since the world in itself is good—the world is a creature, and like every creature it manifests its fraternal solidarity spontaneously and uncritically.

Just as my sinful situation grieves the Creator, so it also grieves the world’s creatures, which join themselves to the prayer of the angels and saints. Thus the world is experienced as a living organism animated by the love of God that dwells in all of it; it is a world endowed with *pneuma* according its own particular form of existence. Its freedom consists in revealing the mutual love of creatures and how they work together for me. That is to say, the way in which creatures express their praise and reverence for the Creator and prove that “love is shown more in deeds than in words” takes the form of incessant intercession for sinners, for me, before the Creator.

Therefore, how can I not love this world which has borne with my wickedness and responsibility and which still, despite my deserving to be justly condemned, suffers with amazing patience my criminal neglect of itself?

Delving more deeply into this vision of the world can help us to correct our vision of nature and the whole environment that makes our life possible. For Ignatius *things* are animate reality, indwelt reality, spiritual reality; they are a sibling reality that lives-with-me and feels-with-me and therefore a reality that affects my history and shapes it silently and patiently. To the extent that they can, things also “labor and work for me” as God does in the CAL [SpEx 236]. Nature is a mother, a womb of religious energy that does not remain indifferent in the face of my sinful affairs; rather it becomes a sister to me, a sister who feels herself bound to me by the same indwelling love, and therefore “offers herself for the labor” (as in the meditation of the Temporal King [SpEx 96-97]) and works for my benefit. Does not this Ignatian intuition change our way of “experiencing and knowing” things?

What complicates matters, as is often the case in theology, is the kind of freedom human beings possess, which is different from the freedom experienced by plants and animals. Ignatius responds to this complexity in the human realm in the first note of the CAL, where he tells us that “love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words” [SpEx 230]. When we are disconnected from this referential experience of *consolation*, our going forth in

mission to the world and to history often becomes an arid, exhausting effort, a labor more akin to egocentric, Promethean projects than to religious ventures borne gently by the Spirit. The key for approaching and influencing the world has to do with the ecology of the Ignatian subject, for the Ignatian subject *first* experiences the Risen One's "consoling role" [SpEx 224] (first passivity) and only then produces the *works* proper to love for the world (reflex activity).

Our works and ministries, the construction of a pneumatological ecology

The proper working of consolation is loving labor on behalf of history. We might say that, understood in the Ignatian sense, the work of the Spirit in us does not consist in our presenting to the world the experience we have had of God in some intimate moment apart from the world. It does not consist in giving the world what we have received from God (that is, it is not the Dominican schema of "*contemplata aliis tradere*"). Rather, it means going forth lovingly toward that world which calls us out of the love that it has already received and that sustains it. What we do (work/ministries) is a loving dialogue for the construction of a pneumatological ecosystem which is continually moving creation, in the midst of its groans (Rm 8,22), toward its final destiny, its Omega Point, Christ. I believe that, given the great urgency we feel to "heal" so many wounded parts of the world, we can find here a solid mystical support for our action and for linking it to a religious option for ecology: the world is God's World.

Spirit - consolation - ministry - world - Spirit. This is the cycle. It's not that we do good things *after* we have experienced God's goodness in us. No, that is not how we justify our experience of God. Rather, our experience *of* God is in our working; our experience is *of* God working through our hands. A parallel can be found in rule 2 of the First Week [SpEx 315] where Ignatius says that "in the case of persons who are earnestly purging away their sins and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord" the good spirit gives them courage and strength and makes things easier "so that they may move forward in *doing good*." It is the Spirit who "draws me" toward the same Spirit who dwells in all things, who is all in all. "Healing the world" means healing the very God who indwells the world, thus completing a process of goodness in which "the beginning, middle, and end are all good and tend to what is wholly good [333]."

But how does God dwell in the world, and what type of relationship with him does he propose to us? As Ignatius comments briefly in [236]: God dwells in the world by *working* and *laboring*. The first of these verbs, *working* [*trabajar*¹ in Spanish], alludes to what we might call the strenuous element of God's activity. His presence is a constant, persevering, exhausting activity. It was in this way that God entered into history in Jesus, "journeying and toiling" [116]; it was in this way that Jesus called those who would be his disciples: "whoever wishes to come with me must labor with me" [95]; and these will consequently "offer themselves wholeheartedly for this labor" [96]. The second verb, *laboring* [*laborar* in Spanish], adds a qualitative character to God's action: it is the careful activity of the hands of the weaver at the loom, the hands of the potter at the wheel, or the hands of the carpenter with the wood. God works hard, but he labors carefully, lovingly, artfully... such is his presence in Creation, and such is the presence that draws us toward the world so that we "go and do likewise," following the lead of the Samaritan.

¹ The etymology of the word "trabajar" is interesting: *trabajo* comes from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument of torture made of three sticks on which the condemned person was stretched. This etymology evokes in our time connotations of suffering, pain, effort, just as in the 16th century.

Care of the world is a mystical habit, a way of breathing forth the Spirit we have received, the Spirit which has already made us creatures but which places in our hands the responsibility of freely continuing a *process* of creation. The Spirit guarantees that she will be present in us *realizing* (the participle is important) in us all the constructive, creative life processes which are advancing throughout the world (growing, feeling, understanding), and she is patiently but dynamically awaiting us in all creation.

“Pouring forth a thousand graces...”

Where does all this leave us? Ignatius’s unique conception of mystical experience does not seek to remove the religious subject from history or from the world, evoking perhaps the prayer that Jesus uttered for his disciples on that Holy Night: “Do not take them out of the world” (Jn 17,15). To the contrary, Ignatius places us in the heart of Creation; we are Creation; I am creation. I am not a “being facing” the world, laboring effectively and competently for its welfare. If such were the case, I would end up situating myself in an ontological state superior to that of the rest of Creation, and I might even be in danger of considering myself superior to other beings, including humans, that I consider less perfect than I am. The experience of the love that *draws me on*, getting me out of myself as the only way to lead me deeper into myself, is what we might call an experience of religious *worldliness*. Through such *worldliness* all is unveiled and revealed with that excess of being that emerges only when its sacred condition is allowed to be seen: “and all things appeared new to him” [Autobiography 29-Cardoner].

As I see it, speaking of ecology from this perspective confronts us with questions about the poverty and modesty of those who inhabit the face of this earth and who are invited to contemplate themselves as humble parts of the environment. I believe that the Mystery of the Incarnation teaches us to become part of the world, one thing among so many, and yet one thing in the midst of *so much*. Only when we have attained the viewpoint of the Creator (consolation) do we discover the thousand graces already poured out on *God’s* world, which he had only to look upon to leave it “adorned in beauty” (Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle* 5).

Original Spanish
Translation Joseph Owen, SJ



The Four-Week Dynamic: The Spiritual Basis for Reconciliation with Creation

James Profit, SJ
Guelph, Canada

The four-week dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises enable us to pray through the ecological crisis, while deepening our relationship with the Creator. By experiencing God in the crisis, we are able to experience the life-giving gift of the resurrection, that life which comes out of death. As a result we are empowered to act as people of hope.

“Breathe deeply,” I told myself as I listened to the radio. Once again, someone was being interviewed who was denying the reality of climate change. The earliest spring ever caused our apple trees to bloom early this year. The late frost though, came at its usual time, killing all the apple blossoms. This past season, there was no apple crop, neither in our farm nor anywhere in our whole region. The spring was followed by the driest summer on record, hurting our crop production, especially our vegetables. Farmers around the world are already experiencing the effects of climate change. I thus had little patience to hear another explanation why we need not worry or change our actions.

Denial of the ecological crisis takes many forms in our society. It can be very tempting to protect ourselves by resorting to denial, for if we let ourselves absorb the details of the ecological crisis and its possible chaotic consequences, we may be overcome with guilt, shame and even despair. Hope is in short supply and the result is often a paralysis regarding any productive action.

We cannot however decide to be hopeful just by being determined and stubborn, for hope comes from the recesses of the Spirit. The Exercises, an excellent tool for dealing with the spiritual crisis that underpins the ecological crisis of our time, offers us a gift, particularly through the four week dynamic, the gift of hope. With this gift, we are able to move beyond any paralysis to constructive hope-filled action. Through hope, that gift of the Exercises to the environmental movement, we undergo a process, and in that process, our relationship with God, other humans and the rest of creation receives healing.

About twelve years ago, the Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph developed both eight-day and weekend retreats adapting the Exercises to address the ecological situation in which we find ourselves. We have offered these retreats at our retreat house, which is surrounded by 240 hectares of organic farmland, wetlands and woods. I have also offered these retreats in various locations on three continents. The days of the eight-day retreat follow the four week dynamic and consist of a presentation on a topic each day, individual prayer both indoors and outdoors, and liturgy. Sometimes spiritual direction is offered. Perhaps the greatest gift

of my ministry has been witnessing the transformation of retreatants empowered with hope and a deepened commitment to act on the basis of this hope.

In the First Week of the Exercises we deal with the extent of the crisis. This is not an easy week. We may focus on one particular issue, or give a more generalized account of the crisis. Retreatants have time to spiritually digest the crisis and their response to it, learning that this is not an exercise in apportioning blame.

In this first part of the retreat, the degree to which the retreatant is alienated from creation may also surface. John O'Donohue states "Part of the reason that we are so demented in our modern world is that we have lost our sense of belonging on the earth."¹ It is natural then that, in this first week, our sense of not belonging and the dysfunctional behaviours caused by this may become a focus of prayer. Reconciliation with creation begins.

Guilt, denial and despair often surface, which is good, for then they can be addressed. It is important to remember that the grace of the first week is to know the love of Jesus. We are loved sinners. Yes, we are limited. I have sinned. I can seem helpless as I live within sinful structures. However, this really is not about me as much as it is about Jesus. I am loved by Jesus, and the grace is to experience this love. When the grace is received, guilt which focuses on self is transformed and is focused on a response of love.

Sometimes, retreatants may disagree with a particular point of the presentation, asking for an academic discussion, or pointing to perceived factual inaccuracy. While there may be, occasionally, some inaccurate facts, the argument is generally rooted in the denial from which the retreatant is operating. I suggest that they take their arguments to God, rather than to me, and see what God does.

If despair is the response, I also encourage them to focus on God and be patient as the retreat is not over. The despair is usually healed during the course of the retreat.

In the Second Week, we nurture our relationship with God and creation – better stated, our relationship with God through nature. We come to know Jesus, the Jesus who was intimately connected with creation. His ministry began with 40 days in the desert, and ended in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had mystical experiences on the mountain (the Transfiguration) and in water (his baptism). The people around him grew their own food and fished. His stories used these images to explain the reign of God. This is the Jesus with whom our relationship is deepened.

We also nurture our relationship with the Cosmic Christ, Christ there in the beginning who became flesh (John 1), the Christ that is a part of evolution, the Christ who is drawing evolution forward, the Christ of creation.

This is the time of the retreat when we seek healing of any alienation from creation which we might feel. We seek to be at home within creation; we connect with the beauty of creation, an expression of the beauty of God. We contemplate the beauty of the land or of a sunset, cultivating a sense of reverence and love for the Earth and all its creatures. We are mindful that the entire universe sustains us. We fall in love with the God of creation.

The Third and Fourth Weeks are especially important for cultivating the experience of hope.

¹ John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong*, London, UK, Bantam Press, 1998, 10.

In the Third Week we pray again about the ecological crisis. Our Western society avoids death and suffering; even though our movies and video games glorify death, we avoid it. We have become used to seeing suffering as a problem to be solved by popping the right pill. We escape death by our various addictive behaviours and ways of avoidance – not unlike the stuff of the First Week. But with the Third Week, we dwell on death, and experience Jesus in it.

Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone tell of the Vietnamese Zen Monk, Tich Nhat Hanh, who once was asked what we need to do to save our world. “What we most need to do” he replied, “is to hear within us the sounds of the Earth crying.”²

As Christians we understand this cry to be the cry of Jesus on the cross. We seek to experience with Jesus the suffering of the earth. This is not about our actions, or lack of them. Our focus is on Jesus on the cross. We experience Jesus suffering in the increasingly dry and hot seasons which have become more of the norm. In the scarred earth of the Canadian oil sands developments, we see the crowning of Jesus with thorns. The disciples’ abandonment of Jesus is not unlike our abandonment of the earth. We go with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane as he surrenders to his suffering and death. Do we surrender to the death that is needed, or do we fall asleep in denial? We get in touch with the despair of the disciples as they witness the crucifixion. We experience the emptiness and hopelessness of Holy Saturday. We grieve the loss of species.

We come to realize that death is essential for life. We may want to pray by the fallen decaying log in the woods. We recall the scientific story of creation and recall that crises involving much death are nothing new. As Teilhard de Chardin reminds us, suffering, pain and death are a part of the evolutionary process. We experience the suffering Jesus in past extinctions as well as in the extinctions of the present. We may wish to contemplate a grain of wheat as we pray the words of Jesus “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12: 24) We experience the life-giving nature of death, death with all its messiness and pain -- God acting in Creation, God suffering in Creation.

In the Fourth Week, we are in the garden with Mary Magdalene, experiencing her despair, followed by her surprise and joy as she experiences Jesus risen. We get in touch with our own joy as we pray with the resurrected life of Jesus, and with the resurrected life within the earth. We recall the joy of spring after a life-deprived winter. We experience the beauty of the flowers nourished by the decaying log. We remember the life that we received from our own suffering. We experience the life of Earth – the life that comes through death -- as we experience new life, new forms of living, that come from Earth’s past crises.

We experience hope. As we immerse ourselves in the life that comes out of death, as we over and over again experience Jesus risen, we nurture the hope within us. This hope enables us to confront the ecological crisis in a new way. Our own personal guilt is not what is most important. We confront the forms of death of the ecological crisis with our life, knowing in hope and confidence that this death is not the end of the story. We become the expression of the resurrection. Our response becomes our joy. Our despair is transformed to hope.

² Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy*, Novato, California, New World Library, 2012, 75.

We receive confidence and hope in the capacity of Earth to be about life. The Earth will survive this ecological crisis. There may be much chaos, death, suffering and pain needed for the life of the planet to survive, yet we have confidence that the ultimate life of the Earth, of life out of death, will be the result. Christ risen will continue to be expressed, and probably in ways which we cannot imagine. We await the resurrection.

For there to be the real experience of the resurrection, there must also be the experience of death and all the feelings that such a death evokes. We cannot avoid this death, or skirt it by going around it, in spite of what our culture might encourage us to do. In order to experience the joy with Mary in the garden on Easter morning, we must also be with Jesus at Gethsemane as he surrenders to death. The Fourth Week cannot happen without the Third Week. As Ilia Delio points out, "Resurrection is the necessary death awaiting us for new life to emerge in the cosmos. The old is necessary for the new; death is necessary for life."³

We need to confront the ugliness of the ecological crisis and all the death that it represents, including the denial by the human family. If despair is our reaction, then we experience Judas in this, and allow our despair to be transformed to hope by the experience of Mary Magdalene and the other disciples.

The final focus of the retreat is on action. In the poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," Wendell Berry encourages us to "Practice resurrection."⁴ I love this expression as it implies acting with hope based on our experience of life, while reminding us that our action itself can be an expression of the resurrection. We pray about the ways we are being called to practice resurrection.

The Contemplatio is used to help us with this prayer. We have prayed and acknowledged the ecological crisis and admitted our contribution to the crisis. We have experienced God dwelling in Creation. We have experienced God labouring for us in Creation. We have wept with Jesus on the cross. We have been renewed by the life, the resurrected life, present within the Earth. In all of this, we have had this experience of love, love of creation, love of God, of Jesus, of the Cosmic Christ. We are filled with amazement and gratitude which, as Judy Cannato says, "propels us into action that is informed by that gratitude and the certainty that the fire of the Spirit is alive in us. In short, we engage in acts of love . . ." ⁵ Ignatius states this more simply: Love shows itself in deeds.

So, what is our response? What are our deepest longings for the Earth? How do we act? It may be a simple and small step that we are able to take. One retreatant decided that she would take only one piece of paper towel after she washed her hands, rather than the two or three she usually takes. This small step is important for the Earth and an important one for the retreatant as she became empowered to do something. Prayer may also be about how to take big steps – shifting our source of income, working to eliminate poverty, changing our eating habits or our use of the car, or examining how our vowed life might aid in our practice of resurrection.

There is no easy way to be people of hope. Rather, the stance of hope is cultivated by our experience of life, and specifically the experience of life that is meshed in with, and comes

³ Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2011, 90.

⁴ Wendell Berry, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," in *The Country of Marriage*, 1973, <http://www.goodnaturepublishing.com/poem.htm>

⁵ Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Sorin Books, 2006, 64.

out of, death. God delivers life out of death. This is the story of Jesus. This is the story of creation. The four-week dynamic of the Exercises enables us to practice resurrection as people of hope by confronting the death present within the ecological crisis head on, and experiencing the power, love and beauty of God in the midst of this. We experience redemption. We become a healing life-giving presence within earth. We practice hope. We practice resurrection.

Original in English



The Dream of an Older Jesuit

John Surette, SJ
New England, USA

*"Your old men shall dream dreams and your
young men shall see visions."*

Joel 3,1

I have been a member of our Society for fifty-five years and have just turned seventy-eight years of age. On the occasion of my birthday I desire to share with you my dream for our Society in this first half of the twenty-first century.

My dream begins with a story from medieval Europe. It is a story about three classes of men: Three men were carrying stones at a worksite. The first man was asked what he was doing and he replied that he was carrying stones. The second, when asked the same question, replied that he was supporting his family. The third man answered the question by saying that he was building a cathedral.

In my dream I ask the question. What is the cathedral that we Jesuits are building in this century? Like the second man in the story, many of us are busy doing our teaching, our pastoral work, our social action ministries, our giving of the Exercises, and many other good works, but what is our overarching Great Work as a Society in this century? My dream reaches for an answer to this question.

I see our Great Work as our discerning the "universal good" and as our focusing on the "greater good." I also see it as our moving onto the "frontiers...those geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find difficult to reach" that Father General Nicolas mentioned in his recent State of the Society message.

My dream also contains a reading of the signs of the times, those deep movements within the world and in the souls of peoples at the beginning of this century. What stands out for me among the signs is the slowly growing awareness that Earth's web of life is under ever increasing stress and diminishment. Forests are shrinking, water-tables are falling, soils are eroding, fisheries are collapsing, rivers are running dry, glaciers and ice caps are melting, coral reefs are bleaching, the ocean is becoming more acidic, the atmosphere is warming, plant and animal species are going into extinction at a greater rate, and the children of all species are increasingly being born sick. In all of this and much more we are reaching the limits of what life on Earth can tolerate... we are facing ultimacy.

We are the first generations of humans ever to be aware of such an ultimacy. No previous humans could even have imagined it. The great teachers of the past did not speak about it. There is no mention of it in our sacred texts and traditions. Our evolutionary past has not prepared us to deal with it.

In my dream I worry that later on in this century the children and grandchildren will find themselves living within a community of life here on Earth that has a compromised future, a future in which it will be increasingly difficult for them to live with hope, find meaning, and enjoy beauty.

What is happening to Earth belongs to an order of magnitude beyond any other into which we Jesuits have poured out our apostolic energies in the past. It is of greater magnitude than any of the present day social justice issues. In fact, it is foundational for them in that none of them will succeed apart from the larger context of what is happening to Earth itself.

We are confronted with the hardest reality of our times, namely, the fate of Earth with its human community. As a Company of religious men I see us being called to make a religious response to Earth's fate. This appears to be the most challenging role that we Jesuits have ever been asked to assume. It is soul size. It will require that we move beyond any denial and paralysis and that we move into the future with hope, courage, and intention.

In my dream this future begins with embedding our passionate love of humanity within an equally passionate love of Earth and its web of life. This love will lead us into working with others to bring about a mutually enhancing relationship between Earth and its human community.

My brothers in Christ and companions on the way, I thank you for reading this outline of my dream. In doing so you have participated in my birthday celebration!

Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat

Borgo Santo Spirito, 4

00193 Roma

+39 06689 77380 (fax)

sjes@sjcuria.org