

Ignatian Spirituality & Sustainability

By: Annette Marksberry

Office of Strategic Information Resources

Spring 2009

Sustainability

- Sustainability is a major growing concern in virtually all aspects of modern life.
- Whether it's about:
 - Global Warming
 - Waste Management
 - Energy Conservation
 - Breathable Air
 - Healthy workspaces
- It's clear the need for responsible stewardship of all resources has never been more critical.
- On Jan. 22, 2008, Xavier University President Michael J. Graham, S.J., signed the American College and University President's Climate Commitment.

President's Climate Commitment

The fight against global warming will shape the 21st century. Colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by modeling ways to eliminate global warming emissions, and by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates to achieve climate neutrality. Campuses that address the climate challenge by eliminating global warming emissions and by integrating sustainability into their curriculum will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society. We hope you will join us in supporting the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment.

Sincerely,

*The Signatories of the American College & Universities
Presidents Climate Commitment*

Related links

- <http://www.xavier.edu/green/Links.cfm>
- <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/index.php>
- <http://www.aashe.org/index.php>
- <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/>

We Live in a Broken World

- In 1995 the 34th General Congregation of the Jesuits called for a study on ecological questions that would provide an orientation for the Jesuits' way of living and working.
- One of the matters to be covered was how Ignatian spirituality provides a foundation for response to ecological questions.
- After consultation with Jesuits with interest and expertise in ecology, workshops and discussion, *We Live in a Broken World* was published in 1999.

We Live in a Broken World Cont.

- Chapter 1 gives a reading of ecological questions, outlining some of the key issues at the time.
- Chapter 2 sets out how Ignatian spirituality can provide a foundation for responding to ecological questions.
- Chapter 3 considers how the different apostolates of works of the Jesuits might contribute to response to ecological questions and how they might collaborate with others to do so.
- Chapter 4 looks at the implications for the lifestyles of Jesuit communities and the institutional decision making of Provinces.
- Chapter 5 sums up the orientations for ways of living and working suggested by the document.

The Ignatian Approach

- Ignatius invites us to marvel at the heavens, with the sun and moon and all the stars, and the earth with fruit and fish and animals, and to consider how these created things sustain, nourish and protect us, keeping us alive even when we ignore God and refuse to praise the Divine Mystery, close ourselves off in isolation from other creatures, even when we refuse to serve God, abuse and misuse creation.

- Ignatius understands clearly that if God and the human person are not in proper relationship this will have serious consequences in the biosphere. He invites the retreatant to follow his lead with the following words: “an exclamation of wonder and surging emotion, uttered as I reflect on all creatures – the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements, the fruits, the birds, fishes and animals – on how they have allowed me to live and have preserved me in life.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's Thoughts

“For human beings there is no authentic search for God without an insertion into the life of the creation, and, on the other hand, all solidarity with human beings and every engagement with the created world cannot be authentic without a discovery of God.”

(Peter Hans Kolvenbach SJ, Discourse to GC 34, 6
January 1995)

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's Thoughts

- In an address titled “Our Responsibility for God’s Creation” which Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ delivered August 22, 1998 at the dedication of the Arrupe College in Zimbabwe, he addresses several of these key concerns. As Kolvenbach explains “To have dominion over all creation does not imply unrestrained exploitation. We are to treat creation as the Creator would, not from our own selfish consumption but for the good of all creation.”

Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises

“The understanding that human psychology and spirituality are intimately connected with landscape is particularly distinctive to Ignatian spirituality, and it has a unique resonance for those concerned with ecological well-being.”

Trileigh Tucker

Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises

- “Ignatius invites us to go deeper. He encourages us to make an ‘exclamation of wonder with deep feeling’:
 - Going through all creatures, how they have left me in life and preserved me in it ... [the Angels and the Saints] ... and the heavens, sun, moon, stars and elements, fruits, birds, fishes and animals.
(Exx 60)

Trileigh Tucker

Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises

“Ignatius recognized, and entreats us to recognize, how profoundly loved we are by God through God’s creation, that both teaches and sustains us.”

Trileigh Tucker

A Meditation on Earth

“We are at a unique time in our Earth history. Never before has any species wielded so much power over Creation. And never before have we been as aware of the consequences of our actions.”

Jim Profit

A Meditation on Earth

“We have the means to be a part of the healing of the Earth: we can surrender to the beauty, awe and wonder of Earth and accept our responsibility to take this beauty, and Earth’s suffering, seriously.”

Jim Profit

A Meditation on Earth

“Do we hear the call to conversation? Do we hear God asking us as God asked Saul, ‘why do you persecute me?’ (Acts 9:4)? Do we hear the Creator calling us to be a part of creativity rather than sinful destruction? Can we as individuals refuse to listen any longer?”

Jim Profit

Global Perspective

“An ‘ecological footprint’ is the total acreage of land required to produce an item or to sustain a person or group of people.”

Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees

Global Perspective

“ The first victims of any ecological imbalance are and always will be the poor”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach

Food for Thought

“The ecological footprint of a person, therefore, includes all the land required to produce the food, material products, and energy that sustain that person. An average Chinese person’s ecological footprint is four acres, and a Thai person’s would be five acres. Were this the worldwide average, the situation would be sustainable. But a French person’s ecological footprint is thirteen acres, and a US resident requires no less than 27 acres – more than five times the sustainable land allocation.”

Trileigh Tucker

Food for Thought

“ For instance, if US Americans reduced their meat consumption by just 5 per cent (perhaps one fewer meat meal per week), they could save enough grain to feed 25 million people – the number who go hungry in the US daily.”

http://library.thinkquest.org/c004833/enviroment_en.shtml

Global Perspective

“Stories of recovery and healing from all over the world can renew and refresh spirits”

Trileigh Tucker

“ Water – refreshing, cool, life-giving, indeed the source of all life.”

Jim Profit

Suggested Reading

*Self-Emptying Love in a Global Context:
The Spiritual Exercises and the
Environment.* It is co-authored by Joseph
Bracken, SJ currently on staff here at
Xavier.

Conclusion

“The mysticism flowing from the experience of Ignatius directs us simultaneously towards the mystery of God and the activity of God in his creation. Both in our personal lives of faith and in our ministries, it is never a question of choosing either God *or* the world; rather it is always God *in* the world, laboring to bring it to perfection so that the world comes, finally, to be fully *in* God”.

(General Congregation 34, Decree 4, n 7)