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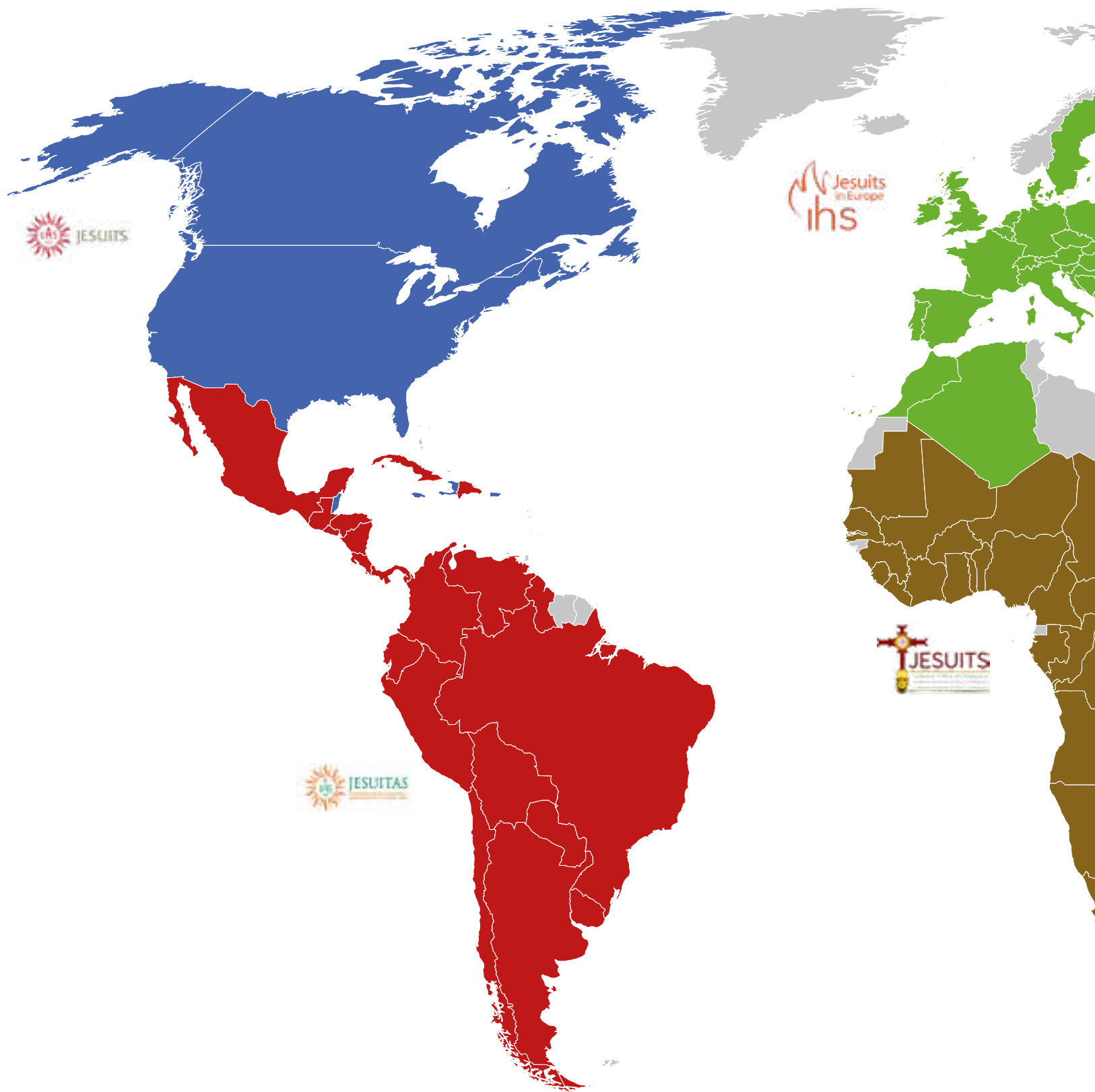
# Jesuits

Caring for our common home

2024

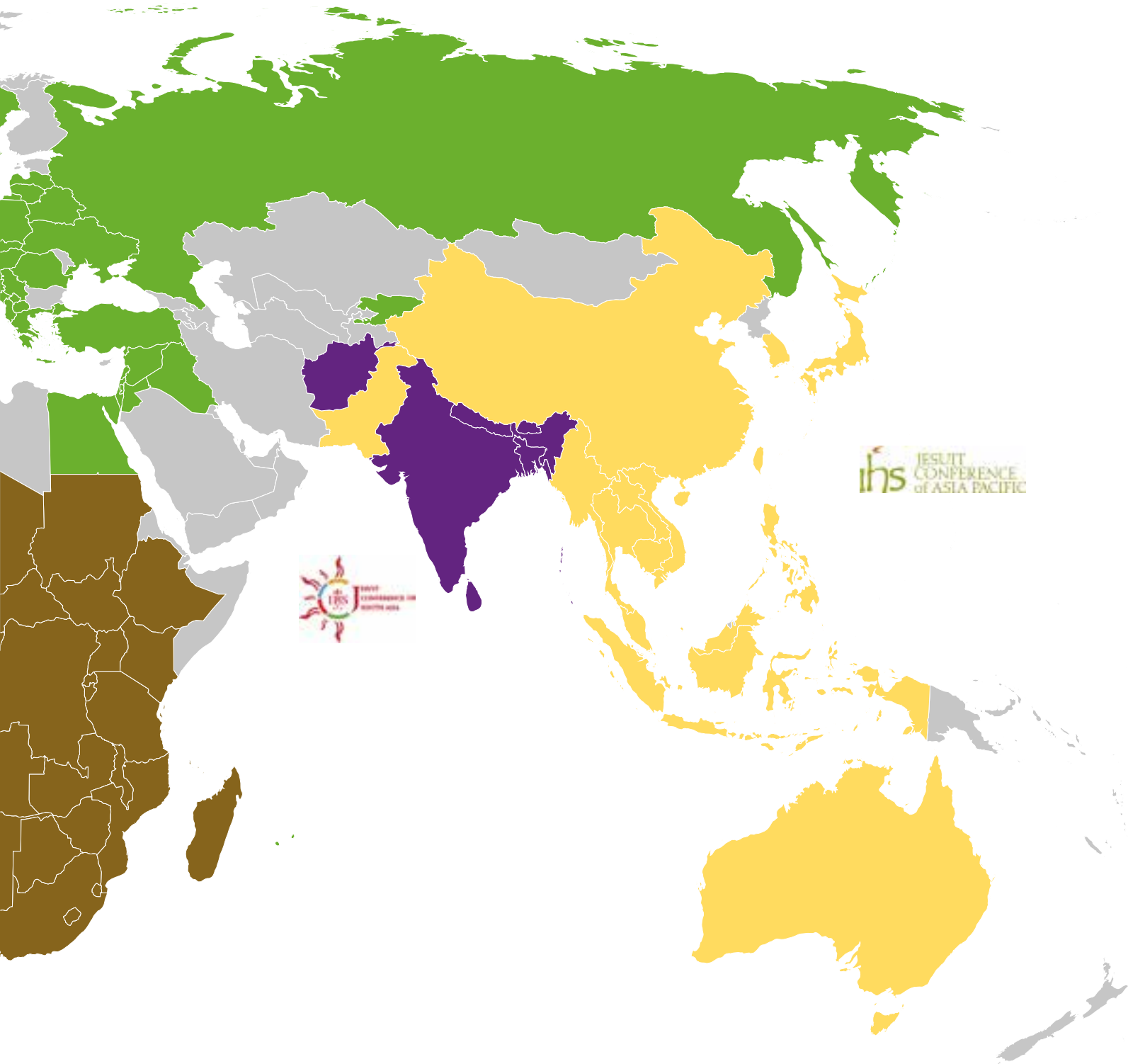


For Jesuits, mission partners and friends



Conference	Name	NOVICES	SCHOLASTICS	BROTHERS	PRIESTS	TOTAL
CPAL	LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	65	245	152	1328	1790
JCAM	AFRICA / MADAGASCAR	150	595	73	931	1749
JCAP	ASIA PACIFIC	74	291	72	1047	1484
JCCU	CANADA / U.S.A.	55	223	94	1614	1985
JCEP	EUROPE	46	214	266	2717	3243
JCSA	SOUTH ASIA	209	961	141	2633	3944
<b>Total</b>	<b>Society of Jesus</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>2529</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>10270</b>	<b>14195</b>

Total of Jesuits in the world as of 1/1/2023



- CPAL – Conference of Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean
- JCAM – Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar
- JCAP – Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific
- JCCU – Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S.A.
- JCEP – Jesuit Conference of European Provincials
- JCSA – Jesuit Conference of South Asia





## Cover

**Photo:** *The way to joy* – by Arturo Araujo, S.J., and Pia Jondonovan. From the artwork series *Heaven's Heart*. In the corridor of Father General's office in Rome, a series of artworks illustrate the Society of Jesus' commitment to reconciliation and justice. The panels also evoke the *Universal Apostolic Preferences*. The Jesuit artist Arturo Araujo created them together with students from Seattle University (USA).

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Published by the General Curia of the Society of Jesus  
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## Heaven's Heart

Other works from this series introduce the sections of this publication. For more information, use this QR code.

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Our thanks to all those who contributed to this edition.

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**Translation:** Collaboration from the Provinces of Britain and Canada

**Graphic Design:** Marín Creación, Burgos, Spain

**Printed by:** Castuera Industrias Gráficas, S. A. – Torres de Elorz (Navarra) / [www.graficascastuera.com](http://www.graficascastuera.com)

October 2023





# Jesuits

**CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME  
with Gospel depth**

**THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN THE WORLD**

**2024**

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ARTURO SOSA, S.J.  
Superior General



## Caring for our common home nourishes Hope

The change of era we are living through is shaking all levels of our life. The most urgent among the immense challenges facing humanity at this time is to restore the conditions of life on planet Earth. Otherwise, there is no future for our common home. Environmental imbalance, with its effects on the lives of human beings, especially the poorest, touches the hearts of those of us who want to contribute to a world that is more just. The Society of Jesus – Jesuits and those who share the mission of reconciliation and justice – feels it has a responsibility to contribute and to leave to the future generations a living environment in which to breathe clean air, have access to uncontaminated water and enjoy the fabulous diversity of creation.

The reflections, the stories, the themes... of our annual publication *Jesuits 2024* offer a compelling witness of the worldwide commitment of the Society of Jesus, inspired by the *Universal Apostolic Preferences*, to supporting efforts to restore environmental balance. Contributing to the care of our common home is, at the same time, a commitment to marginalised people whose living conditions are affected by a degraded environment. It is an opportunity to accompany young people

in creating a hopeful future. More fundamentally, caring for our common home is an effective way of showing the way to an encounter with God the Father, creator of the universe, who makes his sun rise and his rain fall on all created beings.

Yes, it is clear to us: following the way of life proclaimed in the Gospel, impels us today to deepen our capacity to encounter the Creator in all dimensions of reality. The 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation, held in 2016, urges the Society of Jesus to respond to the complex challenges of caring for our common home. It must do so, it stresses, by calling together theologians, philosophers and other intellectuals and experts to contribute to an analysis of the roots of the current ecological crisis and to propose solutions. The “depth of the Gospel” to which we are called is at the same time spiritual and moral but also intellectual. The Society of Jesus wishes to contribute to making the voice of the Gospel present in all areas of life.

At Easter 2023, I had the opportunity to plant a tree in the grounds of Campion Hall in the University of Oxford. It was a gesture of direct support for the *Laudato si’* Research Institute and the efforts of the British Province of the Society of Jesus in its commitment to break new ground in the search for solutions to the complex issues facing humanity today. Our publication is a way of supporting many other significant efforts being made in many parts of the world.

We want to follow the example of Pope Francis. Inspired by his commitment to the gospel, in his encyclical *Laudato si’*, he made a call heard in all parts of the world and by all people of good will, to listen to the cry of the earth. The Society of Jesus, invited to renew its spiritual and apostolic life, wants to find in the Good News of Jesus Christ the strength to increase its involvement in the care of our common home.



EDITORIAL

## Encountering witnesses; then becoming a witness

I have a niece – just one – and she is 25 years old. She is actively concerned about the future of our planet. She speaks a lot on this topic. And above all, she makes choices in her way of life, consistent with her vision of the world and the future. My niece is, for me, a credible witness.

What is it that I find most compelling, that prompts me to reflect, to evolve and to commit myself? First and foremost, the personal testimonies of credible people. My Christian life, my religious life, my Jesuit life, have been deeply influenced by credible people, witnesses, I have met along the way. My faith in the Resurrection is based on the testimony of women and men who, on Easter morning, yes, but throughout the centuries have manifested the Life of the Risen One. My desire to serve, to help, to support people is rooted in the testimony of my parents. My commitment as a companion of Jesus was made possible thanks to the strong testimony of many Jesuits: first those I met in the *Collège des jésuites de Québec*, then the missionaries I knew, and now the courageous companions in Haiti.

All these witnesses have opened the way for me to commit myself to do my best to build a better world.

*Jesuits 2024*, which you hold in your hands, is first and foremost a collection of testimonies by credible persons – young people, both Jesuits and lay; Jesuits and partners involved in science, pastoral work and education. These witnesses are noteworthy because they take position and contribute in a positive way to the future of the earth... and of the world. For we are talking here about integral ecology, about everything that fosters and nourishes the right relationship between nature and human beings.

Read these testimonies; let them touch you. You will be strengthened by them, as I was, and you will want to bear witness to the Life that lives in us all. You will want to take care of it. For my niece, for her generation... and for all the generations to come.



PIERRE BÉLANGER, S.J.  
Editor

# The voice of the youth



Creation – Arturo Araujo S.J., Chloe Rollens – From the series *Heaven's Heart*

The awareness and call to action for a healthy environment comes first from is primarily a concern of the younger generation. Since the 15-year-old activist Greta Thunberg drew attention to the bleak future that awaits today's youth if nothing is done about global warming, the movement has rallied crowds, but more More importantly, it has forced governments, industries and citizens to think differently in the areas of sustainable development and climate change.

The fight for a sustainable future is not just about ecology in the narrow sense. It is a movement for social jus-

stice, for keeping open the hope of a better and healthier future for the inhabitants of our planet, for the young people who will still be around in 50 or 60 years.

The Jesuits, first of all because of their involvement in the world of education, have always been close to young people. And, let us not overlook the fact that *there are young Jesuits!* The following pages contain 12 testimonies. Those of six Jesuits in formation and those of six lay young women. What do they have to say about the relationship between the Society of Jesus and ecology? Read ahead to discover this.





## A new justice, a new sensitivity

Max Echeverría Burgos, S.J.  
Province of Chile

These lines were written during the catastrophic forest fires that raged in the central-southern region of my country, Chile, during the summer of 2022. The fires devastated human and animal lives, as well as vegetation. Yet the land from which I write not only bears in memory this recent wound of the fire, but also the more distant wound of a territory whose soil, air, and rivers have been exploited by an industrial deforestation deeply tainted by an irresponsible oblivion to our human interdependence with the environment.

In the face of this destruction two voices resound. The first is that

of Pope Francis's *Laudato si'*, which forcefully leads us to recognise that "everything is connected". The second is that of Ignatius in the "Contemplation to attain love", calling us to consider how God dwells in every living being and works in them, with them and for them (Sp.Ex. 235-236).

Both voices prompt the question of *how* God is at work in our lands, so that the inherent interconnection between living beings is not severed, and so that this relationship becomes fruitful. Precisely at this point, ecological commitment becomes both gift and mission, enabling us to build

a new paradigm of justice in pondering how to live appropriately in our lands.

Such commitment prompts the heart to a new sensitivity in its very state of *being on Earth*. For example, why not "feel" the charred roots beneath the soil, letting ourselves be touched by the resilience and perseverance of plant life, which knows how to sprout up again in inhospitable terrain? Perhaps in this way, we can flourish as a great community of living beings, capable of inhabiting our common home in justice and communion.





## What can Jesuits do to improve the future?

### Take a preferential option to care

Nahir Andrada

Ignatian Youth Network – Province of Paraguay

When I think about the future, I cannot reduce its dimensions to myself. I think of all young people like me. In Paraguay, our future is uncertain. We live doubting that we will be able to find a job that will provide us with the resources to live with decency; not knowing whether the world we know will even exist in a few years, or whether it will be reduced to the ashen landscape portrayed in disaster movies.

The Society of Jesus cannot change the whole of reality, but it can change the world of its collaborators, by accompanying the actions of young people with deeds as well as with words.

It can serve as a bridge to youth initiatives; not as a discouraging barrier. Jesuits can offer opportunities analogous to those they have appreciated in their own formation, such as the Spiritual Exercises, spiritual accompaniment and mission projects, so nurturing the possible seedlings of future vocation. They can do this free of charge, so that lack of funds would not be an impediment. We need the Jesuits to walk with us and support us, and not only with their prayers. There is much to be done, and we are all needed.

Most importantly, the Jesuits can share funding with partners in mission, creating spaces and jobs where

people can pursue their dreams in love, committed to the roots of their Ignatian spirituality. Then, when it comes to formulating projects in favour of ecology, they will find real leaders capable of generating realistic and effective proposals.

Last but not least, the Jesuits need to be consistent in their words and actions. Long speeches without actions only disappoint, alienate, and end up hurting innocent people. We, your youthful partners, are your hands, your apostolic body, your burning hearts of service. We are always ready; we are also human beings who require support and care.



## Between red and green

António Carlos N'gala Dungula, S.J.  
Province of Central Africa

I had the opportunity to live in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (during my studies in philosophy), and also in Iniangi, an outlying area of the Kwango province (during my regency). These two milieus offered me two different ecological experiences that I can paint in two different colours. Kinshasa presents a picture in red, while the one in Iniangi is all in green. Together, the paintings present a complete experience, on one side negative, on the other side positive.

In the capital, as a young scholastic in philosophy, filled with a deep

desire to change the world around me, I was offended to see young people of my generation disregarding the golden rules of ecology, having no respect for our common home. Consequences: torrential rains, floods, odor pollution, noise pollution, etc., all this leading to the death of many Congolese.

Dismayed and disillusioned with Kinshasa, I finally found a ray of hope in Iniangi – a paradise where life is good. The air is fresh, it's quiet, everything is green, no plastic garbage on the ground. This painting in green makes me believe that it is still possible

to live in our common home, without destroying it. These experiences have challenged me to protect the ecosystems. This is only possible if we adopt an ecological spirit and live it in tangible actions.

That is why I believe that as young Jesuits in formation, we are all called to take part collectively in this universal mission, so complex and necessary, in order to slow down the current compulsive destruction of our planet. Every young Jesuit is invited to dedicate part of his early life to this.





## A better environment needs all of us

Noluthando Honono  
Jesuits Justice and Ecology Network (JENA)  
South Africa

The effort towards a better future must be collaborative; it requires active participation by all. Publicly, the Jesuits can intensify their effort to link the environment and the care for the environment to their spirituality. They can extend the already existing campaigns by setting up partnerships with other denominations thus extending to more than just a Catholic audience. They can also simplify the language used in climate related conversation to allow for a better accessibility to people from all walks of life.

The future can only be a benevolent reality through the active participation of all stakeholders, young and old, educated or uneducated. It is important for us to have academic knowledge but not only that; we also need the knowledge of those who live off the land and have found ways to care for it. We should look at the rural parts of Africa for an inspiration to learn from them about how not to waste resources while ensuring that we are working towards a sustainable development.

I have spent a significant portion of my young life studying the way the world works and how public policies and international laws affect how we react when facing environmental crimes by state officials and multi-national corporations. And on a smaller scale, at work, at home and in school, I have contributed to running recycling programs, in order to ensure that small actions accumulate to bring us to a better future.



## Living the call to ecological conversion

Joseph Do Van Lieu, S.J.  
St. Joseph Scholasticate  
Province of Vietnam

*“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*  
(Mark 1:15).

We usually think that this is a message of repentance for moral life to change and to renew our relationship with God and other people. However, from the ecological perspective, this repentance could also imply an invitation for us towards an ecological conversion. Thus, it is an invitation through which I am personally invited to commit myself to the welfare of the Mother Earth.

While nature is being destroyed and severely abused, Mother Earth’s cries for help are being forgotten by ambitious human beings. I, as a Jesuit scholastic, feel asked to listen to God’s call through his creation. Yes, it is a call from God who leads me towards an ecological journey where I commit myself to the well-being of the gift of nature. The same journey gives me a clear and a vivid experience to contemplate and to see God’s presence in everything, especially in nature. The ecological conversion is a journey which invites me to take responsibility in favour of an integral ecology and the

safeguarding of the world from threatening and destructive human activities.

As a Jesuit, I need to commit myself to promote integral ecology. This invitation requires also much collaboration with others because we share the same Mother Earth. Ecological conversion is a concrete way of life. It is a way to live the Gospel through taking care of Mother Earth, where God is relentlessly at work. One should never forget that nature can survive without human beings, but human beings cannot survive without nature.





## The Good Samaritan Outreach Center - for a better future

Desirie Tiberio  
Philippines

At the moment, the Philippines are faced with numerous environmental issues that are still unresolved and get worse with time.

Seeing what's going on in my community and relating it to the Good Samaritan Outreach Center and the Good Samaritan Scholars, I am hopeful for a much greener future. Together with the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and with the initiatives of Sister Grace Marcelo and Sister Anne Dixon, we hope to inspire students, young people, professionals, and a variety of individuals to give hand in saving nature.

Henceforth, the group visualized a healthier community painted in green leaves, tall trees, and beautified by murals and flowers despite the obstacles created by the modern world.

In 2016, the Good Samaritan Outreach Center launched the Clean Up Boulevard Project, a monthly cleaning activity along our city's seafont. In 2018, we launched the Go Green Project. Families were taught about urban gardening and how to use recycled materials to create vertical gardens. In 2020, it has been the Eco-Park rehabilitation.

In all this, any kind of help from the Jesuits for the success of the Good Samaritan Outreach Center will be appreciated. The Jesuits can promote what *Laudato si'* is telling about climate change. Education, a strength of the Jesuits, is a powerful instrument and is essential in dealing with the environmental crisis. So, focusing on education and the environment would be, for the Jesuits, a fantastic place to start for creating change, particularly for the youth, the new generations. It would include promoting "care teams," youth ministries focusing on faith-informed climate programs and sustainable facilities.



## Letting ourselves be renewed by God's mercy

Alexandre Masson, S.J.  
French-speaking Western European Province [EOF]

Ecology came to me in at least three ways. First, the accompaniment of young people who were anxious about the future of our planet made me aware how much this question could affect our hope. Secondly, the growing importance taken by the challenge of ecological transition in the European public debate convinced me that the future of our “living together” will depend, in the coming decades, on the evolution of the climate and our ability to adjust to it. Finally, on a more intellectual plane and in my opinion, the ecological crisis itself, by casting doubts on our representation of what a good

and desirable life is, reopens the ethical debate and the reflection on the true meaning of life for many of our contemporaries.

Ecology thus presents itself as a new environment in which we are sent to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, dead and risen. For me, promoting integral ecology means placing the challenges of transition in a multidimensional relational perspective. To newly mended relationships with God, with oneself and with others to which the experience of Christ's mercy invites us, we should not forget to add the one that ties us to

the web of the “Living”, and to creation as a whole. Such a gift from God to humankind is entrusted to us, not so that we may unleash on it our destructive madness, but that we may learn to more freely “*praise, reverence and serve*” our Creator.

If Jesuits are able to contribute, together with all people of good will, to a realistic and peaceful ecological and social transition, it is undoubtedly by proposing to them that their commitment be nourished by the experience of the One who “*did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour*” (Jn 3:17).



## The power of narrative

Fanny Stengel  
France

Our modern world, as we have constructed it over the last 150 years, has led us to a dead end. This model, even with all the progress and comfort it has brought us, has not taken into account the limits of our Planet Earth, whose resources we have exhausted and whose fragile balance we have upset. The facts are there. We know that we are hitting up against a brick wall.

To get out of this dead end, we must now write new narratives. Not of the kind that would push us to retreat behind bulwarks of identity or

to build walls to protect ourselves, but, on the contrary, of narratives that take us out of our selfishness and out of our fears. Of the kind that put Creation back at the center, to get us out of the destructive madness that has led to the disconnect between the human being and nature. Of the kind that open up new paths of hope, allowing us to be creative. Of the kind that allow us to take action, so that our common home can remain habitable for all. Pope Francis has already done so much along this line with the publication of *Laudato si'*, a powerful and universal ecological text that

has touched people far beyond those in the Catholic Church. He encourages us to dare to rethink the order of things, even to imagine new economic models based on the common good.

I believe in the power of narrative, as does the Pope. And as you do, dear Jesuits, when you initiate youth gatherings like the EcoSummer Camp, which I attended in 2022. So continue to be one of us, young and old of all nationalities and faiths, so that together we can write new stories and imagine new paths of hope.





## Being part

Collin Price, S.J.  
UWE (United States West) Province

I am a Jesuit because I want to follow Jesus. Most of Jesus' ministry was with the poor. As theologian Sallie McFague states, "nature can be seen as the 'new poor,' not the poor that crowds out the human poor, but the 'also' poor; and as such it demands our attention and care." The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus giving poor people attention and care, usually through healing, nourishing, and providing a place of belonging. I am inspired to carry out the same kind of ministry for our common home. The relationship between humans and the

earth needs to be healed; we need to find ways to let the earth nourish us, so we once again feel like we belong here.

I saw first-hand the effects of our collective carelessness last summer in Newtok, Alaska. I stood on the bank of the eroding Ningliq River, felt the warm air melting the permafrost, and saw remnants of homes that had been washed into the mud. A beautiful landscape scarred by global sins. As I looked across the river and tried to imagine its banks three miles away,

where it was just a generation ago, I became aware of how connected our earth is. What we eat, the way we move around town, the temperature at which we keep our homes, all affect the livelihoods of people in a small fishing village near the Bering Sea. We have forgotten that we are all connected. Separation harms, but connection heals. If we see ourselves as part of ecological systems, not separate from them, we will take better care of the gift God has given us and learn how to thrive together with each other and with the land.



## We give voice to “Mother Earth”

Ashlynn McKlentin; Caroline Saint James  
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USA West Province

Growing up, I never understood the reason for the name, “Mother Earth.” It seemed odd: a humanized object. I learned, however, it is because she is not to be used *by* us as an object, rather to accompany us, like a person. Unfortunately, we have been failing her for centuries. This spinning globe has become smarter, wealthier, and brighter, but the *real* integrity – what all creatures depend on – is nowhere to be found. The generational decision to utilize destructive processes and materials with minimal thought of their impact has placed the earth in an unfavorable position. Everyone knows about this devastating truth. So how can we remain indifferent to the degradation of forests, ice tun-

dra, rural villages, and the atmosphere? Yet we neglect to care and understand. Our industrialized minds seem to *forget* that every apparently “harmless” gestures of our everyday life add up and contribute to destroy our Mother.

*Caroline*

We only have one planet Earth – a special, irreplaceable gift from God. Mother Earth has spoiled us with gifts such as wood to build shelters and homes, metals to develop industries, natural resources, water to drink, plants and animals to eat. I advocate to keep Mother Earth a good place to live, because she does

not have a voice of her own. Our society undermines the importance of the oxygen we breathe and the water we drink, yet we have a mutually dependent relationship with the Earth and all its creatures. If immediate action is not taken many species will become extinct, and communities will continue to spiral into chaos. With unity of mind, the Earth’s health would dramatically increase. Even small eco-friendly steps and educational eco-projects can contribute to our Earth’ health. And for this, the Church can and must take immediate action before we hit the point of no return.

*Ashlynn*





## Being servants of Beauty

Nikhil George Joseph, S.J.  
Kerala Province

There is no real separation between humans and nature. All the seeming boundaries are acquired over years of material and intellectual additions to our personalities. While young, my mom taught me to be overjoyed in experiencing a sapling grow with much care, to spend leisure time with goats and enjoy their company, to feel the thirst of a drooping plant, or the pain of an ant writhing in pain because I accidentally stepped on it. Through all these and many more ways nature evolved to be my own body extending in the other. My seeking to be

connected with everything has roots in childhood and it has been quietly growing along. That which we let grow makes us later.

Jesus used examples from nature to communicate. Maybe he did this not merely because his audience could easily relate to what he said, but because every element in nature has a *mysticality* and an ever-evolving beauty to it, which cannot in any manner be accounted for through reason alone. They all appeal at various levels to a seeker. Nothing exhausts their richness or ren-

der them superfluous (cf. *Laudato si'*, 84). A mystic like St. Francis of Assisi is overwhelmed to hear birds singing as he perceives this as a concert in praise of the love of God.

Jesuit commitment to environment cannot be because of an impending climatic Armageddon but rather because one of those first divine mandates was to care for our common home... and because we, as humans, have failed miserably at it. We are to rediscover that *mysticality* and be servants of that beauty.





## Our common future

Devopriya Dutta

Ecojesuit Ecoteam, Jesuit Conference of South Asia

I have been working with the Jesuits for over 7 years now, so I have closely observed their working style with the touch of eco spirituality while catering to various fields of the greater community. Hardly have I come across people, apart from religious congregations, who talk about ecology. Environment is the most crucial topic in this post pandemic era of global warming and climate change. Eco sensitivity is the area that needs immediate attention.

Personally, I am not sure how my future would be. Will I still have to be dependent on packaged drinking water, food with preservatives, vaccines for immunity booster,

and most importantly, will I have a healthy longevity?

I have been working with school and college going students especially for conservation of biodiversity. I have been celebrating festivals like Holi, Deepawali, Christmas with zero carbon footprint and on the foundation of best out of waste. I have made local, regional, and international interventions where students have led their voices in the UN sharing their eco friendly and green experiences to reach out to as many as possible.

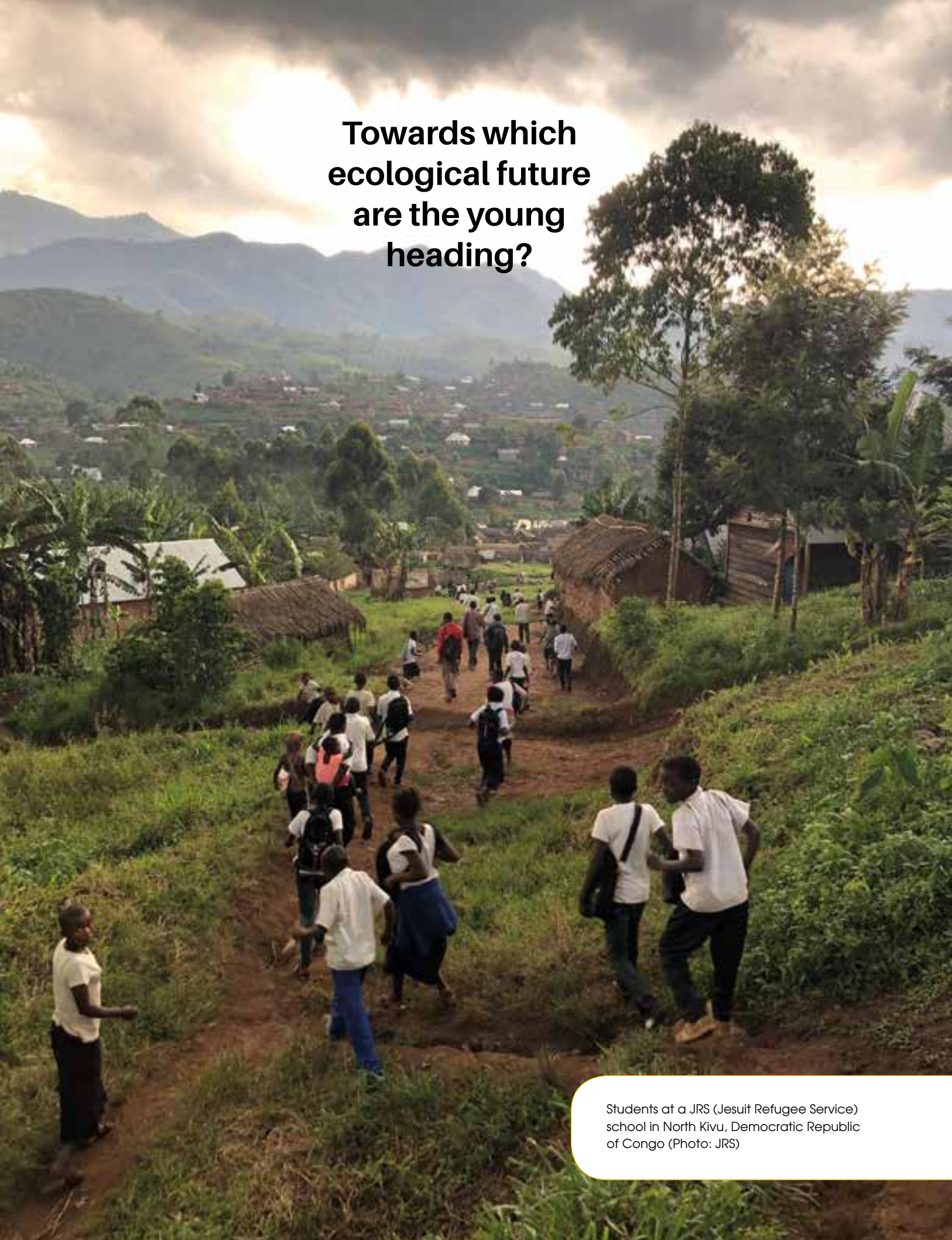
Jesuits are already doing great work for our community at large. I will just suggest a few things in this regard.

Kindly develop activities including these projects in your action plans:

- Grow Earth's canopy
- Build a green economy
- Support climate literacy
- Switch to sustainable fashion
- Celebrate Mother Earth beyond boundaries and disparities

We have to take care collectively of our common home, our common future and, above all, our Mother Earth. If not now, then when? If not here, then where? If not us, then who?



A group of students, many wearing white shirts and carrying backpacks, are walking along a dirt path that winds through a lush, green rural landscape. The path leads towards a cluster of traditional houses with thatched roofs. In the background, rolling hills and mountains are visible under a dramatic, cloudy sky with a hint of sunset or sunrise. The overall scene depicts a rural educational setting in a developing region.

## Towards which ecological future are the young heading?

Students at a JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) school in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (Photo: JRS)



# For an integral ecology



The question of the future of the planet is now unavoidable and could not be more fundamental. When, in 2019, the Society of Jesus chose as one of its four *Universal Apostolic Preferences* the care of our common home, it situated itself at the heart of one of the most demanding and challenging movements of contemporary times. The Jesuits wanted to respond to the call of Pope Francis enunciated in his encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Since its publication, this message has inspired not only Catholics but also men and women of good will from all walks of life. It is not only a cry from the heart for the preservation of nature, its plants and animals. It is a call to a conversion of heart that ensures an “integral ecology,” a perspective that places the human being at the heart of the world and at the centre and focus of decisions taken by governments all over the world. It is a call not to dominate it but to collaborate and to contribute positively and constructively to the development of the world for the benefit of all, especially the poor and the marginalized.

A major part of the 2024 edition of the annual magazine *Jesuits* offers reflections and testimonies on “Jesuit” ways of living integral ecology. Let yourself be guided and amazed as you delve through the five parts of this section: a global portrait, ecology and science, ecology and spirituality, experiences in ecology, ecology in education.

*A shared thirst* – Arturo Araujo S.J., Henry Geary –  
From the series *Heaven's Heart*





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## Is ecological justice integral to social justice?

Xavier Jeyaraj, S.J.  
Secretary – SJES – General Curia

### ***How the commitment to ecology and the environment was born and matured over the past 50 years in the Society of Jesus***

Monday, 3 December 1984, remains a day of catastrophe in India. The Bhopal gas leak, the world's worst industrial disaster, killed around 20,000 poor people, most of whom lived in slums. Half a million who survived suffered and continue to suffer even today from respiratory problems, eye irritation or blindness, and other disorders resulting from exposure to toxic gas. Amidst legal battles in India and the USA and protests by the victims and environmental activists, "justice" remains an elusive mirage and far-fetched dream for millions.

I remember the shock of seeing those ghastly images of dead bodies on the streets. A question that has kept daunting me since then is: why do the poor always have to be the victims of such "man-made" disasters? Are they genuinely natural?

Ecological justice may be seen from two angles. One is the angle of genuine concern for biodiversity, endangered nature and its entire species where the environmental balance and beauty are lost. Protecting, conserving and restoring the ecosystem is the

primary focus. The other is to see the interconnectedness of nature with the human person, especially in places where indigenous or rural communities face the consequences of nature and environmental degradation and large-scale projects, such as mining and hydroelectric dams.

Over the last four decades, we have become more conscious of how human decisions and actions have damaged our interconnectedness with nature. The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, particularly the



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We have become more conscious of how human decisions and actions have damaged our interconnectedness with nature.

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vulnerable indigenous communities, are becoming loud and clear. As Pope Francis says, “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (*Laudato si'* 139).

### **The evolution of ecological justice in the Society of Jesus**

Following the publication of *Limits to Growth* in 1972 and the Rio Summit

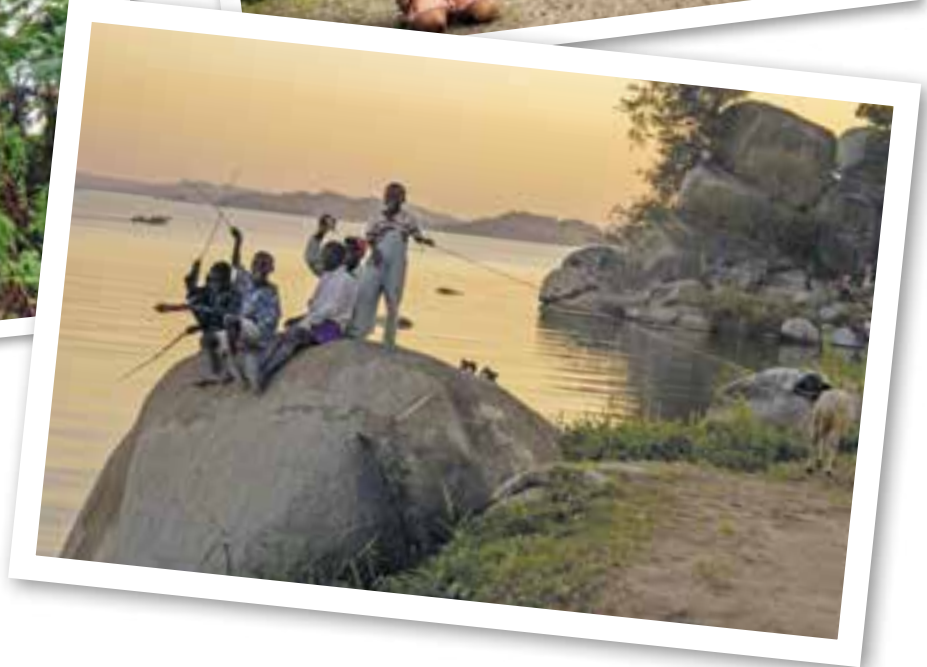
in 1992, in which six Jesuits working in the field of environment participated, there emerged a growing concern from Jesuit Provinces that recognized the relationship between the promotion of justice and the challenges of environmental degradation. The general feeling was that the option for the poor and care for our common home were inseparable, as ecological degradation drastically affected the poorest more than it affected others.

The Society of Jesus, for the first time in 1995, during the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation (GC), officially recognized the world's growing ecological and environmental problems and their impact on the poor, the vulnerable, and nature. This concern emerged from Jesuits who already saw and experienced its effects in some of their mission countries. Hence, the GC rec-

ommended to Fr. General to make a study and orient the entire Society of Jesus for its future mission on ecology. The Social Justice Secretariat (SJS) was invited to make a study and published its results in *We Live in a Broken World: Reflections on Ecology* in 1999.

Subsequently, in 2008, reflecting further during the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation on the ecological challenges faced, the GC called every Jesuit to establish the right relationship with God, with one another and with creation. It invited everyone to reconcile with the creation and “move beyond doubts and indifference to take *responsibility for our home, the earth.*” To do this in an organized and collaborative way, the GC invited the Jesuits to “build bridges between rich and poor, establish advocacy links of mutual support.”





## Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology

After GC35, recognizing that social justice is possible only with ecological justice, Fr. General in 2010 entrusted the Secretariat with the responsibility of coordinating both social and environmental justice and rechristened it as Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES). With this mandate, a Task Force was formed to collectively discern, plan and prepare a plan of action for ecological justice at all levels. The outcome was the document *Healing a Broken World*, in 2011, a kind of Jesuit precursor to *Laudato si'* of Pope Francis. The Secretariat pursued respond-

ing to the call of networking and established Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN) in 2008. One of the four networks is known as Ecojesuit.

Having gone through a year of discernment within the Society of Jesus – in communities, Provinces, Conferences, and the universal Society – Fr. General promulgated the four *Universal Apostolic Preferences* (UAPs) in February 2019 after getting them confirmed by Pope Francis. For the Society of Jesus, *to collaborate in the care of our common home* together with the Church and the entire human society can be a door of entry to fulfil concretely the mission of the UAPs in

bringing reconciliation and justice for the next ten or more years.

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To read the document *Healing a Broken World*, use this QR code:







## Reorienting our economy for the common home

Gaël Giraud, S.J.  
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***A call to invent a new model of economics, not based on capital markets but on a non-violent relationship between human beings and nature, for the benefit of all.***

“Such an economy kills.” (*Evangelii Gaudium* § 53). Pope Francis has said it many times: the economy of deregulated and globalized capital markets that we have built over the last half century not only does not allow for an efficient allocation of our resources but also increases inequality and ultimately kills the disenfranchised. Global warming, the destruction of biodiversity, the universal invasion of plastic, the depletion of a certain number of critical minerals are some

of the existential challenges that we must collectively address if we want to prove wrong the climate scientists who now evoke the possibility of the extinction of humanity in the next century.

In the short term, we must face a major food crisis that is being prepared, reinforced by the disruption of the fresh water cycle: by 2030, only 3 out of 5 humans will have access to drinking water. We can survive with-

out electricity but no one can live without water.

Those of us who are reassured on the grounds that humanity has “always found the means to get by” are telling themselves fables. We now know that the negligence of colonial administrations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with regard to the consequences of the El Niño climatic phenomenon had probably already caused the death of 50 million people in the countries

of the South. The challenge is not to repeat this tragedy and to invent a path towards ecological sustainability that does not involve the elimination of the less fortunate.

But the roots of the problem are deep. *Laudato si'*, *Fratelli Tutti* and *Querida Amazonia*, from Pope Francis, pose a diagnosis of an anthropological and spiritual nature that, for my part, I would formulate in the following way: Westerners have to free themselves from the naturalistic anthropology that has invaded the imaginations of all those who are subject to market globalization. This anthropology, partly unconscious and which has been imposed in Europe since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, makes us believe that humanity possesses the unique privilege of an

interiority that makes it the *imago Dei* in the face of an inert, unconscious, deaf and dumb nature. Consequently, this ontology legitimizes a violent, domineering, patriarchal, colonial and carnivorous interpretation of the *dominium terrae* spoken of in Genesis 1:28.

As Pope Francis reminded us during the audience of 3 September 2020, it is this same dominating anthropology that justifies violence against women, the fascination for financial markets, the destruction of ecosystems, the crimes perpetrated against children and the elderly.

Our inability to enter into a non-violent relationship with otherness betrays our inability to enter into

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*Laudato si'*, *Fratelli Tutti* and *Querida Amazonia*, from Pope Francis, pose a diagnosis of an anthropological and spiritual nature.  
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Share of greenhouse gas emissions by country.

a peaceful relationship with the Other. In other words, the economy that kills is, at bottom, a practical atheism (sometimes lived by the “pious faithful”). In this sense, to invent a new economy is to contribute at the same time to the four *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus.

How can this be done? In the same way that ecclesial synodality requires first of all listening to the *sensus fidei fidelium*, inventing a new economy today undoubtedly requires first of all putting oneself in the school of those who know much more about the economy of life than our learned economists. The *ukama* (in the Shona language) or the *ubuntu* (in Cameroon) speak of a relational cosmology that encases each human being in a web of relationships with ecosystems, ancestors, future generations... *Teranga* in Senegal is a tradition of hospitality that inscribes messianic hospitality in the banality of daily life, a mark of

consent to welcome the Other in the other. The *buen vivir* of Latin American traditions traces an alternative path to the maximization of capital returns. The Hindu *swaradj* points out that this also involves self-limitation of the self and of the group to which I belong...

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was the companions of the First Society who, by telling the European elites how the Indian societies of North America had organized themselves without money, without capital and without a dictator, gave rise to the Age of Enlightenment and to the modern idea of a democracy that was not based on slavery.

The Society of Jesus can recover this inspiration by listening to the wisdom of the people who today are the first victims of the financialized economy of deregulated capital markets. The contribution of Jesuits to the

“Laudato Si’ Action Platform” initiative, from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is a step in this direction – e.g., what some universities like Loyola Chicago are trying to do with *Healing Earth*. As well as the “Economy of Francesco” and the thousand young people from all over the world who are working and thinking about inventing the economy of tomorrow.

How long will we continue to teach the doctrine of “the economy that kills”, which Pope Francis himself reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* § 54 has no scientific basis? If we want our institutions to be part of the solution, then they must stop contributing, in their teaching, their educational practice and their mode of financing, to an economy that is part of the problem.

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## Integral ecology - a concept of Pope Francis

Paolo Conversi  
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Pontifical Gregorian University

**A change of perspective that leads to the need for a new economic, environmental and social paradigm.**

The concept of integral ecology is an insight from the 2015 Encyclical *Laudato si'* (LS), which Pope Francis dedicates to the care of our common home.

Associating integral ecology with care for our common home brings us back to the etymological meaning of the noun “ecology.” It is derived from the Greek words “*oikos*”: “house,” and “*logos*”: “study, reflection.” From this perspective, ecology should be understood not so much as a discipline that lies within the

realm of the natural sciences, as we usually understand it by referring, for example, to the study of ecosystems, but as something broader that also calls into question the various relationships within our common home.

These relationships start from the assumption that “*everything is interconnected*” and must be implemented with responsibility, especially by those who can exercise this responsibility: us human beings. Being part of *one interdependent human family*, the

decisions and behaviors of one of its members have profound consequences on its other members, especially the most vulnerable.

With the concept of “integral ecology,” Pope Francis intends to propose a new vision and approach based on a *change of perspective* that:

1) highlights the inseparability of “concern for nature, justice to the poor, commitment to society and inner peace” (LS, 10);

A key concept of *Laudato si'*:  
everything is interconnected.  
Photo: DS Stories, Pexel.



2) can “recover the different levels of ecological balance: the inner one with oneself, the solidary one with others, the natural one with all living things, the spiritual one with God” (LS, 210);

3) becomes aware of the responsibility of the human being, of each of us, toward self, toward our neighbor, toward society, toward creation and toward the Creator.

This change of perspective, the result of a gradual *rise in conscious-*

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We are faced with a cultural, spiritual and educational challenge that highlights the need for a “change of course” .  
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*ness*, points to the need for a *new economic, environmental and social paradigm* that is more resilient and inclusive: this is the big wager that is actually a *cultural revolution* that will bring with it the change of lifelong habits first and foremost on the individual level. This “reorientation” must hinge on three “beacons of consciousness,” of which there is a shortage: the consciousness of a common origin, mutual belonging, and a future shared by all. Illuminated by these beacons, it is possible to promote new attitudes and lifestyles.

The perspective to be adopted is necessarily global but must be implemented from the local dimension: it is necessary to start from the small, from everyday habits, from small gestures of daily life. The global and local implementation of a correct integral ecology is essential to effectively address the causes of the current *ethical-socio-environmental crisis*: we are faced with a *cultural, spiritual and educational challenge* that highlights the need for a “*change of course*”: to move *from a culture of waste*, in which our society is enmeshed, *to a culture of care*: care for oneself, for others (near or far in space and time), and for the environment.

The ethical-socio-environmental crisis thus represents not only a serious concern, but also an opportunity, a privileged moment of stimulus to more authentic living and to an



Ficus leaf. Photo: JellyfishBusters, Wikipedia.



*individual and communal “ecological conversion” (LS, 231) ... in action.*

For integral ecology to truly represent a driver of innovative and sustainable development, it is necessary to leverage the biblical mandate to “cultivate and care for” our common home (cf. Gen. 2:15). These are two intimately related actions that affect not only our natural environment but also all those who inhabit it and share it with us, now and in the future. “This implies a relationship of responsible reciprocity between human beings and nature” (LS, 67), which cannot but reverberate in greater attention and sensitivity to “people” who live in areas most affected by social and environmental change. For too long this sense of “responsibility” has been lacking in our societies and culture. Growing in awareness of this responsibility is the best way to address today’s *sustainability crisis*.

The *coming revolution in integral ecology* will have no less planetary consequences than those caused in the last two centuries by the industrial revolutions that have followed one another since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Francis states that “humanity still has the capacity to work together to build our common home” (LS, 13). All of this leads us to “recognize the greatness, urgency and beauty of the challenge before us” (LS 15): “while the humanity of the post-industrial period will perhaps be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, it is to be hoped that humanity at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be remembered for having generously shouldered their own grave responsibility” (LS, 165).

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In 2018 at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University, an initiative was born called “Laudato si’ Observatory.” Its purpose is to follow up on Pope Francis’ call to respond to the current ethical-socio-ecological crisis through a “change of course” founded on the promotion of integral ecology ... well aware that this represents a great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge that will involve a long journey of renewal. The Observatory aims to develop continuous in-depth work on the promotion and implementation of *Laudato si’* from educational, operational and pastoral perspectives at local and global levels.





## Integral ecology and politics

Giuseppe Riggio, S.J.  
*Aggiornamenti Sociali*  
Euro Mediterranean Province

### ***Insights from Laudato si' urging new political action.***

Tourists visiting Naples in the 1930s had no reason to go to the Bagnoli district, where the Italian government had set up a number of steel mills, considered strategic for the area's development, in place of the old thermal plants. In the 1990s, the decision was made to dismantle them, and the public administrations were faced with the heavy legacy of the past: high levels of pollution, major employment difficulties, and a compromised urban and social fabric. In a little less than a century, a quality area was reduced to an abandoned suburb, disrupted

in social, labor, health and urban planning terms.

The brief reference to the events of Bagnoli – just one of many possible examples – helps one understand how well-founded is the insight of *Laudato si'* that everything is connected, everything is interconnected, “concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.” (LS, 91). It also highlights well the crucial role that politicians (along with other

figures from civil society and business) have in caring for the common home.

Pope Francis has often addressed the world of politics, calling for a profound change of perspective, in which it is key to question the root causes of problems or the consequences that result from choices made. Many times, politicians focus instead on short-term or very short-term goals, in a frantic search for solutions to play down more or less unexpected emergencies while chasing electoral consensus. Little political attention is then paid to the

demands and the needs of the excluded, or to the impact on the planet of the choices made.

*Laudato si'* identifies as the two factors that condition the actions of politics: the technocratic paradigm – particularly the unbridled reliance on technology and the idea that every limit is surmountable, and the dominance of finance – the pursuit of profit maximization in the short-term, without considering the consequences for the human family and creation. This way of acting leads to neglecting the task of expressing an overall vision of society not only for today, but also for tomorrow. Forcefully, the

“It’s also important to maintain a broad vision capable of setting priorities in light of a horizon not narrowed down to just the present moment.”

encyclical affirms that “Politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy” (LS, 189).

The countercultural proposal of integral ecology offers an alternative. Assuming fully the principle that “everything is connected” implies that issues are approached by recognizing the complexity of reality and the need to look at it from various points of view that complement one another. In this way, policy decisions can take into account the deep interweavings that exist between seemingly distant fields, avoiding the harmful consequences of sectoral approaches (cf. LS, 111). It’s also important to maintain a broad vision capable of setting priorities in light of a horizon not narrowed down to just the present moment. What’s valuable here is

Naples, Bagnoli district, steelworks.





discernment, repeatedly recalled by Pope Francis, which helps to search for the *magis*, considering the concrete situations of people, times and places.

We find this approach in some choices at the international level, such as the United Nations' Agenda 2030, which tries to combine the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. But in *Laudato si'* there is more: attention to the excluded, victims of the culture of waste, is translated into the recognition of their dignity and thus the choice to consider them not so much recipients of philanthropic initiatives, but co-protagonists of change, put-

ting themselves in an attitude of listening and dialogue with them.

It helps policymakers who wish to enter into the spirit of integral ecology to approach *Laudato si'* not as a document to be read, but as a path. Pope Francis writes, "Let us review, however cursorily, those questions which are troubling us today." It also makes us "become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it." (LS, 19). Transparent in these words is the influence of the dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This realization has encouraged various elements of the Society of Jesus, including the

*Aggiornamenti Sociali* social studies centre, to develop various proposals, such as exercise courses or formation activities, that take their cues from the contents of the encyclical to foster the experience of ecological conversion. Offering paths to people who play a role of responsibility is crucial, since they can initiate and accompany processes that involve a majority of people, thus affecting the cultural level as well as the elaboration of the legal rules of society. The necessary change will be lasting only if there is also a community conversion (LS, 219).

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## Caring for communities and Creation

Gabriel Lamug-Nañawa, S.J.  
Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

***A flagship project in Asia Pacific to care for the young and the poor in a changing climate.***

It had been constantly raining a few days already and there were no signs that it was stopping anytime soon. The sky was grey and the ground muddy. The type of situation that would seem discouraging for a group of adolescent students coming to our place for a retreat. But, quite surprisingly, before breakfast on a wet Friday morning, 30 high school and university student leaders of the Ateneo de Naga University, a Jesuit school in the southern end of Luzon, Philippines, arrived on time and in good spirits. They were embarking on a three-day Ignatian retreat. The theme:

ecological conversion, a project set up in partnership with the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP).

Last year, JCAP had launched its Apostolic Plan, part of which was to respond to the issues of poverty and ecology in Asia Pacific. It created a flagship project named, “Caring for Communities and Creation,” through which the different ministries and Provinces of the region could engage collaboratively towards a common goal. The flagship project included three approaches, namely, a) “Youth Leading the

Future”; b) “Transitioning to Cleaner Energy”; and c) “Strengthening Local Communities”. Taken together, these approaches focus on and integrate topics such as: Ignatian spirituality, youth, marginalized and indigenous communities, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and climate crises. All of these themes could easily be related to the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus.

The retreat ended by lunch of Sunday, just when the sun was coming out. Aside from inputs given by





“ The ecological crisis that we face stems from the problem of our relationship with nature because we think that we are the masters of nature.

”

lay mission partners from Ateneo de Naga and a few local Philippine Jesuits, there were also online talks on ecological conversion by Fr Ed Quinnan, S.J., superior of the Jesuits in Micronesia, and on integral ecology by Dr Peter Saunders of “Being with God in Nature”, a Jesuit Ignatian ministry in Australia. Ecological conversion is a long process that did not end at the close of the retreat. The student leaders brought back with them project plans, whose execution will be part of their eco-spiritual journey.

Before leaving to go back home, 16-year old senior high school student Ethan Portes commented, “The ecological crisis that we face stems from the problem of our relationship with nature because we think that we are the masters of nature. However, after the retreat I realize that as stewards of God’s creation, our care for nature should be built on a deeper and more personal relationship with nature.” Surely, he is on the right track, as ecological conversion necessitates a new way of relating with God’s creatures, one that is not determined by modern anthropocentrism. Another student, Denise Padua, an 18-year old university student, concluded, “I used to think that life’s success is manifested in worldly ambi-

tion. Now I realize that eco-spiritual consciousness and enriching creation are what matters as God’s children.” She thus affirms the need to give back to creation, in gratitude, providing the chance to regenerate and thrive.

This retreat for student leaders was the pilot for the flagship approach on “Youth Leading the Future.” The coming together of youth, ecology, and Ignatian spirituality was natural and organic, a way

to form a much-needed nexus. The modules used during the retreat will be shared with other units across JCAP. Each institution or ministry is invited to adapt the material to their own contexts.

The second approach of the flagship project, “Transitioning to Cleaner Energy,” is about advocating for the reduction of carbon emissions by at least 50 % by 2030, achieved through downsizing our energy use







and shifting away from fossil fuel dependency. Although installing renewable energy systems are expected for this approach, other methods are also possible, such as adopting a low-carbon diet, i.e., choosing food options that do not have a high carbon footprint.

Finally, “Strengthening Local Communities” is the third approach, which is geared towards helping build resilience in marginalized or indigenous communities. It will be done mainly through collaborative partnerships with Jesuit ministries and promotes a systemic application of nature-based solutions. At present, there are two communities in the Philippines and two others in Indonesia, whose resilience is being studied to prepare the grounds for a wider application.

The natural systems of our world today are rapidly changing. We are expected to breach the safe limit of 1.5 °C increase in global mean temperature within the next few years, potentially triggering other tipping points. It is urgent that we collaborate in addressing the causes of the many

storms, of all kinds, that will greatly harm the world’s poor and vulnerable peoples.

.....  
<http://jcapsj.org/blog/tag/ecology/>



Students of the Ateneo de Naga (Philippines) participating in the project “Caring for communities and creation”.





## Complex socio-ecological reality in India and a dream for a better future

Lumnesh Swaroop Kumar, S.J.  
Karnataka Province

***A reflection arising from the experience of the Coordinator for Ecology of the South Asian Jesuit Conference.***

Malappa and his family had to migrate from their native village due to frequent extreme climates. He was a small-scale Dalit farmer in North Karnataka, India. Due to crop failures, he was heavily in debt. In search of an alternative livelihood, he left his ancestral land and ended up as a construction worker in a slum in the city of Pune in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra. The family had to adapt to a new socio-cultural environment, which caused additional psychological pressure. Malappa was confronted

with a complex, interrelated ecological problem. It is no longer a rarity for hundreds of Malappas to end up in India's urban slums.

I have witnessed the harsh reality of farmers facing flooded crops and droughted lands every year. What shocked me the most was how Indian farmers, who were attuned to the seasons and signs of nature, used to predict the timing of sowing and crop yields, were hoodwinked by unpredictable climate change in recent years. The

result was an unseasonal harvest, lower yields, economic losses, and the suicide of several farmers. Changing monsoon patterns, landslides, severe cold and heat waves, soil degradation and water scarcity are just some of the impacts of extreme climate events that affect agricultural production, public health, and infrastructure, leading to mass migration and loss of lives and livelihoods in most South Asian countries.

It is evident for me, what we are encountering now – interconnected





Malappa and his family were forced to leave their land and move to live in the city.



ecological problems – is a result of human avarice and narcissism caused by our failure to accept the reality that we are an integral part of an interrelated and interdependent cosmos. Climate change does not discriminate against anyone. We all suffer its consequences. The question, however, is, who bears the brunt? The poor, farmers, tribals, migrants, women, children, the elderly, and the differently-abled are particularly vulnerable. Thus, ecological problems are linked to gender, legal, psychological and physical, socio-economic, migration, spiritual and existential issues.

The exercise of contemplation to obtain love, in which Ignatius asks us to contemplate God working ceaselessly in the world, inspired the Jesuits to care for our common home – the earth. The socio-ecological problems in India enkindled Jesuits to a deeper commitment in promoting integral ecology for the past 30 years and more. The recent fourth *Universal Apostolic Preference* has reaffirmed and revitalized this commitment.





“ Climate change does not discriminate against anyone. We all suffer its consequences. ”



Indian spirituality views reality as an interconnected coexistence in the cosmos. “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,” a Sanskrit phrase meaning “The earth is a family,” sums this up well. This spiritual concept presents a vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life, including non-human life. This provides a cultural context for Indian Jesuits.

2018-2020, I had the opportunity to visit and interact with several Jesuit ecological responses within the Conference. Most of them have proved to be creative responses to the needs of local people in a particular context. Watershed projects in drought-prone villages, promoting ecological leadership among the youth, creating economic opportunities for tribals based on their traditional knowledge, conserving biodiversity in collaboration with indigenous peoples and

As Ecology Coordinator for the Jesuit Conference of South Asia from





Effects of environmental degradation: flooding, stale air, health risks.



conducting ecological research, to name a few. This convinced me that ecology cannot be another apostolate of the Society of Jesus, but rather part of every apostolate we already do.

Today's India expresses immense hope towards an ecologically conscientious society. Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), social activists, scientists, youth, economists, artists, and most importantly the victims of ecological disasters are exercising responsibility and optimism in bringing ecological *metanoia* among individuals and the government. Fr. Stan Swamy, who championed the rights of indigenous peoples – who are fighting for their land rights and conserve forests from mining mafia – sacrificed his life with unrelenting courage for a socio-ecological cause.

My dream of a possible Jesuit ecological action.

- Developing need and context-based socio-ecological responses in Jesuit social centres.

- Establishing linkages between different apostolates within a Province on ecological theme.
- Networking between socio-ecological models of different Provinces.
- Initiating collaboration with the government, other NGOs and FBOs – partnerships beyond Jesuit centres.
- Exploring global advocacy linkages between Jesuit conferences.
- Creating socio-ecological leadership among youth – national-level ecological youth network.
- Conducting socio-ecological research in Jesuit higher education institutions.
- Developing and promoting ecological transformation programmes in Jesuit parishes and retreat centres.
- Using socio-ecological responses as a starting point for inter-reli-

gious dialogue. We have neither a Christian air nor a Muslim water nor a Hindu soil.

The socio-ecological aim of Jesuits could be summarized as collective responsibility, collaborative effort, and creative response to build a hope-filled, ecologically equitable society together with many Malappas.

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...los pies por medio  
...llosa. Los pies por medio  
...e, pero con sus tonos aque-  
...lla llegar a la obra, y ha-  
...son también las aves  
...o, para lo qual se cuenta  
...garrul.  
...los quales hay otros blancos  
...han vuelto acá adela-  
...n en la parte posterior del  
...de el pecho le corre por  
...cerdas blancas, que bibe-  
...naga, desde el fin del cual  
...os por, y lo mismo en el  
...blancas con poros negros  
...del todo negra. Los pelos  
...os los pelos, o cerdas  
...ve con poca ligereza  
...tor Portugues dice, que  
...enriedad en pluma  
...aun las hyperboles hij-  
...ada con sola herme-



*Yogai ò Bidioni, I. especie.*

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Archivum P...



## Some Jesuit missionaries “pioneers of ecology”

### Ecology *ante litteram* in the sources of the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus

Robert Danieluk, S.J.  
ARSI – General Curia

**A singular look at the research work of Jesuit missionaries who studied nature in the places to which they were sent.**

Observing how God dwells in creatures: in the elements by giving being, in plants by making them vegetate, in animals by providing them with senses, in humans by giving understanding [...]

*Spiritual Exercises 235*

It is safe to assume that the word “ecology” is not found in the letters of St. Ignatius nor in the writings of Jesuits of past centuries.

Nevertheless, documents are preserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus that testify to the interest of several Jesuits in this

issue, and thus justify the title of the present article, the purpose of which is a brief presentation of some of these writings.



As the first companions began to travel more and more to fulfill the missions entrusted to them by the Church, among the Founder's major concerns was that of maintaining unity among these friends in the Lord. It was soon joined by the need to ensure the effective administration of the religious Order, whose membership was growing in an impressive way.

One concrete measure that Ignatius recommended from the very beginning was to maintain systematic written communication, regulated by the prescriptions that in 1580 became the *Formula scribendi*, which was nothing more than a brief but sufficiently detailed instruction on how to handle official Jesuit correspondence.

There is no shortage of examples in historiography of how these instructions were put into practice. Among the documents preserved in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* are some that testify to their authors' interest in sciences such as botany and zoology. Here are just two examples.

The Polish Jesuit Michał Piotr Boym (1612-1659) entered the Society

in 1631. Traveling to China in 1643, he found himself staying for a long time in various places on the east coast of Africa: a frequent experience for travelers who, sailing from Lisbon to Goa, had to wait between the outlet of the Zambezi River and the territories of present-day Mozambique before continuing eastward. Finding himself on the Dark Continent unexpectedly, the curious Jesuit saw another world, quite different from his country of origin and from Europe as a whole. Much of his surprise was at the flora and fauna of the regions where he stopped, and this was strong enough to prompt him to describe what he saw there. So, in a report sent to Rome, Boym not only gave a written account of it, but added drawings, which have happily survived to the present day. In a series of five watercolors, he painted some plants that intrigued him, such as the cashew and pineapple. He also did two beautiful drawings of the hippopotamus.

Father Boym did not stay long in Africa. Soon enough he resumed his journey arriving, via India, in China, where he paid no less attention to what he encountered around him. Many of his observations later became







(at least in Europe), others would be a curiosity to many.

Boym and Sánchez Labrador are just two among many members of the Society of Jesus who described and charted the flora and fauna of their mission territories. The fame that the works of these Jesuits enjoyed on the Old Continent can be explained by their scientific importance, including for medicine, where the spread of knowledge about certain plants such as quinine, mate or curare, had lasting effects.

But one might ask, “Why the presence of such documents in the Jesuit archives?” The missionaries of centuries past certainly had enough to do, so much so that one must immediately discard the hypothesis of idleness as the genesis of such writings. In fact, the reason must be found in the instructions of St. Ignatius mentioned at the beginning of this article: several

the work known to scholars under the title *Flora Sinensis* that made its author famous. Another reason for his fame was the diplomatic mission to Europe on which he was sent by the Ming court. He brought to Rome letters from the Chinese empress, written on silk – one to the Pope and one to the General of the Jesuits which are preserved among the most precious treasures in the Vatican Apostolic Archives and the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus.

Returning to our theme, Boym was certainly not the only author of such reports. In the next century, the Spaniard José Sánchez Labrador (1717-1798), a Jesuit since 1732 and a missionary to South America in the years 1734-1767, wrote his great work on Paraguay (only part of which was published) during his exile in Italy. Among his manuscripts preserved in Rome are many drawings of the plants and animals he had seen during his time in the missions. Next to the generally known tobacco or cacao, we see many other species of birds, fish, reptiles or insects. While some such as the gull are common and easy to encounter even in our day

“ Why the presence of such documents in the Jesuit archives? ”

times he, as well as his collaborators and successors, asked Jesuits who had left for places located outside Europe to send information about the regions where they were, and this was done in order to make them known to the brethren as well as to other curious readers. All this also served as good publicity for the missions and an effective tool for vocation promotion.

arsj.jesuits.global





## Towards reducing the carbon impact of a Jesuit Province: the first steps

Xavier de Bénazé, S.J.  
French-speaking Western European Province

***A Jesuit Province has chosen to respond seriously to the 'Laudato si' call - for ecological ... and spiritual reasons.***

Since 2021 the EOF Province (South Belgium, France, Greece, Luxemburg and Mauritius) has been more actively engaged on the path of ecological and social transition. We are reviewing here more than two years of a conversion process.

Before starting this assessment, let us recall that:

- This process is rooted in the conversion of the Church and the Society of Jesus, driven by the encyclical *Laudato si'*, the decrees of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation and our four *Universal Apostolic Preferences* [UAP].
- The dynamic commitment of the EOF Province is rooted in God, especially since our Province retreat of 2018, which had chosen the theme: "Integral Ecology".
- In order to make this conversion concrete, the Province decided to focus on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. That is, to spend time on issues and projects that lead to concrete results (with the support of a layperson





Young Jesuits carrying compost.

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Up to us to carry out those acts of justice and love that provide a taste of eternity in God.

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employed on a full-time basis and a Jesuit on part-time). From the start, we chose to work within the European network of the “Jesuit European Social Centre”.

This background work made it possible to know where our Province stands concerning its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (through its communities). Two main observations emerge:

1. There are variations according to the countries, mostly because the national sources of electricity are more or less carbon-intensive. This reminds us that these transition issues require a regional, national and international political vision!

2. All in all, our Jesuits are below their national averages but above the medians. In other words, we belong to the half of the population with the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Therefore, genuine climate and social justice requires us to act.

In addition, with regard to the four usual CO<sub>2</sub> emission sources, we notice that:

- “General consumption” is quite moderate. To put it in another way, we are already living a sound kind of happy sobriety. It may well be that this comes from the wisdom of our vow of poverty. The inspiration therefore is to be found

in our following of Christ. This is worth pondering, while the other three points will require more effort on our part.

- The first source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is our buildings. Our houses are generally old, poorly insulated, heated with fossil fuels and too big for us. We will therefore have to work not only on technical changes (insulation, heating), but also on a proper use of our buildings.
- As far as food is concerned, we are within the national average, which is however incompatible with international climate objectives. Since, in this regard, one of the main sources of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions







Mass in the midst of a community vegetable garden. (Photo: H  l  ne Leclerc)



is our consumption of meat (especially red meat), we need to work on making our dishes more vegetarian. All the more so since food is also a major source of our impacts on other planetary boundaries, in particular land use change and the ongoing sixth mass extinction of biodiversity.

- With respect to transportation, we are slightly below national averages. Which is not satisfactory. We need to think about reducing our use of carbon-based transportation (planes and cars) and opt for public transportation, especially trains for long distances and bicycles for daily life outings.

Thanks to these first lessons, we know now where we are starting from: we will have to work at the personal, community and provincial levels to try to halve our CO<sub>2</sub> footprint

per Jesuit per year by 2030, and move towards 1.5-2tons CO<sub>2</sub> per year per person. However, today, if the global economy as a whole does not decarbonise faster than the current rate, we will not be able to achieve these goals on our own. Our first projections show that, so far, by acting ambitiously, 40 % of the effort is in our hands. It is up to us to carry out those acts of justice and love that provide a taste of eternity in God.

But we have also to bring about wider changes. This is where the networks of universities, social centres and schools of the universal Society are precious assets. Which is why our Province decided, in 2023, to hire an extra lay person to accompany our 25 schools in ambitious transition projects. The challenge is huge! For those who wish to “work with others in the care of our common home”, the Ignatian maxim of the Hungarian

Jesuit G  bor Hevenesi (1656-1715) has a burning relevance: “The first rule of action is this: so trust in God as if the success of things depends entirely on you, and nothing on God; yet put all your labour into it as if God alone would do everything (and you nothing”.

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## A Jesuit takes a liking to lichens: Contemplative ecology and the Trinity

John McCarthy, S.J.  
Province of Canada

***A scientist tells how every creature can be seen as a reflection of the Trinity's creative mystery.***

As a lichenologist (one who studies lichens), I have helped to describe and name new lichen species. Lichens are creatures you pass by every day but probably have never noticed. Complex and mysterious, a lichen is not one organism but several that have learned to live with each other to the point that they function as one. Neither completely plant, nor animal, nor fungus, a lichen is a combination, a living symbiosis of an alga and a fungus. So intimate is this relationship that we give each lichen only one name, even though it is composed of several dif-

ferent organisms from distinct plant and fungal kingdoms.

The desire to name the world is as old as humankind is. All of us distinguish and name what lives around us – cats, dogs, birds, whales, mushrooms and plants.

Naming is a divine act. In the Book of Genesis, God creates the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and brings them to the man, Adam, to see what he would call them. Centuries later, Carl Linnaeus (18<sup>th</sup> century), the

celebrated Swedish botanist, would invent the binomial (two-name) system of nomenclature using Latin and Greek. Each creature was assigned a genus name and a species name, or epithet. For example, we humans are *Homo sapiens*, the “wise or knowing human.”

Imagine being born and not being given a name. Names give us life! In the rite of Christian baptism, parents are asked by the celebrant, “What name do you give (or have you given) your child?” With this name we are baptized



in the name of the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are named into life by our parents, then we are named into the life of Christ and the living body of Christ, the Church.

A name permits a relationship. No longer is the other unknown but is now named and given a place of honour. Mutuality and love are possible. Remember the risen Christ with Mary Magdalene. She recognizes Jesus only when he utters her name. Then, Mary's

heart springs to life in love and recognition. Never take the name of our Lord in vain – or each other's names, for that matter. Names are powerful beyond our imagination.

Working with colleagues in North America and Europe, I have the privilege of helping to name new lichen species. German lichenologist Christian Printzen and I named *Biatora terrae-novae*, a lichen that grows on coniferous tree bark and, to date, is known

only from the province of Newfoundland, Canada. A British-American colleague, Alan Fryday, and I named *Hymenelia parva*, a lichen species that grows on sedimentary rock along rivers in coastal Newfoundland. Several other lichen taxa await a name.

People often ask me, "What good are lichens?" While lichens have their own special ecological function and pharmaceutical potential, and are used successfully to track and monitor

Saglek Fjord, Torngat Mountains National Park, Labrador, Canada.







pollution, I prefer to note that lichens are “good” by their very existence – which, in itself, gives glory to God, the Creator. Indeed, the vocation of all creation, ourselves included, is to give glory to God.

In the Nicene Creed, we profess faith in the Creator Trinity: in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; in Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made; and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. God is revealed as Creator. All creation expresses some-

thing of God’s love, beauty, and graciousness – even lichens.

In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis underlines the importance of care for all life forms on the planet. How many species live with us on Earth? We do not know. We have named about 2.13 million species. Millions more exist without a name. About 20,000 lichens have a name. New species are being described and named all the time. We have a long way to go before we can hope to name even a fraction of Earth’s biodiversity.









## Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu, S.J.: a biologist... and much more

An interview from the Secretariat  
for Social Justice and Ecology (SJES)

***An interview with a Jesuit who put science in the hands of the poor.***

Wherever they have been sent in the world, Jesuits have made important contributions not only in pastoral ministry and education, but also in the scientific disciplines. This was the case in India and is still the case today. While not directly involved in the environmental field, in recent years Jesuits have increasingly taken initiatives in what can be called environmental justice. Promoting ecological awareness, reforestation, water purification measures, defence of tribal natural resources are some examples. Others have studied

biodiversity or created botanical gardens.

One man of science who stands out among Indian Jesuits is Fr Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu. He is primarily a biologist, but his scope is very broad, having published over 800 scientific papers and 80 books with 2 US and 12 Indian patents. It is worth noting that a species of insect bears his name, *Jacthrips ignacimuthui*, as well as a natural molecule, *Ignaciomycin*. He is one of the top 1% scientists in the world based on the

number of citations of his work by other scientists. We interviewed him.

**Father Ignacimuthu, you are a man of science and a man of God; where do you find unity in your life?**

The basic foundational experience of the Divine from my childhood and the awe and wonder I experience when I encounter nature have helped me integrate my spirituality of seeing God in all things and all things in God. Recognition of God's



presence in the created beings and things in the universe is the outcome of my union with God. By means of created things, whether big or small, the divine confronts me, penetrates me and moulds me. Thus, creation and spirituality converge upon the same view of the reality, that is, vision of God in the concrete world. In this way I experience the unity of being a man of science and a man of God.

**What has your work as a biologist taught you?**

The most important lesson I learnt from my work as a biologist was the understanding that everything and every life are inter-connected and inter-dependent in this world. The

orderly nature of the universe and the diversity of life forms on earth are very evident everywhere. They constantly proclaim unity and relatedness. The complexity of life and its perfect coordination are indeed stepping-stones for awe and wonder. The mathematical principles that govern everything in this universe and the world are the foundation for this. For example, the elegance and the organization of the DNA and RNA, their multiple consequences of the copying mechanisms and their implications in expressions are fascinating. The extensive interaction of miniscule independent cells with one another and the formation of various organs that contribute to life's success are indeed the evidences for the relatedness of all.

**You have made discoveries and inventions and won many awards. In all this, how do you feel you have served the poor in your country?**

My research outputs have contributed to the welfare of the poor in the following ways: 1) India is a country where agriculture occupies an important place in the lives of poor people. When we realized how the poor farmers were suffering due to excessive use of synthetic chemical pesticides and how the environment and food grains were getting affected, we decided to find an alternative. We developed a natural bio pesticide named PONNEEM which is safe, ecofriendly, and biodegradable; it is also less costly than chemical pesticides. We also taught the farmers



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By means of created things, whether big or small, the divine confronts me, penetrates me and moulds me.  
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Affordable, natural products developed by Fr Ignacimuthu and his team.



to prepare it by themselves. 2) India is also a country where many people depend on herbal medicine to treat diseases. We have scientifically validated some of the herbs and promoted their use among the poor. 3) During the Covid-19 pandemic, we developed a natural herbal hand sanitizer which was very effective against pathogens. We popularized it among the poor. 4) Many textbooks on Environment, Biotechnology, Bioinformatics and Bioethics were written and published by reputed publishers in India at low cost to help poor students.

**How have your commitments been related to the ideas of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'*?**

Pope Francis gives a clarion call to take care of our mother earth. We answered the call. We have trained

more than 50,000 students as agents of environmental protection, more than 60,000 farmers as practitioners of organic farming and sustainable agriculture, documented the floral and insect diversity of the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu, and published the traditional medical knowledge of the indigenous tribal people of Tamil Nadu for future generations. We have also trained 10,000 women farmers to prepare natural fertilizer like enriched vermicompost to reduce the use of synthetic chemical fertilizers. We have trained many self-help women groups to prepare herbal household and sanitary products with a view to reduce pollution. I have written books on *Environmental Spirituality* and *Praying with Creation* to promote love for our common home.

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## Protection of insects as sources for building up our common home

S. Maria Packiam, S.J.  
Province of Chennai

***An invitation to understand the importance of the presence of insects on earth and to make a link with the Ignatian experience of "seeing God in all things."***

Nature is the only common home for all living and non-living beings of our Mother Earth in which all forms of life exist healthy and happy, here and now, because of their inter-relatedness. The quality of their inter-relationship decides the quality of health and happiness of microbes, plants, animals, and other non-living resources of Mother Earth. The visible or invisible inter-relationship that is the foundation of our common home originates from God,

the author of loving relationships. Each and every living species contributes a lot to the survival and sustainability of all living species in this biosphere directly and indirectly through inter-relationships. All living species exist in a close relationship that was built at the time of their creation. They labour for mutual benefit. Insect biodiversity plays a very significant role in protecting and promoting our common home.

Insects are relatively small animals that form the most diverse groups of living organisms in our common home. Insects account for 80% of animal life on Earth. The first animals that evolved are insects, which have dispersed and diversified across the globe. They breathe using a thin tube present on their body's surface that is open to the atmosphere. Insects are interrelated with the various ecosystems that sustain well the natural resources of Mother Earth.





They help in waste management on the Earth by functioning as decomposers. Without the service of insects, huge waste, dead animals, and plants would accumulate so much in the environment that it may no longer be suitable for the survival of plants and animals including people. They serve in taking care of our common home (Nature/Universe) such as aerating the soil, pollinating blossoms, controlling insect pests, recycling nutrients, and providing nutrition for wildlife. According to Albert Einstein, the ab-

sence of honeybees would lead to the extinction of the human population within four years due to their role in pollination. Insects have an active role in the food web. Insects are the main sources of food for frogs, reptiles, birds, and other higher animals. Many people in various countries harvest and eat insects, which are rich sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals.

In recent times, most of the insect groups are declining very fast due to anthropogenic activities such as the

destruction of insect habitats, agricultural practices, industry-related activities, urbanization, and various kinds of pollution. Modern scientists report that the main threat to insects is the conversion of natural habitats through intensive agricultural practices, indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides or fertilizers, pollution, and the global climate change. The above-mentioned activities are damaging the inter-relatedness of the insects, plants, and other living species in various ecosystems. As a result, there is a reduction in the

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This insight of Ignatius of Loyola leads all people to respect and be responsible for taking care of the biodiversity of insects and their environment.

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Learning to marvel at creation, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small.

green cover and in the population of animals on the earth. The restoration of the damaged common home is only possible by rebuilding the inter-relationship with insects and their environmental resources naturally and spiritually. The succession of organisms in an ecological community is interrelated to each other through the transfer of energy and nutrients as a placenta, which is connected with maternal and foetal tissues in the womb of a mother continuously and consciously.

Ignatian insights are a great boon for all creatures of the world to restore and rebuild the inter-relatedness between insect biodiversity and natural resources for protecting and promoting our common home for the greater

good of microbes, animals, and plants. The conversion moment of St Ignatius of Loyola began on the banks of the river Cardoner where St Ignatius started to listen to God in nature. Ignatius received a clear understanding and a deep conversion that God is everywhere, which leads him to find God in all things and all things in God. This insight of Ignatius of Loyola leads all people to respect and be responsible for taking care of the biodiversity of insects and their environment.

In the meditations on the Incarnation and the Nativity of Jesus, St Ignatius emphasizes that the created world is the place to experience God where each one could feel the presence and the loving action of God in our com-

mon home through the loving relationship between God and Nature. We human beings need to develop attitudes that are free from extreme consumerism, self-centeredness, and individualism. This will enable us to restore our common home through rebuilding our inter-relationship with all the natural resources in which God is present and active. Pope Francis says in *Laudato si'* that in union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God. Seeing everything anew in Christ is the dynamic spirituality of St Ignatius that leads us all to protect insects as sources for building our common home.

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## Language protection: another aspect of integral ecology

Colin Brady  
Campion Hall,  
Oxford (British Province)

***Protecting endangered language communities is another way of fighting for human rights and addressing the ecological challenge.***

It is difficult to imagine two more different places than the University of Oxford, with its dreaming spires and community of academics and students, and the twenty-eight villages and two small towns in the foothills of the Himalayan mountains that is the home to the Hrusso Aka tribe. Yet a remarkable research project that focuses on the endangered language of this unique Northeast Indian tribe now connects them.

The *Laudato si'* Research Institute based at Campion Hall engaged in

partnership with Fr Vijay D'Souza, S.J., and others who work with endangered language communities. When a community's language is endangered, its people risk losing their unique understanding of life and way of being human on our shared planet. Following in a long tradition of Jesuit linguists, Fr Vijay D'Souza, S.J. has therefore been working with endangered indigenous languages in North East India for over twenty years. His research led him to doctoral studies at Campion Hall in the University of

Oxford. Fr Vijay explains his motivation: "The loss of whole languages is not just an academic concern; when we think about it, we soon realise that we are talking about whole traditions that are at risk, and we can see how 'language rights are a social justice issue, and language rights are human rights,'" he comments.

By delving into sacred mythology, word lists, oral history, and other local customs, Fr Vijay recorded the vocabularies of these endangered languages, enabling community groups

to produce textbooks, stories, and even news channels in their own languages. Fr Vijay adds, "It's a methodology that I call RIME, respectful intervention for mutual enrichment." What is preserved is not just a language, but with it an entire culture and way of life.

Fr Vijay's interest in endangered languages was sparked in 1999 when he undertook a linguistic project in the Arunachal Pradesh state in North East India. Home to approximately a hundred small indigenous tribes and with ninety languages, this is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse states in India. Fr Vijay focused on the Hrusso Aka tribe, with its population of seven thousand. The villagers had asked

the Jesuits to open a school there and so began the Jesuit mission in 1988.

The three pioneers of the Jesuit mission took an immediate keen interest in the language, much to the surprise of the villagers. Fr Vijay initially arrived while still in studies for ordination, and was tasked with learning Aka, an endeavour which proved challenging. Firstly, Hrusso Aka was unscripted, and so Fr Vijay was compelled to find ways to learn it without the usual linguistic tools – grammar, dictionary, or other forms of printed materials. Secondly – and somewhat surprisingly – there was widespread pessimism about the future of the language among the native speakers themselves.

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Caring for languages will be key to protecting the world.

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Dr Sarah Ogilvie, Senior Research Fellow in Linguistics at Campion Hall, shares this concern, having worked on documenting and revitalizing languages in Australia and America. “Over the past fifteen years or so there has been a shift in how we do this work. The biggest change within academic study of endangered languages is a new emphasis on collaboration and capacity building. Heritage communities now invite the linguist to come and work with them; they set the agenda and make the decisions while the linguist is there to learn from them.”



Fr Nick Austin, S.J., Master of Campion Hall has been pleased to see this work developing, “It’s an inspiring example of the sort of work we aim to do with colleagues here in Oxford, bringing world-class scholarship to bear on real-world concerns. Affirming and ensuring the survival of people’s languages and cultures is an essential part of this mission to walk with the excluded and to work with others in care from our common home.”

of the *Laudato si’ Research Institute*, along with other material including a free library of key texts on integral ecology. Conversation about new research partnerships are welcome and Campion Hall is always pleased to discuss opportunities for post-

graduate study at the University of Oxford.

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Endangered languages are not just a human rights issue, but an ecological one. With up to 90 % of the world’s languages are at risk of disappearing over the coming century; caring for languages will be key to protecting the world in a time of climate crisis, and to protecting communities against deepening poverty in a time of global economic turmoil. The partnership between the *Laudato si’ Research Institute* and the *North Eastern Institute for Language and Culture* in North East Asia founded by Fr Vijay, provides vital scholarly and practical support for this work.



Their resources on endangered languages are available on the website



## When life may not spring from water

María Orozco

Secretariat for University Outreach and Social Responsibility  
Catholic University of Cordoba  
Province of Argentina-Uruguay

***A homemade arsenic filter is the bridge between academia and the isolated communities of northern Argentina.***

“Life sprang from water. Rivers are the blood that nourishes the earth; the products of water are the cells that imagine us, the tears that weep for us and the memory that recalls us.” These words, of the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, invite us to dwell on the gifts of Creation. Among these gifts, water represents the cradle of life. In turn, we are all responsible for its quality, availability and equitable distribution. We must recognise that

without clean water there is no truly dignified life.

The peasant and aboriginal families living in San José del Boquerón (Santiago del Estero, Argentina), part of the Gran Chaco region of South America, experience every day the consequences of the scarcity and contamination of this precious gift. Boquerón is an isolated, very poor area, with small communities scat-

tered in the bush. They live by raising livestock (mostly goats), producing charcoal and honey, and growing crops for their own consumption. “Life is hard here,” said Carmen, who lives in the hills of Pirujaj Bajo.

In Boquerón, the concentration of natural arsenic in the groundwater, 0.05 mg/litre, is one of the highest in the world. Taken together with the prevailing structural poverty, this





contamination is a cry of the land and of the poor, a cry that has resonated in the university world to which I belong.

In particular, the cry echoed in two Jesuit works of the Province of Argentina-Uruguay, based more than 700 km apart, and nourished in them the commitment to transform the situation. In 2011, a close collaboration was launched between the Catholic University of Cordoba's Secretariat for Outreach and Social Responsibility (RSU) and the Parish of San José de las Petacas in San José del Boquerón: the aim was to limit the arsenical contamination of the water supply.

The response took shape by way of a team of students and pro-

fessors called *Misky Yaku* ("fresh water" in Quechua) from the Applied Chemistry course of the Industrial Engineering programme. They began enthusiastically, developing a home-made device to filter arsenic and fluorides from the well water used by families, especially those who live inland, who have almost no access to pure drinking water. Today, the project has borne fruit, bringing together several generations of university students and teachers, united in wishing to put their skills at the service of others.

Different designs of the filter were tested in the field, with the feedback of the families who used them. Juan Manuel, one of the first student participants, explained: "We collected data over several years, to improve

the filter. The final design embodies two key criteria: first, it had to be constructed simply, for example, by using elements readily available in the locality (iron nails, burnt bones, cloth, wire wool, sand etc.); second, it should not significantly subvert local customs."

*Misky Yaku* has now been refining the filter, travelling and installing the equipment, for ten years. Families witness to its effectiveness in reducing the presence of arsenic in, for example, human hair. Carla Ruiz told us "I have changed the water supply (...) now I have less arsenic: 3.02 before, 0.75 now."

Currently, two variants of the filter are in general use: one segmented (with plastic buckets) and one

continuous (with plastic pipes). An experiment is being conducted using an electro-coagulation filtration system powered by solar panels.

For the students this experience has been inspiring. As Guillermo Kozameh says: “It was a great personal and academic experience, transforming my study into an activity valuable to others... what I experienced is beyond words.” Nicolás Sánchez added: “I had no hesitation in participating; I wanted my career to express social responsibility”. Florencia spoke similarly: “I joined in because I’m excited about the social aspect of the profession.”

This collaboration between the university and the parish has led many young people and professionals to be present at the “frontier of the Kingdom,” engaging with the challenge of a complex social and environmental issue. Their active and enthusiastic participation, sustained over time, is a living testimony of



Church of San José de las Petacas, Santiago del Estero, northern Argentina.

what *Laudato si'* calls “an ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit.” This disposition of the heart is the key to a true “ecological conversion.”

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A living testimony of what *Laudato si'* calls “an ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit.”

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## When the olive tree turned red

Stephan Rothlin, S.J.  
Chinese Province

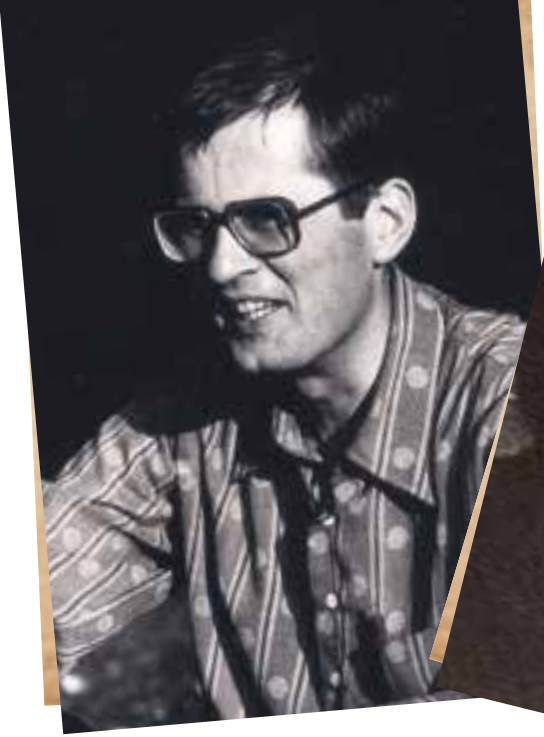
***In Macau, China, remembering Fr. Nicolas KLUITERS, S.J. (1940-1985) and Fr. André MASSE, S.J. (1940-1987) as witnesses to solidarity in war-torn Lebanon.***

The *Macau Manifesto* calls for a new economic paradigm focused on subsidiarity economics, wellbeing for all and common good entrepreneurship. Responding to the call of Pope Francis for a new economic model oriented to the common good, it offers a vision of solidarity across cultures and borders that sets aside traditional prejudices against the others who do not share in our prosperity, whether those prejudices are based on race, creed, or color. If the New Economic Paradigm is to fulfil its promise, we must learn to trust empowerment strategies that

are open to all people, not just to those who are near and dear to us personally. To foster such a broad spirit of care for others, Jesuit middle schools in Lebanon and Macau as well as the Universities of St. Joseph of Beirut and Macau have been involved in solidarity projects in Lebanon. In their effort to implement some of the United Nations Sustainability goals they inspire professors and students to develop further the new integral ecology.

Fr. Nicolas Kluiters, S.J. (1940-1985) is considered an early pioneer,

since he started sustainable farming 40 years ago in the war-torn valley of the Bekaa, Lebanon, which was once regarded as the food basket for the whole Middle East. As Lebanon faces a catastrophic economic crisis and hunger, it is useful to recall the commitment and skills of Fr. Kluiters as a pastor who in a forgotten corner of the world cared for those left behind, by starting eco farming projects with local farmers in his parish, while mastering the local Arabic language. The desolate situation in Lebanon challenges us to learn from the poor and to better understand the



Nicolas Kluiters S.J.; André Masse S.J.

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His teaching, as well as his promotion of sports and his personal example of growing vegetables, brought Moslem and Christian youth together.

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roots of an economic collapse, resulting from widespread famine, rampant corruption, and a decayed infrastructure.

Recovering from such a collapse may start with small projects, such

as promoting solar cookers. How to rekindle the entrepreneurial spirit for which Lebanon used to be famous by teaching people how to develop sound business plans is also a step in the right direction. The vision for

some projects to help those left behind originated from a Lebanese professor, Nabih Yammine, who grew up in a poor family in the Bekaa. Nabih felt a strong call to do his very best, along with his friends, to work for





peace, spirituality, and reconciliation by providing scholarships for poor students and food assistance currently for about 700 families. In line with Fr. Kluiters' way, he is particularly keen to reach out to people who felt despised and discriminated.

The spiritual element seems to be crucial in the whole process: the installation of the relics of the popular Lebanese Saint Charbel Makhlouf at the Ricci School in Macau provided a unique opportunity for the students to discover the healing power of contemplation in midst of conflicts. Jesuit institutions can invite people to understand how complex social realities are destroyed by violence, while also exploring the paths toward recovery, such as the Lebanese effort to develop sustainable farming that may lift the poor out of inhuman suffering.

In March 1985, after the devastating attacks on Christian institutions, Fr. André Masse, S.J. was called to southern Lebanon to teach mathematics and computer science. His teaching, as well as his promotion of sports and his personal example of growing vegetables, brought Moslem and Christian youth together. He convinced students that it was fun to learn math and stay in school, thus dissuading some from leaving their country. Alas, he was shot by a gunman in September 1987. His blood mixed with water was poured by Fr. Joseph Nassar, S.J. over an olive tree which apparently turned red.

Despite many setbacks, the regular practice of contemplation may help to sustain trust in the power of peace and reconciliation. The testimony of Frs. Kluiters and Masse re-

veals the intrinsic link among the four *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of the Jesus, namely, leading the way to God, walking with the excluded, accompanying the youth and focusing on integral ecology. The red olive tree, splattered with Fr. Masse's blood, is a reminder that martyrdom may be regarded as the "mature fruit" (Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.) of a total commitment to the Lebanon.

Even students from a remote place like Macau may slowly realize that Nicolas and André lived a profoundly happy life in the service for others.

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To access the Macau Manifesto: [www.riccimac.org/index.php/en/news-and-notice/9-notice/72-the-macau-manifesto](http://www.riccimac.org/index.php/en/news-and-notice/9-notice/72-the-macau-manifesto)



Ricci School students in Macau show solidarity with the inhabitants of the Bekaa in Lebanon.



## The dialogue between faith and science in the spirit of *Laudato si'*

József Benedek; Gábor Nevelős, S.J.  
Hungarian Province

***Bringing two people into dialogue on stage: one speaking from a faith perspective and the other from a scientific one. All this under the light of an “integral ecology.” This was the challenge taken up by a Jesuit academic institution in Hungary.***

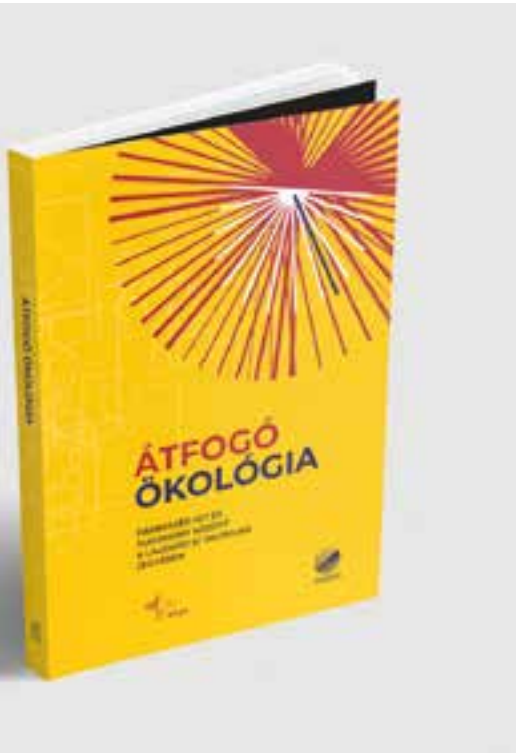
The *Faludi Ferenc Jesuit Academy* launched in 2022 a new dialogue between faith and science through a series of eight “mirror” conferences held between January and June. The novelty of this dialogue is that it brought to the same table representatives of religious institutions and men and women with a scientific background to debate on selected topics relevant both for the protection of creation and sustainable development.

The following topics were selected for social reflection and debate: partnership and dialogue, green economy, sustainable lifestyle, climate change, poverty, sustainable communities, environmental change, social justice. The original approach of these series of mirror conferences, entitled “Forum for an Integral Ecology,” was embedded in the format of all the conferences, so that each selected topic was addressed by two specialists, one

presenting the religious angle and the other the scientific point of view. Interactive debates open to the public, people attending in situ as well as those participating on line, followed the keynote presentations. Through this dynamic, we tried to generate a social reflection on the created world and sustainable development.

The result of this first round of debates was the book entitled *Integral*





*Ecology. Dialogue between faith and science in the spirit of Laudato si'*, published by the Jesuit Printing House in Budapest. It includes 16 reflections on the eight major topics selected for the forum. Each chapter of the publication offers many ways of finding authentic individual and collective answers to the multiple socio-economic and ecological crises, in the specific cultural and territorial context of Hungary.

Among the results of this dialogue, we outline the following:

The need to supplement the three classical dimensions of sustainable development (the social, economic, and environmental dimensions) with a spiritual dimension, adding specific Christian values to

each sustainable development goal, as defined in the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals without clearly assumed or agreed upon values cannot mobilize individuals or lead to collective actions. This “supplement” will help provide clearly defined orientation for institutions. Faith provides, in these circumstances, an immanent motivation for the authentic enforcement of the protection of creation by giving us an internal moral guidance. This spiritual dimension of sustainability may lead to the ecological conversion stressed in the papal encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Ignatian spirituality could play a special role in giving shape to the spiritual dimension of sustainability,





specifically through the Spiritual Exercises. The Ignatian method and orientations may help to distinguish between ecological sins and ecological virtues. The strengthening of the relationship between God, humanity, and nature may help in a meaningful ecological conversion process.

Our institutions, both ecclesiastical and secular, must adopt action plans and good practices in their everyday life for the spreading of behavior oriented towards a sustainable economy (mobility, green con-

sumption and investment policies, energy efficiency of buildings, carbon foot monitoring, etc.).

Local communities, parishes for instance, must be strengthened and sustained in the objective of finding their specific collective and contextualized answers to the multiple challenges generated by the ecological crisis.

There is a real need for the rethinking and replanning of the concept of economic growth towards a human

centered and integral development that includes not only material elements but the spiritual dimension as well.

We recognize that radical changes and transformations are unavoidable. At the same time, in many places and contexts, especially in marginal and peripheral areas, the only solution might be resilience and adaptation to the changed environments.

We hope that our shared dialogue between religion and science on the protection of creation and sustainable development may be a reference in the future for the expanding contents of the education curricula both in schools and in higher education institutions. Our work could then influence the formation of a positive attitude and generate motivation for local responses to our complex crises. By doing this, we hope to be in line and in the spirit of the encyclical *Laudato si'*, and we conclude with one of the final chords of the papal document: "Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (LS 244).

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Sustainable Development Goals without clearly assumed or agreed upon values cannot mobilize individuals or lead to collective actions.

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## The Spiritual Exercises in an ecological key, inspired by *Laudato si'*

José Ignacio García, S.J.  
Cristianisme i Justícia,  
Province of Spain

***For several years now, the Province of Spain has offered retreats inspired by Laudato si' at its spiritual centre in Celorio (Asturias).***

With the aim of linking a deep spiritual experience with an enhanced awareness of environmental challenges, the Jesuit house in Celorio (Asturias, Spain) has offered a series of retreats in the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises, and inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Francis argues that if we fail to recognise in ourselves a commitment to the integrity of creation, we need to examine the *kind* of spirituality from which we are nourished. We

know the dangers of a spirituality that is conditioned by ideology, and the opposite danger of a disincarnate spirituality, which merely seeks our own interior well-being.

The experience of these "*Laudato si'* Exercises" is marked by prayer, lifestyle choices, community, and discernment. Prayer is primarily aimed at restoring that interiority which is easily desiccated by everyday life, wounded by the complexities of life, deafened by the noise that surrounds

us. Celorio's privileged environment – close to the sea, yet at the foot of the *Picos de Europa* range, with its vivid colours – favours not least that mode of interiority known as the "application of the senses," so characteristic of the Spiritual Exercises.

The programme's design – "See, Judge, Act" – integrates the internal dynamics of the Exercises text itself and its "four-week" structure with a prayerful reading of *Laudato si'*.

Thus, Chapters I, II and III of *Laudato si'* may correspond to the first week: what is happening to our common home; the gospel of Creation; the human root of the ecological crisis. In the second week, we read chapter IV, "An Integral Ecology" which integrates social justice into the paradigm. In the third week, we read Chapter V, which provides guidelines and lines of action while recognising the complexity of each moment. Chapter VI, the encyclical's final chapter, entitled "Education and Ecological Spirituality" resonates with Ignatius's "Contemplation to Attain Love," inviting us to a profound inner conversion with respect, among other things, to the ecological crisis.

This sentence can summarise effectively the experience of the Spiritual Exercises, which more than a hundred people have made in recent years at Celorio, "what they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident

in their relationship with the world around them" (LS, 217). The dimensions of the ecological crisis also challenge their faith. Yet, through a sincere and profound encounter with Jesus Christ, through drawing out all the consequences of this encounter for our own time, we discover the words that enable our response.

Isaac Sánchez Giménez (CLC), trainer, consultant and advisor to

non-profit organisations on ecology and social inclusion, personally participated in the programme two years ago. It opened up for him a new way of experiencing spirituality, of living life. He writes, "Since then, I cannot conceive of any mysticism, or of any other instrument connecting me with the source of life, which does not go hand in hand with the profound conviction that *I myself am matter*, created, surrounded by matter, itself









## Earth invites us into a new relationship

Iain Radvan, S.J.  
Australian Province

***About an international meeting with the dynamics of a retreat: to listen, reflect, experience, and move from a destructive relationship with the Earth, to one capable of profound respect.***

Ignatius intended that the one receiving the Exercises encounter God directly and so re-orient his or her life. So, we too, members of the *Being with God in Nature* ministry and the *Care for our Common Home Committee*, intended that the International Ignatian Ecospiritual Conference (IIEC 2022), with the dynamic of a retreat, help participants to encounter God in Nature over six days and re-orient their values, goals, and actions to the care of our common home.

After having dealt with the technical aspects of creating an online conference, with the great support of Anthony Costa, an IT manager specialized in online religious events, our two biggest challenges were finding good speakers, and willing financial sponsors. Our panel of speakers eventually included Jesuits Xavier Jeyaraj (Secretary for Social Justice and Ecology for the Society of Jesus) who gave an opening address and Pedro Walpole (co-ordinator of Ecojesuit) who spoke about *Laudato*

*si'* in action. Peter Saunders also spoke on the encyclical *Laudato si'*, Dr Leslie Hughes (Professor of Biology at Macquarie University) on the climate emergency, Tony Rinaudo on his work with World Vision restoring degraded natural environments, and Sherry Balcombe, an indigenous elder, reminded us of the spiritual connection the First Nations have had with the land for thousands of years.

Father General Arturo Sosa opened the conference with these





words, “This is an opportunity to explore our deep interconnectedness with all creation through mindful encounters with nature, reflection, sacred listening and prayer ... this ecological conversion is an invitation to experience Christ present in all Creation.”

Participants were grouped in hubs of about eight, some in person, some online; besides those in Australia we had four hubs around Southeast Asia. Each morning began with prayer, a time of quiet reflection to be open to the grace of God for the day.

The speakers showed us first our present destructive relationship with Earth, as a kind of First Week meditation; then, as the Principle and Foundation does, how God intended our relationship with Earth to be; and lastly how we can change our attitudes and practices to be more respectful of Earth. Each afternoon the participants were encouraged to move to some area of nature – a garden or park – and do a spiritual exercise that would engage their sens-

es with the natural environment. We wanted them to experience intimacy with Earth in a concrete way, just as Ignatius wanted us to encounter God directly. The last part of the day saw them meeting in their group again where they shared their wonder and delight in having been closely attentive to the trees, birds and animals they encountered.

The final session of the conference (or retreat!) focused on the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: we wanted the participants to incarnate their enthusiastic new-found relationship with Earth. From an evaluation form here are some of the responses:

*I wanted to be educated and moved. Each successive day deepened*









## Inter-religious Ecological Ignatian Retreat: an experience to feel the divine of all faiths

Centro Alternativo de Cultura – CAC Team  
and Province of Brazil Communication Team

***Inspired by the eco-theology and teachings of the Encyclical letter Laudato si', the retreat held in northern Brazil provides people of all faiths with contact with the earth and with the Divine.***

Catholics, evangelicals, Afro-religious, spiritualists and agnostics gathered to live and share moments not only of prayer, silence, and reflection, but also of experiences such as circular dance, which allows each one to feel the ground that sustains us. The *Inter-religious Ecological Ignatian Retreat* is a spiritual experience of deep contact with mother-earth, in which everyone is invited to know

and feel the sacred, regardless of his or her belief.

Held since 2017 by the *Centro Alternativo de Cultura* (CAC – Alternative Culture Center), which promotes, among other aims, the rescue and appreciation of Afro-indigenous knowledge and ancestry, the retreat awakens the interest of people from several backgrounds, including members of

social movements for the defense of human rights and nature. The proposal is to bring together people willing to live in harmony, love, and enchantment, in the midst of nature, touching the ground, feeling the wind, listening to birds and recognizing themselves as brothers and sisters.

“The interest is very often from people from other religious traditions,



who feel welcomed, integrated and respected, in an experience they consider similar to their own,” says Juscelio Pantoja, CAC Coordinator. In its first edition, there were 22 participants and nowadays the retreat gathers up to 50 people. Many of those who have been through the experience choose to come back for the retreat two or three times.

One of them is Suelem Velasco, from Belém (State of Pará), who was once a participant and collaborator. She was interested in the novelty and in the integration with the communities and movements that are part of the CAC. “Each Retreat is unique because it depends on its participants and what they bring in their ‘baggage’: their stories, their gods, their prayers and their silences. The retreat reveals the beauty of the diverse, the multiple,



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To feel God from the earth, in the bush, in the flowers, in the trees, in the water, in the clay, and in the neighbor was the most beautiful prayer the retreat delivered. It was a wake-up call for the protection of our Amazon.

”

the respect for the Sacred and the Superior Being of each one. It is a hand in hand meeting and an opportunity to reconnect with our roots,” she says.

Alice Lopes Pereira, from Ananindeua (State of Pará), says that when seeking a deeper experience with God, she awakened to the fact that all creatures, peoples and environments are sacred. “To feel God from the earth, in the bush, in the flowers, in the trees, in the water, in the clay, and in the neighbor was the





Meditation and prayer come in a variety of formats during the retreats.

most beautiful prayer the retreat delivered. It was a wake-up call for the protection of our Amazon,” she said.

These experiences are possible thanks to the four-day schedule, with much prayer, sharing, silence and experiences, which permeate all the religions and spiritualities of the participants. The activities of each day are developed in order to focus on one element of nature (earth, air, fire and water) that is linked to Ignatian spirituality, as well as its biological and theological aspects.

**Everything is connected**

A scholar of eco-theology, Fr. David Hubald Romero, S.J., Delegate of the Provincial to the Amazonian Apos-

tolic Preference of the Province of Brazil, is one of the facilitators of the Inter-religious Ecological Ignatian Retreat. He began to study this ecological dimension in the Spiritual Exercises in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was in response to the invitation of the then Provincial of the Central and Southern Province of the United States, Fr. Ron Mercier, to lead, online, the Province’s biannual retreat with Fr. Brian Christopher.

During this virtual experience, because of the pandemic, Fr. David found ecological connections in Jesus’ parables about crops, seeds, and water. From then on, all his retreats have been based on an ecological approach.

“In the Encyclical letter *Laudato si’*, one phrase is repeated: ‘everything

is connected.’ It is one thing to think about this, but it is another to feel that we are part of God’s creation, as well as trees, rivers, fish, animals, insects, the sun, the moon, and the stars. In this recognition of our interdependence, an appeal for co-responsibility and commitment to the care of the common home emerges,” he explains. He underlines that the retreat cultivates an eco-centric perspective, in which the Creator loves all creation, not just human beings. Father David believes that God’s unconditional love is universal and all-encompassing. So, we can realize that all creation, without words or speeches, is expressing the beauty and love of the Creator.

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## Following the land, the Creator embodied

Trevor Scott, S.J.; Greg Kennedy  
Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Guelph, Ontario  
Province of Canada

***The Ignatius Jesuit Centre: The incarnation that enlightens and motivates an integrated engagement between regenerative agriculture, ecological restoration, and spiritual accompaniment.***

### **The heart of eco-spirituality - The Incarnation**

The heart of eco-spirituality is our Creator's own incarnation into our created existence... God taking on our flesh. Pondering this great mystery of creation, the existence of our earthly lives is rooted in the soil beneath our feet – the womb of all our food that sustains us. With the help of our prayerful imaginations, we can witness how God has literally and mysteriously become earth... for

us. To touch the Earth is to feel the Creator tangibly present.

Witnessing this deepened Incarnational mystery of the world around us can help deepen our response to Jesus' invitation, "Follow me" ... especially today upon a planet of decreasing natural abundance and fruitfulness. For those with ears to hear, the soil itself now speaks through Jesus. The land is asking us to leave behind our deadly nets, those former ways of domination, control,

greed, and fear. The land is saying "follow me" to life.

### **Ignatius Jesuit Centre - Cultivating spiritual depth and ecological engagement**

Ignatius the pilgrim put his whole strength and spirit into following Jesus. The Ignatius Jesuit Centre (IJC) in Guelph, Canada, continues this pilgrimage not to the land where Jesus walked, but rather towards the land



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The soil itself now speaks through Jesus. The land is asking us to leave behind our deadly nets, those former ways of domination, control, greed, and fear. The land is saying “follow me” to life.

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that Jesus was. In its three chief ministries of regenerative agriculture, ecological restoration, and spiritual direction, the Centre has grown increasingly aware of its responsibility and need to follow, rather than lead, the land. Its mission states this awareness clearly: “IJC cultivates spiritual depth and ecological engagement.” The Centre follows the truth of the Incarnation: that the human spirit only really grows when deeply rooted in the nature of reality, and the reality of nature.

### **Ignatius Farm and other ecological projects**

For more than a century, Jesuits have farmed about half of the 240 hectares that comprise IJC. Since 2001, all food grown on Ignatius Farm is certified organic. Following the land agriculturally means giving it rest and nurture through cycles of fallowness and cover crops to enhance the fertility of the soil without pesticides or chemical fertilizers. A community-shared agriculture (CSA) project now grows over 60 varieties of fruits and

vegetables. People can buy a share of the farm’s harvest and pick up their food in a variety of locations from late spring to early winter. Farm volunteers can also receive a share, which enables those on lower incomes to enjoy healthy, organic food. A vast quilt of community gardens provides a place for 275 local households to grow their own food. The farm also offers a seven-month internship for new farmers interested in organic food production.

Other projects participate in the ecological mission of the centre. The Old-Growth Forest Project is creating a 38-hectare sanctuary of wetlands, meadows, forests, and waterways along the banks of Marden Creek and the Speed River which is protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement. Marden Creek has become a kind of living icon for following the land, as it slowly settles again into its narrow, natural course after nearly two centuries of confinement and bloated stagnation. Here to follow the land is also to attend to the freedom of its waters.







## Casa Velha: spirituality, ecology and community

Margarida Alvim  
Casa Velha – Ecology and Spirituality  
Province of Portugal

**Hospitality, the ability to aggregate diverse peoples, and human and local development are the hallmarks of the mission of the Casa Velha rural farm.**

*Casa Velha* (Old House) is the name of a farm in a rural area in Portugal, very close to Fátima, in a village called Vale Travesso, cared by the fourth generation of the Alvim family. The great centenary oak trees that live here give us back our precious smallness, as part of God's creation that takes us and calls us to take part in it. They awaken the contemplative openness that allows us to reverence our Creator, Life, those who preceded us and those who will come. In constant exercises of grateful memory, we are given back our just place in a greater History,

which includes and transcends us, which claims, unites, and enlarges us in the mission of taking care of our common home through *Casa Velha*.

*Casa Velha – Ecology and Spirituality* is an Ignatian non profit association, fruit of a long journey of personal, family, and collective discernment, well rooted in the faith and apostolic commitment of those who preceded us. This “new” *Casa Velha* was born in 2012 as an answer to the call to care for people, land, and to the local territory in crisis, in a region

deeply marked by rural abandonment. Since then, hospitality, capacity for gathering different peoples, and human and local development have been the mission shared among family members, a group of lay people (of different ages, backgrounds and origins), the Society of Jesus and a religious congregation of women, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, each entity represented on the board.

Among the proposals of *Casa Velha*, “In the rhythm of Earth” is



“ We can deeply experience that the Kingdom is already here by feeling the urgency of being a shelter and not only a house with a roof.

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perhaps the one that attracts more participants. Each season – Spring, Winter, Autumn–, during a weekend, around 40 people (from 8 to 80 years old, adults, young people, young couples with their children, from different origins), will work together in the land as well as praying together several times during the day. Throughout these weekends, we can deeply experience that the Kingdom is already here by feeling the urgency of being a shelter and not only a house with a roof, of being a community that takes care of each other in a very natural way, as the Good Samaritan did. The experience of being welcomed and feeling at home, rediscovering our roots, working the fields: all this strongly affects everyone that spends these days in *Casa Velha*, confirming the ecological and spiritual dimensions of our existence.



The publication of *Laudato si'* by Pope Francis in 2015 was a very special landmark in our history. It was a moment of profound consolation: we were receiving a letter that substantially mirrored and confirmed the intuitions and experiences of the path that we were following. The smallness of our experience connected us with other communities or houses that, like us, want to take care of our com-

mon home. Through the Ecojesuit Network, *Casa Velha* started a special link with *Balay Laudato Si'* in Bendum, Phillipines.

Through the CIDSE network (International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity), among other partners, it was possible to integrate and articulate our action with various projects in spirituality

and development. There, we found strength, vitality and inspiration for our strategic reflections and agenda.

Concretely, the campaign of CIDSE titled “Change for the Planet, Care for the People” revealed the full potential of this articulation in a joint action which mobilized and united Catholic agencies and young activists from different countries in Europe





and the Global South, with two editions of a *Laudato si'* international camp held in *Casa Velha* (2017 and 2022).

This is the “miracle of the multiplication of the loaves” that has been the basis for the exterior transformation of the old garage into the Good Shepherd’s Chapel, the haystack into a shelter, the sheep stables into accommodation. Taking care of the vegetable garden together or in the cleaning of forests to prevent fires, all this has been the space and time where we have learned, above all, to live together – which is already so much! The exterior transformation that has been happening at *Casa Velha* reveals the personal and collective interior transformation, to the point that today we recognize ourselves as a community, called to a common vocation in this place, or, through this place, to be “*Casa Velha*” in other places, with other communities. In our strategic plan for the coming years, we recognize as the strong point of *Casa Velha*’s identity its “fragile, unfinished and simple” condition, which we continue to recognize as a strength for the future.







## Where spiritual fruits and vegetables are growing side by side

Tobias Karcher, S.J.  
Lassalle-Haus  
Province of Central Europe

### ***Fruitful cooperation between Lassalle-Haus and Zuwebe in Switzerland.***

Janine, who is 21 years old, has been working in the fields of our *Lassalle Haus* for two years. She often returns home in the evening tired, but always satisfied. She tells us, “My favorite job? I like harvesting vegetables, portioning them, and getting them ready for the baskets we then sell. It’s just nice to see what has grown in our garden. And it’s quite incredible what can fit in a seed.” And Noah reports, “At the moment we are harvesting the last cucumbers. The cucumber season is over now. We are emptying the beds. The leaves and the undergrowth must go on the compost. And the compost has to be turned reg-

ularly. Not necessarily my favorite job, but you can’t like doing everything.”

Janine and Noah talk about their work at *Zuwebe*, an organization offering work and housing for people with disabilities, in the canton of Zug. Since 2018, *Zuwebe* has been responsible for the garden and park at *Lassalle-Haus*, the Swiss Jesuits’ Centre for Spirituality. The collaboration with this institution, which accompanies people with physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities in our canton, is proving to be a great stroke of luck for our centre. Throughout the year, up to 14 garden

workers tend the park and fields in Bad Schönbrunn. Vegetables, lettuce, and flowers are once again planted on the one and a half hectare area. During the warm months, vegetables are harvested and can be purchased fresh daily by subscription or in the form of vegetable baskets. Seedlings are also grown and sold. Most of the vegetables that are prepared for the guests in the *Lassalle-Haus* kitchen come from the farm’s own garden. In the meantime, the farm has been certified organic.

Almost 100 years ago, the Jesuits returned to Switzerland after being

expelled during the *Kulturkampf* and founded one of the first retreat houses in Switzerland in Bad Schönbrunn, between Zurich and Lucerne. While the fathers devoted themselves to the retreats, the Jesuit brothers tended the garden and supplied the retreat house with fresh fruit and vegetables. The 1970s were then marked by the awakening of the Second Vatican Council and, at the same time, by a strong wave of secularisation in Western Europe, which also had an impact on religious vocations. No more brothers found their way to Bad Schönbrunn. So, the cultivation of the fields was discontinued gradually. In the 1990s, when the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation began to address the issue of interreligious dialogue, the Jesuits opened their centre to Eastern spirituality. They were inspired by Jesuit father Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle, the former Provin-

cial of Japan, who began to offer Zen courses in Europe, including here in Bad Schönbrunn. Our house is named after him. Along with the openness to different spiritual traditions, silence has also been a hallmark of the *Lassalle-Haus*. The silence that also inspires our friends with disabilities. In 2015, with the publication of *Laudato si'*, the question also arose as to what it meant for us, Jesuits, at Bad Schönbrunn. That is when we became aware anew of the richness of our fields and our small forest, which characterises the grounds of our *Lassalle Haus*. We then got into conversation with *Zuwebe*, the organisation for disabled people in our canton.

Garden and forest also play a role in our Eco Summer Camp, to which we have been inviting young people from Switzerland and its surrounding

“ That is when we became aware anew of the richness of our fields and our small forest.

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## "Heal the Earth" Caravan of Hope Amplifying voices from the margins

Ngonidzashe Edward, S.J.

JCED (Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development), Malawi  
Jesuit Province of Southern Africa

***In Southern Africa Province, young people are responding to the call to care for creation, advocating for climate justice and amplifying the voices of those most impacted by climate change.***

Since cyclone Idai in March 2019, Southern Africa has experienced back-to-back cyclones and tropical storms: Kenneth (2019), Chalane (2020), Eliose (2021), Ana, Gombe (2022), Freddy (2023). These extreme weather events have affected more than 3 million people and have left a trail of destruction and damages. Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique are the most affected countries in Southern Africa with Mozambique

being the hardest hit due to its geographical location along the Indian Ocean. In 2022, the Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development brought together 37 young people between the ages of 18 to 25 to embark on a journey to capture stories and raise awareness on the impacts of climate-induced disasters to frontline communities. This journey was dubbed "The Heal the Earth Caravan of Hope Tour" and took 15

days covering approximately 2000 km across Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi.

### **We want climate justice...!**

During the Caravan of Hope 2022 Tour, the young people saw and experienced how frontline communities are suffering from climate change. The sad reality is that these communities



“

I saw how powerful art is in healing those who have been traumatized by the cyclone. I saw art washing away their sad faces and anxiety.

”



have contributed least to the causes of this crisis, yet they are the most impacted by climate change. Hence, the key message of the Caravan was, “We want climate justice now!”

Here is what some of the young people had to say about the situation:

“I did not know that people are suffering like this. This Caravan of Hope has inspired me to do more as a teacher and I commit to teach and advocate for climate justice and make everyone aware that he/she is a steward of creation. Care for creation

is everyone’s responsibility,” Chaliwa Kaboma, teacher and youth leader.

“It is painful to see that the most affected and marginalized have least contributed to climate change. I pledge to passionately commit myself in caring for creation by acknowledging first that I am part of the ecosystem,” Colleta Kachepa.

“We all need to act now and make a difference. I believe that the youth can actively contribute to sustainable environment conservation for climate justice. I commit to continuously amplify

the voices of the marginalized in need of mindful assistance. Let’s unite for this cause as future generations rely on our actions today,” Shingai Anselmo Nhala, climate justice advocate.

What is striking is that each participant made a personal commitment for the future.

**The power of art and storytelling: *Artivism* and story-based advocacy**

Art is such a powerful way of mobilizing communities and inspiring





The *Caravan of Hope* puts on street shows to raise awareness about climate justice.





action. This is why the Caravan of Hope 2022 Tour used music, dance, poetry and social circus tools to capture climate stories, facilitate dialogue and engage communities. It also included art-therapy (Dance-it-out and Mbira Music Meditation sessions) for processing trauma and activating healing. Tatiana, one of the young CoH champions and *artists* testified to the power of art saying, “During the immersion experience, I saw how powerful art is in healing those who have been traumatized by the cyclone. I saw art washing away their sad faces and anxiety; we left the communities with a hope filled future.”

**The stories from frontline communities**

The CoH provided a platform for young people to journey with frontline communities and listen to their stories. One of the powerful stories we heard during the Caravan of Hope was from a young man from Chimanimani (Zimbabwe) called Panashe who is a survivor of cyclone Idai. He narrated how an intuitive visit to his aunt’s place saved him from a perilous disaster that washed

away all his family members and the entire village. About 300 people died due to the floods that washed away the entire village. The most painful thing is that the few survivors did not have an opportunity to properly bury their beloved ones as most of bodies were not found. In Mozambique and Malawi, we heard similar tales of such gruesome death and traumatizing loss and damage. These are the kind of stories that need to be told and be

heard at global climate negotiation meetings: stories of real people, real experience and real losses.

*The Caravan of Hope continues and the call for climate justice grows stronger... and we continue to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*

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## Dreams of the ecological wager in the southwest of Colombia

Alix Katherin Niño Corzo  
Province of Colombia

***The Instituto Mayor Campesino – IMCA – and the Suyusama Foundation are Jesuit social works that seek to build sustainable community processes and strengthen the social fabric in the south-west of the country.***

Socio-environmental education and the struggle to construct or create zones of peace have been two driving forces behind the Colombian Jesuit Province's ecological commitment. This mission has been led by the systemic and fraternal work of IMCA and Suyusama, two institutions located respectively in the Valle del Cauca and in Nariño, which are committed to promote sustainability, while developing proposals for the decent and dignified life of the region's peas-

ant, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Through mutual respect, equity and cooperation, they have generated tools for political advocacy and regional transformation. The process has entailed the awareness raising and training of communities in the service of an economy which is productive without degrading our common home.

For Erminsu David, director of the works, their engagement has borne

many fruits: "promoting agro-ecology, becoming a resource for the support of projects, and expanding ecological awareness to many organisations." He recognises the importance of conservation in this mission. "Becoming aware of the importance of healthy food, understanding and communicating that we harm nature through the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals, is like proclaiming the Gospel. It preserves our common home. However, the challenge



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Her dream is to turn her farm into an edible forest.

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is not only to provide comprehensive accompaniment, but also to encourage communities to continue generating their own spaces for development.” For this, the challenge, according to Luis Rodríguez, regional coordinator of Suyusama, is “to connect worlds and to plant seeds from which initiatives may grow.”

The following are experiences and testimonies that demonstrate

the impact of ecological work in the region.

#### Water is life

An initiative for the defence of water resources, since 2005 the National Network of Community Aqueducts, has supported a project to link organisational processes around the provision and conservation of water.

Erminsu explains that the Network has enhanced the visibility of organisations that carry out conservation work without remuneration, has promoted understanding of the link between population and water scarcity, and has improved water access for those who had little.

Since 2009, Mariela Cardona, a community leader from Restrepo, Valle del Cauca, has participated in

Healthy water and food for forward-looking community development.









## The Ukama Center for Socio-Ecological Transformation in Nuremberg (Germany)

Jörg Alt, S.J.  
Province of Central Europe

***The Jesuits of the Province of Central Europe are taking seriously the vast project of socio-ecological transformation of the world in which we live.***

Milestones on the way to the foundation of the Ukama Centre:

2015: Pope Francis publishes his Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* on care for our common home. Fabian Moos, S.J., who studied philosophy in Munich at that time and who was to become a teacher in one of our schools, would like to make the contents of chapter 6 ("Ecological Education and Spirituality") the focus of his work.

2017: Among other things, the Tax Justice & Poverty research project finds that Africa would not need development aid if the super-rich and corporations could not shift their profits to tax havens.

2019: During a visit to Africa, it is reported that due to climate change, sowing times are no longer predictable, with food shortages and migration as a result.

2021: During the COVID pandemic, the suspension of patent rights for vaccine fails in states where pharmaceutical companies are based.

The last three crises kept Jesuit Jörg Alt busy with research and campaigns as Advocacy Officer of *jesuitenweltweit* (lit.: *jesuitsworldwide*), the *Mission Procura* of the Jesuits in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. At the same time, he gained the impression



To ensure that the ecological voice is heard, the Jesuits themselves must participate (here, in Munich).

that many crises in our world have a common root: the Western neoliberal way of doing business. So instead of dealing with each crisis symptom individually, it would surely make more sense to deal with the root cause of the problem.

At this point, Klaus Vähröder, S.J., director of *jesuitenweltweit*, brought up the 2011 report *Welt im Wandel – Gesellschaftsvertrag für eine Große Transformation (World in Transition – Social Contract for a Great Transformation)*, by the German Advisory Council on Global Change. High-profile scientists outlined how our world can be made more socially just and ecologically sustainable with the help of a socio-ecological transformation.

Since the ECE novitiate, which was previously located in Nuremberg, moved to Innsbruck, the Provincial Bernhard Bürgler agreed to the establishment of the Ukama Centre. He also sent Dieter Müller, S.J., of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) as the fourth Jesuit to join the new team, because displacement and migration will become more explosive in the coming decades. The task of the centre is to



raise awareness of the problem and the need for action within and outside the Jesuit communities and works of the ECE Province.

This composition is indeed very promising: Rich knowledge about the international effects of injustice and climate change flows to us via JRS and *jesuitenweltweit*. This can be further processed by Jörg Alt due to his political contacts, while Fabian Moos can prepare this knowledge appropriately with the help of his pedagogical skills.

“Ukama” is the name of the program. This term from the African Shona philosophy expresses the transboundary interconnectedness of everything with everything, not only of humans, animals, and the plant world, but also of the spiritual-transcendent dimension. So, the term “Ukama” re-introduces what has been lost in the Global North and must be restored laboriously: the feeling for the living whole of creation.

The centre began its work with an inaugural congress in early October



2022. The following are a few examples from the programme of the first year:

The centre offers permanent hospitality to refugees. Currently, five refugees from Ukraine and three others are living in church asylum with the Jesuits. Due to climate change, global migration will increase exponentially in the coming years. While hundreds of millions will soon be at stake, living with refugees demonstrates that everyone is a human being with a face and a destiny.

For two practical reasons, awareness raising and socio-political engagement are currently focused on Nuremberg and Bavaria. First, a socio-ecological transformation requires a wide variety of “real laboratories” in order to make progress locally as quickly, as strongly, and with as many people as possible. Towns and municipalities are ideal because people can be trained there relatively easily and can help shape the transformation process. Second, in Germany, much depends on the legal and political framework of the federal states. During the campaign for the election of a new state parliament in Bavaria in the fall of 2023, the centre has cooperated with a civil society alliance in the election campaign to ensure that issues relevant to transformation are adequately addressed before the elections.

A third focus is civil society resistance. In three countries of the ECE Province, there are groups that use street blockades as a symbolic attempt to interrupt the fossil fuel “business as usual,” thus making the warning of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) heard. They want to stress that the next three years will be decisive if the 1.5-degree target agreed to in the Paris climate agreement is still to be achieved. Even



“ Jesuits have a high credibility and furthermore a good reputation when it comes to the ethically reflected accompaniment of change processes. ”

conservative commentators understand that the Jesuits, in fact, support the commitment of the mostly young demonstrators: Jesuits have a high credibility due to their history in science and research and furthermore a good reputation when it comes to the ethically reflected accompaniment of change processes.

From the summer of 2023, Klaus Vähröder has had more time to work at the centre, and in the autumn, Fabian Moos has been strengthening the team. From then, the Ukama Centre has finally been fully operational.

It is also high time, because the current events show that in society and politics there is still no broadly supported readiness for a socio-ecological transformation – all the more so within the short time outlined by science. Accordingly, the work of the four Jesuits sent to the Ukama Centre will aim above all to work in networks and to achieve a leverage effect as well in the ECE Province as in the Church and the world.

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## Ecological conversion, a transformation in community

Magdalena G. Parra  
Province of Spain

**Since 2004, the Jesuit community in Valladolid has lived an “ecological experience.” Over this period, specific projects have embodied the reality that ecology goes hand in hand with social transformation.**

“We were ecology nuts, and when the Pope published the encyclical *Laudato si'*, it was a boost to us, assuring us that we were on the right track.” This is how Pady Miranda remembers the origin of the ecology project of the Valladolid Apostolic Platform. Pady is coordinator of the Ecology Commission, which dates back to 2005, the year when the ecological garden project was born at the University School of Agricultural Engineering (INEA) in Valladolid, led by the director, Félix

Revilla S.J. Hundreds of retired people in the city were eventually able to have a garden on the farm.

To take proper care of the gardens meant running them organically, with chemical-free cultivation. Felix admits that “We didn’t know what organic farming was because we had all our lives been teaching *conventional* farming.” That intuition shifted INEA’s entire understanding; its teaching model and agricultural practice

turned to agro-ecology. In turn, that decision prompted a community reflection. We all make daily decisions that can be different, and we noticed the “butterfly effect”: As we adopted agro-ecology, we were implementing social change. Over time, social integration projects were added, with gardens for people with disabilities and mental illness, so that the *social* ecosystem was being transformed too. This was the pilot experience of a deeper dream.





***Come Sano, Come Justo.*** The dream came true in 2009. The INEA model inspired a specific project: the *Come Sano, Come Justo* cooperative. A diverse group of friends, chaired by Pedro Piedras and united by the idea of acting indivisibly for the planet and its inhabitants, opened a shop in the city centre selling sustainable and fair-trade products. They opened it, in fact, in the street where various Jesuit works already coexisted: the church, the pastoral centre, social institutions, *Entreculturas* and *Red Íncola* (an NGO established to welcome migrants). In this environment, the cooperative would follow three principles; First, to raise awareness of the environment, organic production and fair trade; second, to embody a social commitment by employing people at risk of social exclusion or people with special physical or mental needs; finally, to direct the profits to social and cooperative projects. The founders commented, “a humble but strong project, well rooted in the city and in its Jesuit environment.”

*Come Sano, Come Justo* later forged links with indigenous families in Chiapas, Mexico. It committed itself to their social economy and became the Spanish distributor of their *Capeltic* coffee. Every packet of coffee sold communicated the message of caring. The original local project, run by just a few people, not only grew but came to indicate a different yet possible social model, global and inclusive. Six years later, this small community of small actions heard from *Laudato si'* (LS) the call “to care for our common home.” Embracing Francis’s words along with Ignatian spirituality, the community integrated the presence of the Creator God into its small gestures of solidarity and its care for nature. The Community produced its own documents (*Ecological Conversion: a Reading of Laudato si' from the Perspective of Ignatian spirituality*





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The ecological experience is rich; the challenge proposed by Francis is still more powerful.

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and Recent Documents of the Society of Jesus). From there, have developed “Eco-retreats,” offering the *Spiritual Exercises*, and celebrating the Easter Triduum in an ecological mode.

**The Ana Leal House of Ecology and Refuge**

Sustained by its spirituality and friendship, this community nourishes its passion for the care of creation. The ecological experience is rich; the challenge proposed by Francis is still more powerful. The originating principle (“Our daily choices can be different”) was integrated into community

life, forming a “different space,” the *The Ana Leal House of Ecology and Refuge*. Jesuits and lay people live in community on the INEA farm, the site of INEA’s ecological gardens. This space forms temporary welcoming refuge for migrants and refugees, especially families. The house also receives groups who wish to live out a more profound experience, because it is by truly connecting with the most natural aspect of ourselves that we can make decisions and change our way of life in tune with the Gospel. The key to this life is simplicity, ecology and care for the project garden itself. In the *Ana Leal House, Laudato si’* reigns: “everything is connected.” That is why, in the

words of LS’ §.91, “Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.”

With small gestures, says Felix Rivila, “It’s possible to do what we do, more deeply and more fully. This is necessary. But it’s not easy and it is a work of the community.” As LS § 219 sums up the matter, “Ecological conversion to create a lasting dynamism of change is also a community conversion.”

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## At the service of a smiling and itinerant ecology

Thierry-Jean Roboüam, S.J.  
Loyola Centre for Ecology & Justice  
Province of Sri Lanka

***In Sri Lanka, an ecological centre of the Society of Jesus is being reborn to offer ways to improve living environments. Humbly and slowly, things are changing for the better... and smiles are blossoming.***

One morning, gazing out over the Trincomalee Bay, I finally realised what I wanted to do to reorganise an ecological centre that had fallen into disrepair. The option, among others, was simply to work with the most marginalized people in favour of a joyful, smiling and itinerant ecology. Two years later, having suffered several health, financial and political crises, our centre is running dozens of projects at the service of thousands of underprivileged families. Involving

those families, we are working to solve their problems with our own means.

There are smiles and laughter that cannot be fake; they appear naturally and light up faces. In daily life, it is these smiles that give me the strength to carry on. They shine on the faces of the parents whose children are in our care, on the wrinkled faces of those who receive our canvas bags, on the faces of the families we help to tend their vegetable gardens. In a

world where the computer revolution has made us anxious and bitter, where environmental activism atrophies the muscles that help us smile, clenches the jaws and wrinkles the brows, we decided to take our time and work on long-term solutions, at the pace of the poor.

When in 2020 the Provincials of Sri Lanka and Japan invited me to restructure a Jesuit centre dedicated to ecology, I did not hesitate for a

moment. The centre faces the magnificent deep, fish-rich Trincomalee Bay, on the Eastern side of the island of Sri Lanka. But this picture postcard view dissimulates poorly the effects of pol-

lution. Day after day, plastic bottles and other toxic products pour into this beautiful body of water, bordered by some of the most bio diverse areas of the world. Pollution progresses in

an insidious way, and therefore looks very much like a natural phenomenon. Every day, people clean up in front of their doors and collect leaves and plastic waste that they burn.



Beautiful handmade bags can replace plastic bags.







These are the most ordinary activities of daily life: polluting waste is treated just as natural waste, and toxic fumes are inhaled without concern.

The project of this Jesuit run centre is to promote an ecology that adopts natural gestures, respecting the religious and social roots of these hab-

its, and seeking for what, in everyday life, could offer a solution. A simple approach does not make much noise, and does not claim to be the solution to “Climate Change” and other problems of global injustice. It is a response to two fundamental insights. First: that only the build-up of local solutions has a global effect. And, second,

that any local solution must foster the ability of even the marginalized to solve their problems. This is our approach to globalisation.

Our original purpose may be a surprise to you. We did not want to offer theoretical solutions to problems inherent to poverty. For us, poverty is



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The economic transformation of a region should not be at the cost of increased environmental damage.

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Raising awareness in the villages starts with young people in their school.

not a problem but a reality. We discover imbalances that hint at innovations, silent solidarity and ingenious know-how. This reality is in itself a source of solutions to environmental problems. We hope these remedies will have positive effects on the local economy. Our love for these families has made us cautious. The economic transformation of a region should not be at the cost of increased environmental damage.

Our itinerant ecology takes us from village to village. Everywhere we start by listening, looking, smelling, touching and breathing... Sri Lankans are fond of bags and use

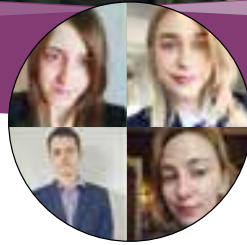
them in daily life. That's why the Loyola Centre for Ecology and Justice has opened three sewing workshops that make thousands of canvas and jute bags, which are then distributed free of charge to families in need in order to reduce the use of plastic. We talk a lot, and I love those moments when the seamstresses show me their work. They are beaming; they know how to surprise me and don't get offended when I make practical suggestions. We teach in schools and the children are our ambassadors who in turn educate their parents. We transform palm wood into tables, pots and towel racks. In the skilful hands of our workers coconuts become soap

dishes or buttons. The economic crisis stimulates the poor people to cultivate their own vegetable garden. But they need seeds. So, in one year, we have provided seeds to a thousand families.

This pilot project, supported by keen benefactors – a project born in the heart of Sri Lanka with Sri Lankans and the Society of Jesus of Sri Lanka – promotes silent transformations that generate long-term solutions to the rhythm of the laughter and smiles of the poorest.

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## VIRIDIS Scientific Circle: for the planet and for the people

Dominika Mąka; Krzysztof Kuczma; Zofia Pietrzyk; Teresa Stanek  
Ignatianum Academy, Krakow  
Province of South Poland

**Take action! The world needs pro-ecological inspiration! The VIRIDIS Scientific Circle, group of enthusiastic students, shares their experience and knowledge of creation, making young people aware of the need to care for the planet and for those in need.**

We are students at the Jesuit University *Ignatianum* in Krakow (Poland). We come from various places, we study in different departments, we have different career plans, but we are united by our concern for creation, nature and the people who surround us. Our student-led ecological VIRIDIS Scientific Circle (under the care of the Institute of

Philosophy) is a way of bringing together students who are looking for ways to respond to Pope Francis' call in the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

We are betting on development! Our academic supervisor says, "Ecology and conservation of nature are both easy and difficult, simple and complex." So we broaden our

knowledge by reading scientific publications and familiarising ourselves with environmental news. We want to have a real impact on protecting the planet and reach the widest possible audience. Therefore, a large part of our activity is writing and publishing short articles on social media addressing environmental issues, which are at the same time linked to



our other interests, like psychology, journalism, cultural studies, pedagogy, political sciences, etc.

However, we are not limited to the virtual space! The real world, the one we experience through our senses, is even more important to us. In a series of meetings with students, we discussed how to talk to children about ecology. Invited guests involved in environmental activities and environmental education on a daily basis assisted us. Very inspiring meetings! They are helping us to promote the idea of environmental responsibility among young boys and girls in an accessible way.

We want to better understand reality. So, it is worth considering participating in a scientific conference. We did it recently! Olivia, pre-

vious president of the Circle, prepared a presentation on the effects of the war in Ukraine on the country's environment. Dominika, the current Vice-President of the Circle, highlighted another problem: "During the presentation, I spoke about the snow leopard, which is one of the most endangered species in the world. How many species have disappeared for ever!" The conference gave us an opportunity to reach another audience and to broaden our horizons.

We also go beyond the walls of the university. As part of the "Bee happy" campaign, we used an open-air game format to distribute flower seeds to students so that they could use them at home. By doing so, we wanted to draw attention to the important role of pollinating insects. There are several insect hotels around

our university, too! "When organising the 'Bee happy' campaign, I personally did not realise the seriousness of the situation at the beginning. However, by handing out seeds to the students, I realised that what we were doing was much more important than we might have thought," says Zofia, a member of the Circle.

A workshop in the Krakow's forest sanctuary, *Las Wolski*, was also a mind changing experience. Through various tasks such as painting in marble sand or creating a scent wand, we were able to experience contact with nature in an interesting way. This type of activity allowed us to stimulate our sensitivity, take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and see in nature what surrounds us every day and escapes us in our hurried life. So, we could





appreciate what we have and what surrounds us.

**Reaching out to the whole community of the Ignatianum**

The goal of our activities: combining environmental activities with the integration of the academic community of the *Ignatianum*. In the run-up to Christmas, we organised an activity of repairing damaged Christmas tree decorations together in a relaxed atmosphere, thus trying to counteract the consumerism that accompanies this period and shape an alternative lifestyle. “Refurbishing old baubles and giving them new life allowed me to see the world from a slightly different perspective. I noticed that not everything has to be thrown away just after using it. Things that seemingly

no longer serve their purpose can be repaired. All it takes is a little willingness and creativity. In this way, we cut down on consumerism and can have a lot of fun at the same time,” says Krzysztof, a member of the Circle.

We try to listen to students’ expectations in order to encourage them to be active, because we know that we are the generation that can make a difference in the world. We feel that the world needs us. And enthusiasm is very much needed! We want our university to graduate young people who are aware of the problems of society and the lack of care for the planet, men and women who will want to and be able to counteract this.

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Kiosk for the “Bee happy” campaign to encourage people to plant flowers... and thus help pollination.

“ We know that we are the generation that can make a difference in the world. ”



## Finding God in farming

Dieng Karnedi, S.J.  
Province of Indonesia

***Farming connects people to God while also forming them environmentally. This is the foundation of the Jesuit run Kursus Pertanian Taman Tani Agricultural Center, in Central Java, Indonesia.***

“The ultimate goal of farming is not growing the crops but the cultivation and perfection of human beings,” said Masanobu Fukuoka, Japanese farmer and promotor of “natural agriculture”. Actually, farming is an easy thing. You can learn and practice it. However, if the farmer himself does not have the right attitude, if he is not striving to be “a cultivated and perfect human being,” the results and impacts of farming can be detrimental to others.

At KPTT Agricultural Center, we have been involved in agriculture

for 58 years and we discovered that through agriculture we reach something spiritual, ecological, and eminently formative. These aspects are interconnected and are complementary.

### **Agriculture connects us to God**

We are a Jesuit-run boarding and day school that teaches organic farming. We are consoled and satisfied when we reflect together with the students, the participants in our sessions and the visitors on the meaning of our

Center’s activities. One simple question we always ask them is: what are their feelings after participating in the courses, internships, or even simply after their short trip to KPTT? Surprisingly maybe, the most dominant feeling is the joy of being able to know about and experience concretely our agricultural formation project.

An additional feeling is also noteworthy: it is a sense of affirmation of the importance of agriculture and an inspiration to pursue and love agriculture even more than before. The



participants in our sessions are delighted to witness and being directly involved in the growth of the various commodities they have planted, from seed to germination, growth stage, flowering stage, and fruiting stage.

An amazing process starts from a small seed that grows into a large plant that produces stems, leaves, seeds, and fruits. And they can see that all of these parts of the plants provide food and various products for the people.

We believe that farming activities are connected to God who continues to work in us and makes us feel joy and wonder; a way for God to motivate us in our daily life. Theologians have said that spirituality is something that connects you to God. For us, farming is a spiritual encounter that connects us to God. What we do can be called “finding God in farming.”

### **Healthy soil for a healthy life**

One of the agricultural courses we offer is about preparing healthy soil for our healthy life. This movement was initiated globally in 2015. Soil









## From Eco-worriers to Eco-warriors

Mark Mackey, S.J.

Loyola University Chicago – School of Environmental Sustainability  
USA Midwest Province

***Accompanying youth through eco-anxiety: a part of the work of a Jesuit Brother, professor at the School of Environmental Sustainability, in Chicago (USA).***

*“Mom, I told you, I’m not going to have kids! [pause, listening]. How can I do that? How can I bring children into this world? There’s not even going to be any green left. It’s too late. That would be cruel.”*

This was a snippet of conversation I unintentionally overheard. A visibly and audibly upset student was talking on her phone on the campus of Loyola University Chicago. It was October 2018, and the UN Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had just released its latest report. The report covered the global impacts of an increase of 1.5 °C above the pre-industrial period and how to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Some news agencies ran headlines such as “Planet has only until 2030 to stem catastrophic climate change, experts warn.” People were beginning to take notice of these reports on climate change, and often the framing and conclusions were despairing.

*How can we better accompany this student? How can we help her navigate media headlines? How can we help her learn about the mechanisms and serious consequences of climate change while also moving into a hope-filled future?* These were some of the questions that fueled my MA thesis in Christian Spirituality titled *In Pursuit of an Ecologically-Based Spirituality Which Leads to Spiritual Accompaniment and Environmental Action*. I finished it in 2020. Around the time I returned to



Loyola in August of 2021 to teach full time as a lecturer of environmental science, *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal published the results of a survey of 10,000 young adults ages 16-25 from 10 countries (six from the Global North and four from the Global South). Of the 10,000 respondents, 75 % indicated “The future is frightening;” 56 % indicated “humanity is doomed;” 39 % indicated they were “Hesitant to have children.” Apparently, the American student I had overheard 3 years prior was not alone.

In spring of 2022, I taught *Eco-Spirituality for Action*, a class that has students explore the interconnectedness of creation over time (cosmology) and space (ecology) through a spiritual lens. After the semester, I asked five promising students from this class whether they would be interested in helping start an eco-anxiety support group both for themselves and for other Loyola students. All five students readily agreed, and thus began our group. We have now met once a week for a whole school year, and at least five clear benefits of this group have become apparent: community, solidarity, a place to vent, spirituality, and hope.

We start each hour-long meeting with ten minutes of making tea and catching up informally, and this building of community is as important as any aspect. Madeline Palmquist, a third year Conservation and Restoration Ecology student, says, “Studying environmental science comes with a weight that is unlike other majors, and building a community to talk about that unique pressure and stress has been incredible.” From this community comes solidarity. “When I begin to feel overwhelmed by the state of our environment, this group has been a safety net to remind me that I am not alone in my fears,” adds biology student Sidney Ryans.

Our group also provides a healthy place to vent. Environmental Policy student Lori Cornelius reflects, “ Oftentimes when we are sitting in our environmental classes, we have to put up an emotionless front and just take the doom and gloom. With this group, I feel that I can express my frustrations and grief about the world’s situation and feel heard, understood, and supported.” Carly Fournier, an Environmental Science MS student states, “This group has been helpful by providing an outlet for me to pause and contemplate on what I can and



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“I leave each meeting with a renewed sense of hope that I carry into the rest of my week.”

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## The London Jesuit Centre copes with climate desolation

Nicolete Burbach; Aidan Cottrell-Boyce  
London Jesuit Centre,  
British Province

### ***The Ignatian way out of desolation as a paradigm for understanding the possibility of facing climate desolation.***

We teach on social and environmental justice at the London Jesuit Centre, a small, UK-based organisation dedicated to whole-life theological education and formation. In our work, we often encounter those who are deeply moved by the gravity of the ecological crisis. But we have also found that people are less likely to engage with these issues when we teach about them.

Perhaps one reason for this is the very gravity of the crisis itself. Many of us at this moment in history are afraid and grieving for creation and all that is

bound up in our troubled relationship with it. This makes it hard to confront the loss it represents.

Yet grief need not lead to despair. Instead, it can be a moment for our love to grow and deepen. The famous British writer C.S. Lewis taught this in *A Grief Observed*, his reflections on his experience of bereavement following the death of his wife. He wrote, with as much honesty as lyricism, that “bereavement is not the truncation of love, but one of its natural phases.” How then can we, as educators, help

our students to grow through this grief?

Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environmental crisis, *Laudato si’*, speaks to this question. It is a hopeful text, looking forward to our redemption from the crisis in the repairing of our broken relationships with God and creation (§66). Yet this hope, which emerges within a context of loss, is also therefore a melancholy one. It requires us to acknowledge that there *is* a crisis, that relationships *are* broken. And it prompts us to consider that





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Viewing climate grief in terms of desolation can help us to navigate it.

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some things may well be lost forever (§33).

This melancholy resonates with our students’ grief. However, for Francis, it is not the last word.

Ignatian spirituality, another major part of the London Jesuit Centre’s work, can help us to understand how this is the case. The encyclical’s melancholy reflects Ignatius’ concept of *desolation*. It does so in three respects:

First, as a time of alienation: we have disrupted our relationship with creation, and thus with God. Second, as a time in which we are counselled by the “evil spirit,” another Ignatian concept: we are struggling to respond to the situation with courage and responsibility. Finally, in the literal desolation of our planet.

Viewing climate grief in terms of desolation can help us to navigate it. In his “Rules on the discernment of

spirits” at the end of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius teaches that desolation is part of a cycle: like grief, it is a “natural phase” of love, and not the end of it. That is, despite appearances, in desolation our relationship with God is never truly gone.

In this context, Ignatius instructs us to remember and look forward to times of consolation. In the meantime, he also exhorts us to fight the temptation to despair and to cleave ever more strongly to that which supports and saves us.

Similarly, *Laudato si’* looks forward to the redemption of creation in Eucharistic communion at the end of time. In the Eucharist, creation is “joined to the incarnate Son,” and “the living centre” of creation is revealed to be “the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life” (§236).

In the Eucharist, we enter into this love. This reminds us that the



desolation of our grief is but one phase within the journey of history, in which God's love never abandons us. And it encourages us to keep striving to respond with our own love.

Most profoundly, Ignatius also instructs us to take strength in God, who provides us with help to bear our desolation.

This represents a somewhat paradoxical moment of faith in which we are prompted *by* the perceived absence of God to turn to Him *in* that absence.

Our apparent alienation from God thereby becomes the threshold to the recovery of our relationship with Him, leading us out of desolation.

The Eucharistic hope in *Laudato si'* makes a similar movement. It locates our redemption in grace, and thereby reminds us to turn to God, seeking consolation not in the weakness of our own courage and powers but in God's activity.

When Francis makes this movement in *Laudato si'*, he does so not simply as a theologian but as a teacher. Perhaps our task as teachers is to find ways to make this movement within our own pedagogy and to draw our students to make it with us. Perhaps then they too can begin to lift from their own desolation.

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## Timber poaching - When will enough be enough?

Chukwinonso Obiora, S.J.  
North-West Africa Province

### ***The experience of Jesuits “fighting” timber poaching in Nigeria by encouraging and supporting agricultural development.***

Ogbere is located in the forest reserve area in the eastern part of Ogun state, Nigeria. There, and as in other parts of the country, illegal logging abounds. The rate at which such activities are conducted is disheartening and worrisome. Regrettably, this happens daily, on vastly different scales, throughout the seasons.

The indigenous people of Ogbere need more ecological awareness. Only a few of them know that tree poaching causes climate change, desertification, soil erosion, flooding, increased

greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and an unprecedented host of other problems. The question is, when will “enough be enough,” considering that the tree poaching habit amongst the people of Ogbere is seen as a means of livelihood?

### **Preying on timbers at Ogbere**

In September 2022, my face-to-face encounter with two young men poaching timbers on the land belonging to *Xavier Jesuit Institute* in Eregun village, Og-

bere, left me with utter consternation. It was scary seeing them with machetes and other machine tools. They looked famished and malnourished.

At first, I thought that by seeing me with other priests they would stop and run away, but to the contrary. The youngest asked us in their local Pidgin English, “Fathers, what are you doing in this part of the bush? Did you bring us something? We are hungry, we don’t have any money, and we need the wood for our houses and to earn a little money.”



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We believe that agro-training and accompaniment can help them become eco-sensitive citizens who creatively work for the common good.

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Fr. Patrick Ajewole, the parish priest, asked them to stop and listen to us. In our interaction with them, we realized that they had been illegally poaching on the land for a week. One of them said, “We were not aware about the effects and consequences of our action because nobody ever told us.” They were sympathetic and expressed sincere apology for poaching the trees, but insisted that they did this in order to have some money for food.

After enlightening them on the ecological impact of their action, they packed their machine tools and left because we assured them of a means of livelihood if they stopped poaching. Three months later, we invited them to join other workers clearing and preparing the land for farming.

According to Ogbere Forest Reserve officials, timber poaching is a big problem in every forest area. Ille-

gal loggers run the whole range of cutting down small tender trees to large-scale devastation of entire groves. Because of poverty, poachers here do not consider the long-term effect and consequences of their actions. When they learn about it and are given other opportunities to earn their living, they could change their mind. They are then enlightened and encouraged to intervene in the ecosystem dynamics, stability, productivity, and







nutrient balance through healthy agricultural practices. With the cultivation of over 100 hectares of land with organic cassava, maize, plantain, and banana, Xavier Jesuit Institute aims at grassroots sensitization, education, and synergy with the youths and rural women in view of eradicating timber poaching.

We are committed to making farming an attractive and viable source of income for these people who com-

plain of a lack of financial resources to meet their daily needs. Through our workshops, lectures, seminars, and training, we hope to encourage people to start up their own agro-business. We believe that agro-training and accompaniment can help them become eco-sensitive citizens who creatively work for the common good, irrespective of their religion, culture, or economic status.

Since the population is most-

ly poor and hardly knows the effects of indiscriminate deforestation, the rich business people who profit from poaching continue to use different tactics to lure people into the activity. The rich go as far as recruiting and bribing officials to allow youths to poach trees illegally. Our goal is to reduce inconsiderate attacks on the natural environment in Ogbere. The salient point here is that timber poaching can be minimized if, by encouraging organic farming, we can show that poverty is surmountable through other ways.

For the Xavier Jesuit Institute, organic farming as an empowerment strategy becomes a necessary tool for stopping the poaching of timbers in Ogbere. Yes, “enough will be enough” when the Ogbere people are empowered and convinced that organic farming can serve as an alternative source of livelihood. This is our task: sensitization and education for people to understand the perennial and devastating effect of timber poaching.

The young people who were illegally poaching trees are now working to prepare the land for farming.





## Harnessing the sun for a better future

Michael Austin  
Editor of UMI Province Magazine  
USA-Midwest Province

**Three Jesuit schools in the Midwestern United States turn to solar energy to reduce electricity costs and help the environment along the way.**

The sun doesn't shine on the Great Lakes region of the United States the way it does in other parts of the country. Summers are short, and the sun's intensity pales in comparison to the bright, hot rays common in southern locales. Nonetheless, three Jesuit schools are harnessing the sun to make a positive impact on both the environment and the vitality of their institutions.

In Chicago, *Christ the King Jesuit College Prep* (CTK) high school and *Chicago Jesuit Academy* (CJA) elemen-

tary school share a campus on the city's west side, where air quality lags and residents suffer from higher incidences of respiratory ailments. A fundraising effort has cleared the way for the schools to partially convert to solar energy. Installation of 72 Cell Tier 1 solar panels was expected to begin on CTK's rooftop in late summer of 2023, though additional support was required to fully fund and complete the project.

"To me the most exciting part is that the energy created won't affect the

environment negatively," says Josiah, an eighth-grader at CJA. "I've never seen a school with solar panels before, so I think that it's a unique thing for us and it's really cool."

Figures vary for the two schools, but at *Christ the King* alone, solar panels will produce an estimated 318,439 kilowatt hours per year, equating to roughly 20 to 30 percent of the school's annual energy consumption. That amount of energy would power 30 homes for a year, or





In the neighbourhood of *Christ the King Secondary School* (Chicago), air quality is very poor.

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It’s important for our students to see that we don’t just talk the talk, we also walk the walk.

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allow an electric car to travel 920,000 miles (1,480,600 km).

“Having solar panels installed at CTK is moving us further into a future we can all be proud of,” says Maggie Deady, a CTK social studies teacher. “Environmental sustainability is a key feature of our Catholic social teaching. It’s important for our students to see

that we don’t just talk the talk, we also walk the walk when it comes to helping our environment and the climate change crisis.”

In Detroit, a green program is fully operational at *Gesu Catholic Church and School*. In recent years, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) – who have long been teachers, administrators, and pastoral ministers at *Gesu School* – renovated their Motherhouse, achieving LEED certification and viewing sustainability as a moral mandate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Sisters served as a good model for *Gesu* students and staff because when a lay teacher learned about the “My Solar School Contest,” students and faculty were instantly interested. They formed a Solar Energy Club in their historic 1925 building. They toured solar facilities and spoke to experts in the field, and with the help of *Gesu* alumnae, they created a solar power-themed video. The video won third place and \$500 in prize money.

Being in the epicenter of the American automobile industry, *Gesu*







# Jesuits at the frontiers



Two lives – Arturo Araujo S.J., Alex Campagnella-Dose –  
From the series *Heaven's Heart*

The missionary impulse of the Jesuits has pushed them, since the times of St. Francis Xavier in the 16th century, to the frontiers of known and unknown worlds. Throughout their history, the sons of St. Ignatius have not been afraid to stand in solidarity with men and women who were in crisis, even in danger. Why were they so? Because the Good News of the Gospel must be heard everywhere, supporting those who suffer, and calling to conversion those who cause suffering.

Even today, Jesuits are present at the frontiers: not only geographical but also at the crossroads, where

there is confrontation between humanity and barbarism, between solidarity and tyranny, between signs of life and the powers of death. They struggle, together with the humble and the poor, so that humanity, solidarity and life may come to the fore and that the Reign of God may become more and more a visible reality.

There is no shortage of frontier areas. We offer you testimonies from nine of them, where war, global warming, ethnic conflicts, power or money sow desolation. However, the list is not exhaustive...



## The Golden Land of Myanmar cries for environmental justice

Paul Tu Ja, S.J.  
Region of Myanmar

***In Myanmar, the rule of force, money and weapons is destroying the environment and threatening the future of indigenous communities.***

The resource-rich Myanmar is called the Golden Land, and the territory in Kachin state in Northern Myanmar is called the *Garden of Eden*. The Kachin people say the indulgent God kept precious resources above and below the ground for them. Kachin land, called Jade land, produces high quality jade fetching nearly \$31 billion annually. It is also the land of seven decades of conflict, chronic displacement, and forced migration of thousands of youth who are modern-day slaves in

nearby countries. As the forgotten crisis of Myanmar, overshadowed by the Ukraine conflict, is falling victim to global amnesia, the visceral agony of a long-suffering population continues. Nearly 100,000 Kachins live in “Internally Displaced People” camps.

The Jesuits in Myanmar Region are committed to the socio-pastoral formation in parishes through a catechetical centre, particularly among the indigenous in the three upper

Myanmar dioceses of Banmaw, Lashio and Myitkyina. We may not be everywhere, but the people we form become active agents to promote ecological awareness, and they represent hope for the future. The majority of Jesuit vocations are from the Kachin area.

### **The jade and the fading life**

The most valuable jades are found in Hpakant, in Kachin state. Almost





all Myanmar's jades end up in China. It is Myanmar's "big state secret" that the Chinese government import data for 2014 indicates that the category of gemstones imported from Myanmar was overwhelmingly worth \$12.3 billion. However, numerous industry sources have told Global Witness that 50 % to 80 % of jade is smuggled illegally over the Myanmar-China border.

The "resource curse" is the cause of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, drawing the Pope there. In Kachin state, jade is the cause of all disputes and displacements. Thousands of youths are condemned to hard labour in the jade, gold, amber and rare earth mines. If resources and hard work resulted in wealth, the Kachin youth should be the wealthiest group in the country. But their resource-rich land is a looters' paradise, looted by all state and non-state actors. Myanmar

is the "richest resource country" in Southeast Asia, where the poorest human population lives. Recently, democracy was euthanized by men who hold sway over the priceless resources. The beneficiaries are military ruling party families, non-state actors (like the Kachin Independent Army), army companies and drug lords. Jade mining laws, policies and license procedures are manipulated in their favour.

### **The wounding jade trade**

The uncontrolled jade mining and trade devastate the indigenous Kachin people. In the early 1980s, Hpakant jade town lured many Kachin people. Many people left their families, sending their children to boarding schools and relatives' houses and started to do small-scale mining. Young people, more and more, were attracted to work in jade mines,

and some earned their fortune and their livelihoods. Many families shared jade wealth.

However, in the early 1990s, the trade passed on to big players. The military authorities parcelled out the jade mines. The corporatisation of the mines ejected the small players. In a region that negates all indigenous rights, the once proud Kachins are reduced to slave labour on their own land.

The impact of jade mining on the local environment and culture of the Kachin people is catastrophic. The description of a clean Uru river 40 years ago would sound like a fairy tale: people could drink the water then. The streams that feed the Uru river now flow only during the rainy season due to the blockage of bulldozed mud from the jade mines. The wholesale stripping of the Hpakant region's forests has made



environmental wounds. The loss of land, pollution and the takeover of the jade industry by government-licensed companies have disrupted the traditional livelihoods of farming.

### The Pope shows the way

Nature and communities gasp for survival. An urgent need for equitable sharing and constitutional reforms to protect nature and people is overdue. Political reforms that ensure indigenous rights are necessary now. Myanmar truly needs a trusted government with a board of trustees. The Kachins lived for centuries in these resource-filled mountains respecting the sacredness of nature, which protected and provided life. Today the Kachins are one of the most wounded people, as their sacred land is ravished. The Jesuits are among them helping to heal their wounds and echo their cry wherever it needs to be heard.

On 10 February 2023, Pope Francis warned, “we should listen more to indigenous peoples and learn from their way of life to properly understand that we cannot continue to greedily devour natural resources.” This Golden Land would return to its former glory only by listening to the voice of the indigenous!

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The people we form become active agents to promote ecological awareness, and they represent hope for the future.  
”

Poverty leads to the exploitation of people, in a context of exploitation of natural resources that benefits the wealthiest.







## Stan Swamy, S.J.: The body killed, life immortalised

Henri Tiphagne  
Executive Director, People's Watch – India

***Defending the rights of indigenous people in India might lead to persecution and even death.***

On 5 July 2021, in the city of Mumbai, in judicial custody, Stan breathed for the last time, 1,500 kms away from what he considered to be his home and people, Jharkhand. His thoughts and memories will always be immortal, the urn with his body's ashes rests today among his people in Jharkhand.

Born in a village in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and having joined the Society of Jesus in the northern state of Bihar, it was his

regency in Jharkhand that brought him closer to the Adivasi communities – the indigenous people. He began to appreciate their ways of living their closeness to nature and their culture. He felt inspired by and made himself a part of these communities. They in turn reciprocated and made Stan theirs. A relationship of close to seven decades, that even Stan's death failed to do apart.

Stan had a long stint at the *Indian Social Institute* in Bangalore (1975-

1990), where through his trainings he prepared several young people as critical social thinkers and activists. He made it a point to be deeply connected to almost every trainee's family and social engagement until his death. In 1991, he moved back to Jharkhand and began advocating for popular causes of Adivasis and reviving the traditional Adivasi model of self-governance.

Stan was a highly committed human rights defender (HRD)



who restlessly put into practice the faith-justice mandate of the Society of Jesus. He worked to secure and protect the land rights of Adivasis, and was a prominent advocate against their forced displacement, linked to infrastructure projects and the mining of mineral-rich lands. He spoke out courageously against the systemic discrimination directed at them and documented and advocated against the mass arrest of Adivasi youth, accused by the authorities of being “Naxalites” or “Maoists.” He has always been an active member of the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL).

He accompanied the Adivasis, empowered them and stood for their

rights, but always made sure they alone were in the forefront. Never himself. He strongly believed in working with several other actors bearing true testimony to what his Ranchi Jesuit home, “Bagaicha,” stood and lived for, and the deep inspiration he derived from other HRDs from across India. In doing so, he naturally made many enemies: with the mining mafia, with powerful politicians and other vested interests, even within his Jesuit companions.

On 8 October 2020, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Stan and 15 other HRDs from across India and booked them in a case charging them, under India’s anti-terrorism legislation, that they were

“ Stan was a highly committed human rights defender (HRD) who restlessly put into practice the faith-justice mandate of the Society of Jesus. ”

hatching the conspiracy to assassinate Mr. Narendra Modi. Before this arrest, Stan’s room at Bagaicha was raided twice by the NIA – in 2018 and 2019, when his personal belongings and electronic devices were seized. But despite repeated appeals, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) did not pay any heed. He shared the testimony of his NIA investigation to the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs, Ms. Mary Lawlor, demonstrating his belief and commitment to human rights.

During his nine months of incarceration, courts repeatedly denied him medical bails. He was later shifted to a hospital where he tested



positive for Covid-19 and passed away on 5 July 2021. The application about his deteriorating health in custody and state negligence, dated 19 May 2021, was ironically still pending before the NHRC after his death!!

Stan's death is seen as an "institutional murder" resulting from arbitrary detention without trial. During his incarceration, he and his "comrades" in prison lived the best part of their lives – through a life of sharing and caring – not only of thoughts, ideologies, spiritualities and beliefs, but also the doggedness to survive the agony of prison life. In his death in custody, he "witnessed" the pain the State has subjected thousands of Adivasis in prisons with false cases.

While no one has been held accountable yet for Stan's death, an independent forensic investigation that analysed his electronic devices seized by the NIA has concluded that his computer was infiltrated illegally and remotely, and incriminating materials were maliciously planted

on over 50 occasions. UN experts agree with these conclusions, Stan's death in custody will forever remain a blot on India's human rights record. Indian civil society is proud that the Indian Jesuits are pursuing his case – a testimony to stand by his cause even after death. Long live "comrade" Father Stan Swamy. Let him continue

to inspire not only all Jesuits but also all human rights defenders.

(Henri Tiphagne, Advocate, was a long-time friend of Fr. Swamy.)

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## Jesuit works in Micronesia: at the forefront of caring for creation

Philip J. Williams  
Micronesia – USA East Province

***The Jesuits and their lay colleagues in Micronesia are spearheading the fight against climate change, and despite their size and limited resources, they are doing more than their share to be stewards of the environment.***

In the fall of 2021, world leaders gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for COP26. This annual meeting, orchestrated by the United Nations, has provided a forum for countries of all sizes to discuss what can be done to combat climate change.

During one panel – on how climate change is affecting indigenous youth around the world – moder-

ators played video questions submitted by students. The first series of questions came from a senior at *Yap Catholic High School* (YCHS), a Jesuit school located in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in the Pacific. While the FSM is spread out over 1,802 miles, the 607 islands it comprises are fairly small, as is the population, which is less than 120,000.

Nadley Yow, the senior from YCHS, discussed how severe changes in weather have been affecting the island of Yap. “Climate change causes irregular weather patterns, so there are typhoons and tropical storms that pop out of nowhere and end up taking down our Yapese huts, as well as some trees, which can block roads,” she explained. Additionally, the irregular tides have been a concern with





Nadley Yow spoke at the COP26 summit.

If the island where we live is in danger of being submerged due to global warming, commitment to protecting our common home becomes a clear priority!

their food supply. “When tides come in higher than usual, they flow right into our taro patches and our gardens, which ends up killing most of them,” said Nadley. Conversely, Yap has also dealt with droughts and resulting wildfires.

Nadley finished by challenging those nations in attendance by asking, “What are the bigger nations willing to do to help the smaller islands affected by climate change?”

“Many of these smaller islands may not exist in the future if sea levels continue to rise. Students in our Jesuit schools are particularly aware of the precarious situation in their country,” said Fr. Joseph O’Keefe, S.J., Provincial of the USA East Province. The Jesuits of this Province (then the New York Province) were given pas-

toral responsibility for Micronesia shortly after World War II. Despite not being geographically close to the rest of the Province, the works and people of Micronesia are an integral part of the USA East Province. “During my visit to our apostolates in Micronesia in 2023, I saw firsthand how acutely important environmental issues are with the threat of climate change in this region,” said Father O’Keefe, who visits the works of Micronesia annually. “While these concerns may not be top of mind for many of us in the United States, we must all work together in caring for our common home, for the greater good of all.”

While Jesuit-educated students like Nadley are bringing their concerns to larger audiences, these issues are not new, nor are they unique to

Yap. Islands throughout Micronesia have been dealing with the challenges of climate change for years.

In 2015, Super Typhoon Maysak hit the island of Chuuk and disrupted the source of water for *Xavier High School*, the other Jesuit high school in Micronesia. “Our banana trees, breadfruits, and other local crops were damaged; we had to buy water from Guam,” said Xavier’s principal, Martin Carl. The school faced a similar challenge in March 2020 amid COVID-19 and a drought on the island. “Xavier catches drinking water from rain. We do not have water from the city or government. So, when there is a drought, we have to ration water,” continued principal Carl.

In 2020, Xavier High School started a program called *Laudato*







## A life of dignity for refugees from Ukraine - The efforts of JRS-Poland

Wojciech Żmudziński, S.J.  
Province of Greater Poland and Mazovia

### ***The direct testimony of those who lived under the bombing and those who cared for them.***

Staff and volunteers of the recently founded JRS Poland are doing what they can to arrange a dignified life for refugees from Ukraine. They help find housing, run language groups, provide legal and psychological assistance. Those who remained in Ukraine are helped on the spot. In return, they hear testimonies that bring tears but also inspire hope.

Natalia fled Mariupol with her children. The memories she confides to Father Paweł Kowalski of

JRS Poland stir horror: “War remains inside a person,” she says with a heart weighed down by suffering.

“When the bombing started in the city, we had to take refuge in the basement,” Natalia recounts. “We stayed there for a month. There was no electricity, heating, water, mobile phone coverage or gas. The city was being shelled all the time. We only went out to prepare something to eat and get water. We did all this under constant shelling. We cooked

on a bonfire near our house, risking our own lives. All the people shared what they had put together in their homes.”

Then buses started arriving to take people to Russia. By this route, crossing Russia, Natalia’s daughter with her fiancé arrived in Poland, together with her eldest son.

“I could not leave alone,” Natalia added, “because my mother, who was sick and disabled, was unable to move.



To alleviate the suffering of war refugees, the first remedy is to welcome them.

I stayed there to say goodbye to those who were leaving. Then we moved my mother from the basement to our friends' apartment. I started looking for another way to get out of the city together with my mother. We had a car, but there was no fuel. In the end, it was the priest of our church who helped us."

They settled in a house near Mariupol. They were welcomed by good people. After spending five months there, they finally left.

"If anyone who helped us during that time reads these words, I want them to know that we are incredibly grateful to them", Natalia says. "They hosted us for free and we were about 30 people all together."

In August 2022 they left and, through Russia, headed first to the Estonian border and then to Warsaw. Her daughter and her fiancé were already there. They were all welcomed by JRS Poland and are learning Polish here to find work as soon as possible.

"I am very grateful for the help we received," Natalia says, much moved. "We have a place to live and our son has gone to school. Thank you so much for what you do for us. When I think of the future, I dream that our family will be united. And that there will be no more war."

Ukrainian Jesuit Father Vitaliy Osmolovskyy reports: "For me, one of the most difficult moments during the war was to see a lot of people leaving. When you see a husband and father







Larga vida a los líderes y lideresas sociales

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## The truth, as a path from the hell of war

Francisco de Roux, S.J.  
Province of Colombia

***An important testimony of Francisco de Roux, S.J., who chaired the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition in Colombia (known as "The Truth Commission"). From a 9,000-page report, the fruit of years of work, the author extracts some focal points about a search for peace that respects truth.***

I had the role of chairing the Truth Commission in Colombia. I had been named by the Committee created by the peace agreement between the Colombian State and the FARC guerrillas, and the Jesuit Provincial confirmed this task for me as a mission.

In the Commission, we were eleven, women and men, with a work team of 450 people and over one thousand supporting organizations. The Commission recounted the histori-

cal, ethical and political truth of a sixty-year conflict. In the next building was the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, responsible for pursuing legal truth, which has the power to make restoration to victims, and to convict perpetrators with less severity than the regular courts only if they tell the truth.

The Commission faced a wider society that refused to face the truth, or to be moved by ten million victims: that is, more than 130,000

armed actors from all sides who died in the fighting, plus 600,000 murdered civilians, and all the others who survived an absurd war. There were nearly 50,000 kidnappings; among them women separated from their children for no less than seven years, and fighters held prisoner for up to fourteen years. More than 18,000 boys and girls were recruited as combatants: 7,000,000 displaced people lost their land. Indigenous and black communities were destroyed or lived





in terror under siege; thousands were killed or wounded by antipersonnel mines. More than 120,000 people “disappeared” – that is, “were disappeared”. There were more than 6,000 “false positives” – innocent young people from poor families, captured and killed by the army, which presented them publicly as terrorists killed in combat, the soldiers themselves feted as heroes. Towns were destroyed by bombs; 1,000,000 fled into exile. The natural environment itself was devastated, a victim of human conflict.

The Commission heard from more than 30,000 witnesses, survivors and perpetrators. In the hell of war, the other person, whether victim or victimizer, is a person like you, with feelings, sufferings, questions, family and children, friendships, dreams for the future.

Consider the 32 young people from the Jesuit parish of Barrancabermeja, murdered at a party

in one mother’s own home; or the 14 men and women killed in our parish of San Pablo; or Sergio Echavarría, a Jesuit shot to death in Tierralta; or María’s husband and children who died in the fire caused by an explosion set off by the guerrilla. Pope Francis, in Colombia, asked this woman, “María, have you forgiven?” She answered, “No, I don’t hate them, but I haven’t been able to forgive. I hope that one day God forgives them for me”.

We learned that seeking the truth is possible only if you free yourself from the material or spiritual possessions that block you from accepting unvarnished reality, so that you can discern whether to speak or remain silent. Sometimes the torturers break witnesses, so that they say whatever the torturers want, as the criminals of the CIA did with María del Carmen, witness to the murder of the Jesuits in San Salvador. One day, María recovered her inner freedom and was able to insist publicly, “*I saw them, the soldiers killed the priests*”.



On the other hand, we learned the miracle of forgiveness: the army general who publicly confessed to a mother that he had killed her son, at which moment the mother cried out in pain and hugged the criminal; or the guerrilla who destroyed a town and killed its leaders, who later managed to tell the truth of the tragedy and seek forgiveness: the townspeople first reacted indignantly, but later forgave. Such dramas happened many times.



The Commission's work enabled millions of Colombians to reject the intolerable and to call for social and political change, and ethical transformation. Far from solving Colombia's problems the guerilla war – and the State itself – aggravated them, since war harmed everything it touched. And it was families who were the most affected. Today mothers still cry out in the face of the remaining armed conflict: *"Stop these wars, stop them on all sides, stop them now!"*

Those who, throughout the world, insist on war need to hear that cry. How dare they call themselves human, still less Christian if they despise the victims of wars lying along the road to Jericho?

Pedro Claver, a Jesuit, dedicated every day from 1616 to 1654 to the black population brought to Cartagena, Colombia, to be sold as beasts of burden, while the city, full of churches, refused to recognize the reality. Working unremittingly for 38 years he failed to persuade the Church to reject slavery; yet he did not lose hope. And when he bade "Farewell" to his black brothers, he knew that the seed of life from his work would bear fruit throughout the world.

Let us not lose hope!

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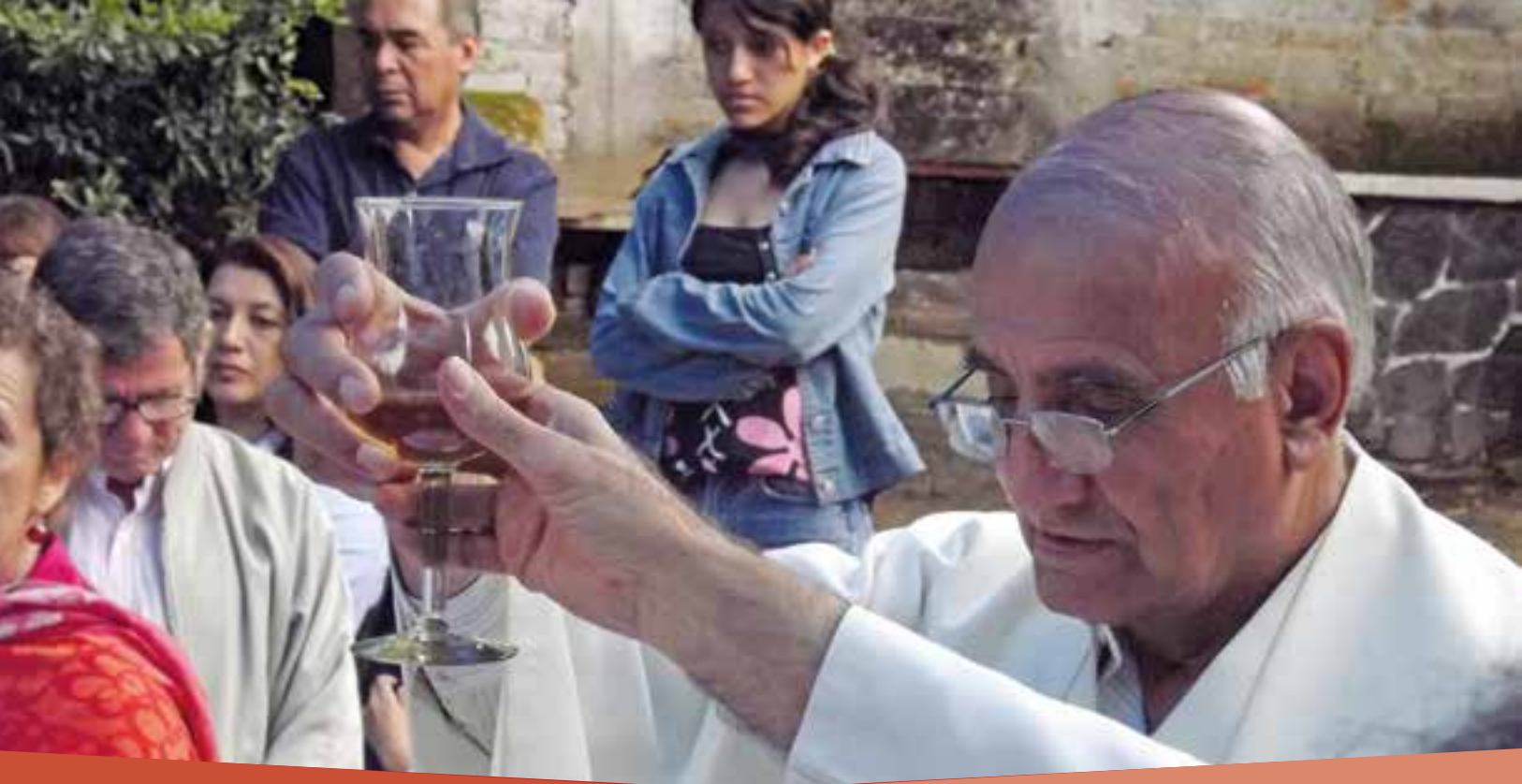
So many missing people whose families are crying out for the truth!



“ We learned that seeking the truth is possible only if you free yourself from the material or spiritual possessions that block you from accepting unvarnished reality. ”







## The fruits of death in a violent Mexico

Esteban Cornejo, S.J.  
Province of Mexico

### ***The Experience of the Jesuits who have remained in Cerocahui, Mexico, after the murder of two companions, priests and friends.***

On 20 June 2022, Mexico and the world were shocked by the murder of two Jesuits, Javier Campos and Joaquín Mora, in the town of Cerocahui, situated in the Sierra Tarahumara of Chihuahua. They are not the only ones to lose their lives; on the contrary, a long list of people of that region have suffered violence over decades.

Over three different periods, the Mexican Government has militarised the territory so as to “wage war” against organised crime. The result: hundreds of thousands of

deaths; areas where fear and criminal impunity have ruptured families; a broken society. Thousands are forced to leave their land to avoid being recruited or after being dispossessed. Others continue to suffer extortion, or have gone through the horror of their children “being disappeared”: many simply remain silent before the threats. One can see in this pervasive structural violence a direct relationship with the exploitation and seizure of natural and mineral resources. In this way, the events that took place in Cerocahui are akin to those happening in other parts of Mexico: the

wealth of the few is secured in the face of the precarity of the many.

Nearly two years after arriving in this region, I found that I had developed my own style of accompanying the people as deacon, then as priest. In other parts of Mexico, people speak only in Spanish; the liturgy focuses on the aspect of sacramentality, and on the role of the priest. Here both Rarámuri (the indigenous language) and Spanish are spoken, and traditional dances form an integral part of liturgy, which therefore becomes a festival of the people for

God. It is the indigenous leaders (the “*sirígames*”) who decide when the priest will say the prayer, will offer the consecrated species.

Javier and Joaquín were true teachers of an incarnated Gospel. To the people they were not only priests but also friends, intimates, guests at the family table, who were familiar with its problems. They were true missionaries who, from a base of affection, were able to bring love of the triune God to others. That is why the news of this murder is scandalous, unbearable. People say to me, “If the killers did that to our ‘*padrecitos*’ in God’s own house, what can the future hold for us?”

Confronted with these murders, the Jesuits decided to remain in Cerocahui and in the Sierra. New companions have been sent to strengthen the community and develop the pastoral work. We live at risk, like everyone else here, and our style of ministry has had to change. Now a team of the National Guard lives behind our house, and accompanies us to the communities. There are some especially dangerous areas we cannot visit; but we continue with catechism classes, with neighbourhood Masses, with youth and peace groups, and with community festivals. We have chosen to remain with the people, whose lives are no less under threat, for a simple reason: by God’s grace, we are among those who mourn a missing or murdered loved one. By the same grace, we are supported and comforted by the townspeople. I can say that we have been given the grace to experience a Beatitude, of those who mourn being comforted amidst the “indigenous face of God”.

The Jesuits of this mission, along with other religious congregations





“

If the killers did that to our 'padrecitos' in God's own house, what can the future hold for us?

”

and civil society organisations, have joined forces to make the diocese a “Church with its own face”. Two cultures coexist here: the Rarámuri and the mixed race population. Respecting the rich culture of the indigenous people, the missionaries opted for an inculturated Gospel, for the dignity of the sons and daughters of God. So, we work hard to strengthen education, health, culture, the reconstruction of the social fabric.

In these challenges, the Jesuit commitment to the defence of Human Rights has become central. In the same way, faced with the forces of suffering and death, the Jesuits collaborate to create spaces for encounter, for life, and for sharing. We recognise, too, that faced with a Western culture that can impose various modes of colonialism and violence, the Rarámuri's way of life can help counter individualism, dispossession, the logic of consumption, and the lack of respect for human dignity. We hope that the blood shed on this altar will be the leaven for peace and for justice.

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## Youth as the hope of Aleppo

Alvaro Dorantes, S.J.  
Near East Province

***Jesuits face the challenge of hope, in a city deeply scarred by the war and the earthquake.***

Aleppo, in Syria, is one of the world's oldest cities. It is situated on the ancient "Silk Road" and was a meeting point between East and West. Given this importance, it was here that the Society of Jesus founded, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its first community in the Middle East. Aleppo is known for its trade, its gastronomy, its rich history; it is also known for its active and diverse Christian community (it has six Catholic and three Orthodox bishoprics). In recent years, though, Aleppo has become best known for being destroyed. The civil war in Syria, twelve years long, has had drastic

human and economic consequences for the city.

Since 2019, Syria has also endured a financial and energy crisis, mainly through the economic sanctions mobilised against the country. The Syrian currency has suffered a huge devaluation, just at the moment when prices have escalated for gasoline, oil and electricity (in Aleppo, for one hour a day). The outlook is grim, especially for young people who find themselves unemployed, facing compulsory military service for men, lacking any prospect of building a future in their

own country. Many young people think about leaving. Indeed, millions of Syrians – 5.7 million according to the UNHCR count in 2022 – have sought refuge in Europe, North America, and such neighbouring countries as Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon. A large proportion of these migrants are Christian; it is estimated that 90 % of the Christian community has left Aleppo.

Talking about hope in and for Aleppo is therefore a challenge. How to speak of hope to those with so little chance of finding work, maybe





A country wounded by war...  
where the vitality of the young  
does not fade away.

“

“We must not only help  
to rebuild the country,  
we must also help to  
rebuild the human  
person”.

”

after years of study? How to speak of hope when living amidst a conflict that seems without end in sight? In Aleppo, we, Jesuits, work with young people in three different projects: in the Jesuit Vocational Training Center, in the Study-Zone Library, and with the Jesuit Scouts. These projects try to provide the tools – educational and cultural, psychological and spiritual – with which young people can face up to their reality and give meaning to their presence in the country. In the words of Amar (a Muslim computer science student), “We must not only help to rebuild the country, we must also help to rebuild the human person”.

Then, on 6 February 2023, a huge earthquake hit Aleppo as well as Turkey. The next day we awoke with sadness, with horror, with endless questions. How could it be, that after so many years of war, economic crisis, and deprivation, this city should also

have to suffer an earthquake? The event dramatized the fragility of the city and of our very humanity. What can we do? All day we walked the streets seeing collapsed buildings, talking to their former residents. People wandered around not knowing where to go, spending the nights in public gardens, sports fields, churches, mosques; for those who were luckier, in cars or cafes. People were afraid to return even to those homes that had survived, fearing after-shocks and being trapped in the rubble.

If, therefore, we ask young people today about their hope, most will say that in this city there is no hope. Yet many others, like Mark (a Christian medical student) have mobilised to help the victims of the earthquake: “With our team of volunteers we look for people among the rubble, we distribute blankets and medicines, and we visit houses to meet the needs

of our neighbours”. Earlier, during the Aleppo crisis of 2014-2016, young people organised campaigns to donate blood to those wounded in the bombings, distributed food to destitute families, organised hot meals, visited the elderly living alone, etc.

We conclude that, in Aleppo, hope should not be sought in speeches, but in action. In Aleppo today, hope resides in these young people ready to serve others, and who – in the words of Judy (a Christian finance student) – “long for peace, for the best for their own families, and also for others”. In turn, these young people enable us, foreigners, and us, Jesuits, to speak of hope. They are the salt of the earth, salt that gives a special taste to our presence here; they are the light of the world that illuminates us in this darkness, so that we too can know where and how to serve. There is indeed hope in Aleppo – and such young people are that hope.







## Insecurity in Mali and the Jesuit Mission

Danikou Nestor Dabiré, S.J.  
Province of West Africa

***Deepening one's faith, discerning the way, reflecting and dialoguing in a crisis situation: such is the Jesuit mission in Mali.***

Sent to take responsibility of a social centre, the “Djoliba Centre”, two Jesuits arrive in Bamako for what is the foundational moment of the Society of Jesus in Mali. Warmly received in November 2018 by the local Archbishop, Cardinal Jean Zerbo, we took temporary quarters for four years in a disused presbytery, before finding accommodation in the heart of the city. We share the noon meal with the clergy of the Bamako Cathedral and, in the evenings (five days a week), we enjoy the food

brought to us by friendly neighbourhood families.

People ask us, “*What have you come to do here? Why come now, at the moment when some religious congregations trim down their presence in Mali, limiting it to national missionaries only?*” Indeed, in 2018, the situation was bleak: a post-electoral crisis was aggravated by threats from separatist groups in the Northern part of Mali, threats that weakened national territorial integrity.

Jihadist expansion is conspicuous by its terrorist attacks and kidnappings, including of missionaries. Just as we arrived in Bamako a nun from Columbia had been kidnapped. Prayers and masses were publicly celebrated for her release. Restrictions were imposed on liturgical celebrations in the occupied zones, and in some places, even a total ban on traffic movements. A nun testified that, to avoid being molested, she was compelled to wear a hijab, while on a home visit to her Christian mother.



“

Jihadist expansion is conspicuous by its terrorist attacks and kidnappings, including of missionaries.

”

To avoid the hostility of jihadists, Sister Colette and her mother have to wear the hijab.



All this restricted much missionary movement in the interior of the country, limiting our activities to the city of Bamako, where our missions are thus concentrated.

There is a strong spiritual demand, particularly from women religious congregations, which means that, between June and September, we organize a series of eight-day

retreats, one after the other, with an average of thirty participants per retreat. Testimonies are encouraging: *“It is a grace that you are here! Since your arrival, our retreats have gained in depth and help us much to better understand and live according to our Ignatian spirituality”*. In fact, we contribute too to the spiritual formation of young professed men and women through sessions in spirituality.

On Sundays, we help the diocesan sacerdotal team for the pastoral service of more than fifty Christian communities. It is not unusual to celebrate two Masses on the same Sunday in communities that are five to fifteen kilometres apart. Because the access to a priest is not easy in many places, some Christians approach us at the end of these celebrations for confession. The effort is worthwhile and consoling when you see the joy on their faces.

During the week, in addition to requests for individual accompaniment – often done at the end of the day – the many activities of the Djoliba Centre keep us busy. The revival of this social centre, once the flagship of the Malian intelligentsia, now almost abandoned because of previous mismanagement, requires the restoration of a library ten years behind in its acquisitions but still attended by faithful visitors, journalists and students. Through conferences



and debates, we strive to offer a dispassionate space for thoughtful discussions on social issues around which passions often forge almost radical divisions. Finally, this space offers various training courses on social issues.

Last but not least, the Jesuits in Bamako (as per the convention

signed with the diocese) are also in charge of the university chaplaincy. The Christian students, who attend the four major state universities and three “Grandes écoles”, organise themselves into prayer communities to better resist the overwhelming Muslim majority. Once a month in the evening, after classes, we celebrate

a mass for them, and a further recollection is proposed during the main liturgical seasons. Despite their busy schedules and knotty academic timetables, we try to gather them all, from time to time, for one day, around the celebration of the Eucharist, sharing convivial moments of games and meal. The last time we had such encounters, an earnest desire was expressed for meetings that are more frequent. This led to the start of a reflection on how to better structure the accompaniment of students and young people in general.

In spite of the uncongenial general environment and the risks generated by the pervading insecurity, the Jesuit mission in Mali contributes to favouring a dialogue with all people of good will sharing Christian values. This mission is carried out in prayer, abnegation, commitment and hope, in a context of a tiny Christian presence coupled with social instability. It also supports a deepening of the faith through the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

At the heart of this mission, we taste peace, joy and self-confidence, which confirm the relevance of the new Jesuit foundation in Mali and fosters in us the vigour of generosity.

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## A presence that offers an outlook of hope

François Kanyamanza Bahati, S.J.  
Province of Central Africa

***For the Jesuits, living in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is to live "on the frontiers" in a region of violence. Their goal: to live close to suffering people and to bring them consolation.***

For almost 30 years, Eastern DRC has been bleeding. It is a region that includes the administrative provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. For almost three decades, this region has been plagued by wars: aggression by neighboring countries and armed conflicts in the form of rebellions and violence that have already caused more than ten million deaths (about 913 people slaughtered per day), five million internally displaced persons and so many refugees. Why do nations remain silent in the face of

indefensible crimes repeated over and over again? Pope Francis, during his visit to Kinshasa, did not hesitate to challenge the international community: "We cannot get used to the blood that has been flowing in this country for decades now, resulting in millions of deaths as most stand by unaware."

Eastern DRC is a region whose soil is considered fertile and whose subsoil is of inestimable wealth with its rare minerals such as niobium, coltan, oil and lweshite. The greed of

multinational mining companies and of neighbouring countries, combined with their hegemonic and expansionist ambitions, makes this region an open-air hell where blood is spilled to take over the land and plunder the mineral resources - a macabre enterprise made possible by corruption, manipulation and the division of local ethnic communities. To perpetuate their crimes, both the corrupted and the corruptors are installing the force of injustice almost everywhere.





The situation in eastern DRC is a tragedy that has thrown the people into turmoil and torment and has caused terrible suffering. They are a people subjected to the temptation of ethnic division, resignation, discouragement, and complicity with the game of its predators. It is to this people that the Jesuits in the East of this country bring their closeness and consolation. They are a people, it must be said, that does not give in to fatality. Like a nascent but stubborn bud, a resistance emerges among the people, a resistance that needs to be supported, an energy that wants to push back the forces of death in order to bring about the forces of life.

This is the environment in which the Jesuits do their work.

In September 1941, the Jesuits arrived in Bukavu to dedicate themselves essentially to the apostolate of primary and secondary education. Later on, discernment would lead them to initiate three other types of apostolate, namely, parish ministry, the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises, and the social apostolate.

A flagship project, the *Cheche* social center (“sparks” in the local language) welcomes young people who have dropped out of school and offers them two or three years

of technical vocational training to enable them to integrate into their communities and practise their trades. Many young adults who are victims of unemployment, who could have ended up in armed groups or criminal gangs, are also transformed through this training and become agents of change back home.

As for the *Collège Alfajiri*, an educational gem in Bukavu and in the province of South Kivu, it is recognized for the solidity of the education it offers to all. Yes, to all, since it is accessible to all social strata without distinction of financial means. The school welcomes children who come

“

Like a nascent but stubborn bud, a resistance emerges among the people, a resistance that needs to be supported, an energy that wants to push back the forces of death in order to bring about the forces of life.

”

from all over the country or even from neighboring countries. This allows the children to grow up in a spirit

of openness and collaboration with other cultures. They benefit, as Pope Francis states, from “real educational opportunities that allow them to make full use of their brilliant talents”. They are young people who grow up with the understanding that they will have a role to play in the recovery of their society. Upon graduating from high school, a student by the name of Mugisho said, “Every day that passed gave me a sense of new hope.”

This wounded people in the East of the DRC receive the accompaniment of pastoral agents who, in their turn, need spiritual renewal. Our *Amani* Spiritual Center offers this opportunity to these pastoral agents as well as to the faithful of Bukavu and its surroundings. The

faith of the people is becoming more and more personal, deep and solid. It is certainly the witness of the martyrdom of Archbishop Munzehirwa, a Jesuit, assassinated because of his social commitment, which continues to inspire them. All the wounded people in the region need priests who are available to them, who are close to them, and who heal their wounds. “The vocation of the Church is to take care of the wounded. Today, this image is even more valid given the scenario of war that we are living” (Pope Francis).

That’s the meaning of the Jesuit presence in this suffering region.

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# And to conclude



*A Song of the Spirit* – Arturo Araujo S.J., Henry Geary –  
From the series *Heaven's Heart*





## St. Roque Gonzalez. An “ecological” Jesuit saint; a project of “integral ecology”

Jaime Tatay, SJ  
Provincia de España

It is well known that St. Roque González was one of the pioneers of the Paraguayan missions. In 1619 he founded the reduction of Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepción (today Concepción de la Sierra) and in 1627 he founded the reduction of Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, in Caazapaminí (today in Brazilian territory). Later he founded the San Javier reduction on the coast of the Uruguay River. On that river he extended the missions southwards, participating in the founding of the Yapeyú reduction, in the present-day province of Corrientes (Argentina). From Yapeyú he set off towards the southern interior of present-day Brazil, founding the reductions of San Nicolás (today Sao Nicolau); Asunción del Iyúí and Caaró.

What is less well known is that the distribution of the missions is an example of what today we might call an urbanization that integrates the natural environment or, in the language of the ecclesiastical magisterium, a concretisation of the ideal of integral ecology. The Jesuit Diego de Torres Bollo developed the model of evangelisation for Paraguay and was the first Provincial of this Province. Already in his founding letter on the reductions, he spoke of the importance of establishing these settlements in a healthy, open, uncluttered place with water nearby. Those missionaries not only sought to dignify the life of the indigenous peoples – thus avoiding their enslavement – but also to make possible a harmonious

(today we would say “sustainable”) relationship with nature.

Certainly, the missions of these pioneers were, without formulating it in these terms, examples of respect and coexistence with creation. In the complex and accelerated process of encouraging the indigenous populations to adopt a sedentary lifestyle, because until then, they had led the hunter-gatherer way of life in that part of the world, Roque González and his companions managed to establish settlements in which agriculture, stock-breeding, industry, art and spirituality coexisted harmoniously without generating the impact of the large conglomerations that in other latitudes had led to the destruction of the environment.





*We are the Jesuits.  
Serving where the Church  
and the world are most in need.*

We help people  
find their way  
to God and to their inner self.

We proclaim the Gospel.  
We believe it's a call to action.

We're with the poor and the rejected.  
We care for our common home.

But, first of all, we are Companions of Jesus,  
our leader, our teacher,  
our inspiration.







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*The vocation  
promoters  
are standing by!*







General Curia of the Jesuits

Merci – **Thank you** – Gracias – Grazie – Danke

### Thanking you

The Society of Jesus wishes to express its gratitude to all those who collaborate in its mission of justice and reconciliation. Thank you in particular to all those in the works and communities who are involved in awareness raising, education and commitment to the environment.

### Thanking us

The needs are many and huge. You, the readers of this magazine, are sensitive to the commitments of the Society of Jesus towards the young and the forgotten, in favour of a better future for all, and for our common home.





### Why not make a donation to the Jesuits?

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# JESUITPILGRIMAGE

**At home. On a journey.**



**RICH SPIRITUAL  
IGNATIAN EXPERIENCE**



**UNIQUE VISUAL  
CONTENT**



**AUDIO MEDITATIONS  
AND GUIDANCE**



**EASY ON LOCATION  
NAVIGATION**





## In memory of Pope Benedict XVI (1927 - 2022)

“We have many reasons to remember him with deep affection and gratitude, not only for his service to the universal Church as Vicar of Christ, but also for the esteem that he so often expressed for our Society.”

Arturo Sosa, S.J., Superior General,  
31 December 2022



From a letter of Pope Benedict XVI to Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, then Superior General, on 15 May 2006, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Haurietis Aquas* on the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

*Whoever inwardly accepts God is moulded by him. The experience of God's love should be lived by men and women as a "calling" to which they must respond. Fixing our gaze on the Lord, who "took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17), helps us to become more attentive to the suffering and need of others. (...)*

*"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).*

# Let us pray for the Earth, for justice and peace

Lord,  
teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.  
Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.  
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you! Amen.

*From Pope Francis,  
at the conclusion of the encyclical Laudato si'*





## Discover in this issue

\* Caring for our common home

The voice of the youth • Integral ecology • Eco-science

Eco-spirituality • Eco-experiences • Eco-education

\* Jesuits at the frontiers

