



a MATTER of SPIRIT

A publication of the INTERCOMMUNITY PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NO. 126 / SPRING 2020

Environmental Justice

This year marks two important dates—the fifth anniversary of the release of *Laudato Si'* and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Both remind us of the important intersection of faith and ecological preservation. For many years, the environmental movement focused largely on preventing and repairing damage to Earth itself—to the air, the water, animal species and ecosystems. In recent years, there has been a broadening of perspective to include more conscious consideration of how environmental destruction impacts certain communities more than others, particularly persons living in poverty and communities of color.

As persons of faith, we recognize the call to care both for our common home and for all people who inhabit it. The concept of “integral ecology” that Pope Francis introduced in *Laudato Si'* weaves all of life together. Within this weaving comes the painful reality of our collective ecological sins that harm the most vulnerable and those who have been pushed to the margins. When we see the interconnectedness of all of creation, we also see where we have fallen short. However, the same faith that calls us to account for our shortcomings also gives us a vision of new life for both our common home and our common family.

In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*, we look at the environmental justice movement, hear stories from affected communities and explore our personal and collective responsibilities for planet and people. May this issue inspire us to seek environmental justice for all life on the planet.



wikicommons

An Introduction to Environmental Justice

BY ROBIN MORRIS COLLIN

Environmental Justice, Environmental Racism, and Environmental Equity

The terms environmental justice, environmental racism, and environmental equity have all been used in the United States to describe the social movement uniting low-income, African American, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Latino communities challenging the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits in their communities. These communities disproportionately receive the wastes and pollution produced by industry, and few of the ultimate benefits these activities generate. Over time, the land, air and water of these communities has been left degraded, and the health of the people who live there—women, men and children—has been compromised. These are the sacrifice zones created by policies of industrialism and racism that underlie climate change and epigenetic harms to both the environment and people. And these sacrifice zones are spreading to global proportions as the climate reflects these policies.

The environmental justice movement chronicles the inequitable distribution of environmental burdens that exists today as the direct result of past policies. Equity demands forward-looking policies aimed at changing these outcomes. A downward spiral of destabilization and environmental degradation is created by public policies and private values rooted in greed. That spiral of degradation knowingly harms our environment, threatening all lives, and concentrates harms in the sacrifice zones of poor and vulnerable communities. But policies of sustainability¹ and so-called environmental justice that ignore or exclude racial, ethnic, gender and economic injustices will continue to generate environmental and human harm.

The environmental justice movement in the United States arose from communities disproportionately burdened by pollution resisting these public policies concentrating waste in their midst. Climate change, inequitable access to water, land, food, health and education, and a host of other modern crises are the direct consequence of social, economic and political policies that treated Nature and people as commodities to be used for the generation of profits. These policies appealed to a utilitarian logic that became joined with racism. Utilitarian logic seeks the greatest good for the greatest number. Utilitarian logic when applied by a racist system or person will make choices that benefit those deemed worthy of consideration while imposing costs—intentionally or implicitly—on those deemed unworthy or made invisible by implicit biases. The dynamic of exclusion can be explicit, and it can also be implicit in how we make choices. This dynamic is empirically observable and measurable in the ways hazardous waste and pollution have been distributed in communities of color—nationally and globally, in the distribution of health impacts from pollution on communities of color, and in the distribution of the devastating consequences of climate change.

The systems we inherited were the products of empires political, military, and economic; empires with an agenda of conquest. In them, greed acquired the royal clothing of formal religion and the power of a gun. Armed and winged, greed marched mercilessly over the Earth and her people. Religion clad this army with vindication, not redemption. Winged like angels and armed like demons, greed became the organizing principle of our lives. Nature and poor people were trampled underfoot like the grass when elephants fight. We made systems that carved up people and land into commodities. We inherited systems from another age that poisoned the air, destroyed the cycles of temperature controls of the Earth, and sickened our children and elders. From transportation to agriculture, from housing to employment, we created systems that venerated greed without qualifications or limits.²

¹ Collin, Robin Morris and Robert W. Collin, *The Encyclopedia of Sustainability* (3 volumes, authored volumes). Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2009.

² Robin Morris Collin, "Restoration and Redemption" in *Moral Ground Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*, p. 84, Trinity Press San Antonio TX, 2010.

“Nature and poor people were trampled underfoot like the grass when elephants fight.”

Consequences that we are suffering now follow the footsteps of these earlier policies into the landscape of our land, air and water as well as the cultures, communities, bodies and bones of the people sacrificed to insatiable greed. In the United States, these policies and their continuing effects are identifiable on a geographical map of isolated, exploited, economically starved, and vulnerable communities and in the burdened bodies of people of these communities. These maps can be generated in free, online applications such as EJ Screen.³

Historic and Current Degradation: All of Us Feel Some of The Consequences, Some of Us More Than Others

Studies by government, non-profit organizations, and academics have validated claims about underlying racism and its consequences, providing the basis for organized resistance to environmental burdens, such as polluting facilities and abandoned hazardous waste sites. In addition to these studies, a variety of publications, including church bulletins, articles, books, and conference proceedings, have given the movement greater visibility and power.

In 1983, a United States General Accounting Office study revealed that three out of four off-site, commercial hazardous waste landfills in the southeastern United States were located within predominantly African American communities, even though African Americans made up only one-fifth of the entire population. Subsequent studies revealed that industry specifically targeted communities that were least able to resist unwanted land uses. In 1987, The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice issued the first national study to correlate waste facilities and race. The study *Toxic Waste and Race* found that race was the most significant factor in determining where waste facilities were located to a 99.9% certainty. A follow up study in 1994 concluded that this trend had worsened. In 1992, a study by the National Law Journal, *Unequal Protection*, uncovered significant disparities in the way the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforced environmental laws. White communities saw faster action, better results, and the imposition of stiffer penalties on the perpetrators than African Americans, Latinos, and other minority communities. Most recently, in 2018, EPA issued a report confirming that “a focus on poverty to

³ “EJ Screen” is a free online tool <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen> allowing anyone to view and map a wide range of vulnerabilities and environmental hazards across demographic lines including age, race, gender, by census block or other tracts.



Common Dreams

Polluted Water Samples from Flint and Detroit

the exclusion of race may be insufficient to meet the needs of all burdened populations.⁴

Environmental justice struggles continue to receive national and international media attention. In Flint, Michigan, in 2016, government officials knowingly exposed African American and low-income residents to lead-contaminated drinking water. Agency officials were charged with crimes including involuntary manslaughter. The Dakota Access Pipeline controversy drew thousands of protesters to their site who were attacked with pepper spray, rubber bullets, sound cannons, water hoses, and attack dogs. Climate change is accelerating the intensity and occurrence of environmental disasters. The governmental disaster relief response to EJ Screen communities is to abandon its own people. The grotesquely inadequate response to Hurricane Maria in 2017, reminded observers of the same horror when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005.⁵

Yet, the most pernicious legacy of this history remains in our land, air, water, and in the bodies of people most exposed. The effects of environmental injustice transcend human generations becoming inheritable genetic consequences of trauma to the land and communities. What is now clear from epigenetic study⁶ is that social conditions affect the way the cells of a human body use genes responding to social conditions of environmental justice. Those cellular level responses are

⁴ I. Mikati, A. F. Benson T.J. Lubn, J.D. Sacks, J. Richmond-Bryant, "Disparities in Distribution of Particulate Matter Emission Sources by Race and Poverty Status" (2018) 108 *American Journal of Public Health* 480-485 at 485.

⁵ For a more complete history, see Robin Morris Collin and Robert W. Collin, "Environmental Justice and Sustainability: The United States Experience" in *The Cambridge Handbook on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development*, Sumudu Atapattu, Carmen G. Gonzalez and Sara Seck (eds.) (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2019).

⁶ The field of epigenomics explores the ways in which social conditions may affect the way in which the cells of a human body use genes. While genes do not contain a specific racial identity, the way society has imposed conditions upon the lives and livelihoods of people can create a chemical basis for modifying DNA. In this sense, the epigenome is a multitude of chemical compounds that tell the genome what to do. These epigenomic compounds attach to DNA and modify them, by changing the way cells use DNA to assemble proteins that carry out functions in the body.

transmitted from one generation to future generations. The social conditions of slavery, conquest, and exploitation have left indelible markers on the bodies of people of color that are affecting contemporary and future generations. These markers make populations of color sicker from diseases ranging from asthma, low birthweight babies, maternal mortality, diabetes, heart disease, and other lung conditions.

Race remains a major determining factor in business and government environmental decisions. As the 2018 EPA report recognized, analysis of environmental injustice that disregards race will not be adequate to address the needs of environmentally burdened communities.

A Call for Reparations to Nature and People

The environmental justice movement has demanded the restoration of communities and repair of Nature as a form of corrective justice. Corrective justice requires the rectification of harm to eliminate suffering. Justice requires that the wrongdoer pay the true and full costs of the wrongdoing to all victims ensuring that the cost of harm caused by wrongdoing will not be externalized onto innocent people. This is the necessary bridge to sustainability linking environment, economics, and equity. Linking reparations to ecosystems and communities provides the intergenerational and transformative development needed to achieve climate and environmental justice. Neither disaster relief nor social welfare goals will provide the intergenerational restoration of nature that is required. Such a reparative connection must be place-based and operate through the environmental justice communities that live and continue to struggle with the consequences of pollution.

We must make amends for wrongs to the earth and to our contemporaries for wrongs that degrade them and us, even if the only wrong we committed was to enjoy the fruits of wrongdoing. We must demand reconciliation of our faiths, and amends-making to the Earth from our nations. Our faiths clothed conquest, murder, slavery, and rape with a powerful entitlement. For sins done in the name of Faith, Faith must atone. Our nations have spent your inheritance on arms. They must give back to the Earth accordingly, in ways that care for the systems that support life, not by using force to take Life.⁷

▲ Robin Morris Collin is the Norma J. Paulus Professor of Law at Willamette University College of Law in Oregon. She is the first US law professor to teach sustainability courses in a US law school. She is the Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women and a former Commissioner of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs.

⁷ Robin Morris Collin, "Restoration and Redemption" in *Moral Ground Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*, p. 85, Trinity Press San Antonio TX, 2010



Confessions of

BY VINCE HERBERHOLT

Vince | God

I am a white male nearing my 70s; living a privileged life. I grew up as a spectator, in an era of greater environmental awareness marked by burning rivers (1969), holes in the ozone (70s), the creation of the EPA (1970) and the founding of Earth Day (1970). To some, I say that I was born on Earth Day, April 22, 1951, as if my birth, on that day, makes me special to the planet. I am not.

To others, I hide my birthdate and hope that they do not question me. The truth is that I—and my whole generation—have ignored the warnings of climate science and let the inevitable come upon us. Now we commit the sin of omission, the sin of having failed to respond. Communally, we have “blood” on our hands for the death and misery caused by climate change. I feel guilty of this sin, and I make my confession.

Whoa! Dear God did I do this?

God offers clarity and mercy
echoing the words of “*Laudato Si*” (LS):

Dear Vince, climate change is caused by human activity. Not to lay all the blame on you but, “[It’s] the harm you have inflicted upon [the earth] by [your] irresponsible use and abuse” (LS no. 2). Think about all you have contributed to this crisis and how you can change your behavior? Be not afraid, I will stand with you while you figure this out.

And so gracious God, I come to you as a sinner longing for forgiveness and at the same time fearing what my penance might be and how I might be called make amends for my sins. I hope it is not too late for the planet and for me.

Bless me God for I have sinned. It has been 51 years since my last climate confession.

Interesting, I don’t often hear confessions that concern climate and “care for our common home.” Go ahead.

Calling to mind the sentiments of *Laudato Si*, rooted in my examination of conscience, I am heartily sorry for my sins:

- For my privileged life style, my ardent consumerism and my culpability in protecting that structural privilege to the detriment of others. For my country’s continued consumption of 80 percent of the world’s resources and for my unconscious participation in that consumption. Overconsumption is killing the planet and robbing all creation of the justice it deserves. **I will start by eating less meat and cut down on my online purchases.**
- For my failure to listen to the justice cries of creation—I hear the voices but I don’t let it affect me. For my failure to comprehend how I am related to all of creation and how my self-appointed superiority and privilege fosters greed and overconsumption. **I will read and learn more about the impact of climate change and solutions.**
- For my lack of faith and hope in what I can do with your help—Environmental justice is huge. What can I possibly do to make a difference? I have to do something and allow God to lead me in that work. **I will sign and live the St. Francis Pledge.**¹

¹ <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/program/st-francis-pledge>.

a Sinner

- For my refusal to live a simpler life exemplified by Jesus. My sacrifice is required to reduce the suffering of others. **I will learn to get by with one car.**
- For ignoring proposals to join with others in actions to halt climate change. There are solutions. I just hesitate to take action. My excuses are lame: I don't have the time. This won't work. It will cost too much. **I will join and actively support Earth Ministry.** ²

OK, I've confessed my sins and I am ready for absolution. I quickly mumble:
For these and all the sins of my past life, I am sorry and ask for your forgiveness and penance, gracious God.

Now I am bracing for the penance. As a flashback to my childhood, I wonder how many sorrowful mysteries of the rosary I will have to recite.

God consoles me.

Relax, I have something else in mind. Before I go there, I want to help you make a good confession. Do you have a firm purpose of amendment? Are you going to do the things you said you would?

God muses.

Should I retain your sins as a quid pro quo? You change and I will forgive you. Nope, that's not the way I roll. I will never deny mercy and forgiveness. I offer that freely along with the grace to change your ways. I will provide absolution and let your penance speak for itself. By the way, for your penance, I am asking nothing less than your ecological conversion. Change your heart and your behavior:

Remember what you do to the least of your sisters and brothers, you do that to me.

Stop your consumption based on scarcity. My abundance is enough for all.

Notice how good you feel when you respond to the cries of those around you.
Am I Right?

Although you cannot personally stop climate change, you can do something. Do it.
Notice the new freedom and connections that come into your life when you live a simpler life style.

You're not alone. There are others with good ideas. Join with them.

Finally, realize that climate change is a justice issue. It has greater impact on people of color, the poor and women.

OK, why don't you say the Act of Contrition while I give you my forgiveness.

O my God I am heartily sorry...

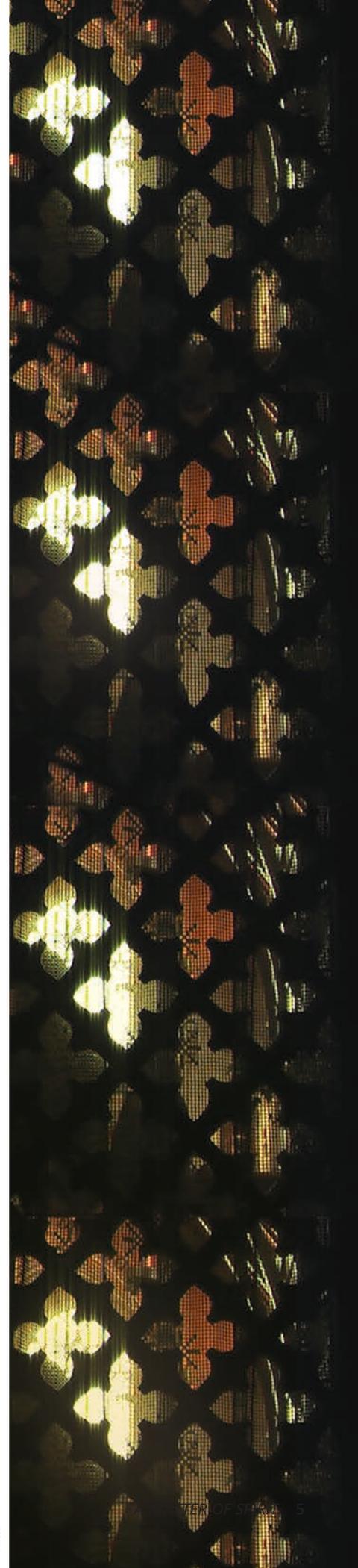
Thank you gracious God.

I forgive you your sins...

Go in Peace!

▲ *Vince Herberholt lives in Seattle and is a member of the AMOS editorial board. He is also a member of the St. Joseph Parish Faith Justice Commission.*

² www.earthministry.org.



Displaced Farmers LIVE WITH HOPE



CARMEN nos cuenta cómo era su casita y la tierra a la que quiere volver para reconstruir su hogar. ¿hasta cuándo le impedirán su derecho?

Carmen shows what her house and land was like. She wants to return to rebuild her home, how long will her right be prevented?



COCO podía tener muchas carencias en su vida, pero era feliz trabajando su tierra. Así recuerda su hogar y su tierra a la que quiere volver. Le siguen privando de su derecho. ¿hasta cuándo?

Coco could have many shortcomings, but he was happy working his land. This is how he remembers his home and land to which he wants to return. He is still deprived of his right. For how long?

MARÍA, campesina de El Seibo
A María le asesinaron su hijo.
Ella y el país esperan justicia.



María, farmer from El Seibo. María's son was murdered. She and the country expect justice.

Photos courtesy of Fr. Miguel Angel Gullón, OP, prominent justice & peace advocate who has been a leader in the people's struggle for their land.



The Adrian Dominican Sisters have had a presence in the Dominican Republic since 1945 when they established the Colegio Santo Domingo, a school for girls.

About 600 farming families from El Seibo, in the Dominican Republic, continue to live with hope more than three years after they were thrown off their land by Central Romana, a local sugar company controlled by the United States-based Fanjul Corporation.

The take-over of the farms was violent, involving the arrival of bulldozers and armed men who routed the people out of their homes and destroyed their crops to make room for the Corporation's sugar plantation. The farmers depended on their crops—root crops, chickpeas, cocoa, and plantains—for their families and for basic needs, which they bought with the money they earned by selling their crops at the market.

“Every day the media brought news of the mistreatment [the farmers] had suffered at the hands of the landowner, who with his economic power and influence had evicted them from, and destroyed their plantations,” said Adrian

Dominican Sister Luisa Campos, OP, a native of the Dominican Republic.

Sister Luisa has spent her life working for justice for people who are marginalized. In 1979 she founded CEDAIL—the Dominican Center for Legal Aid and Investigation, which works with those who have no advocates. She helped the farmers in El Seibo retain their land in the 1980s. With the Dominican Friars and other Sisters, in 1994 she founded Centro Montesino, which educates people concerning their human rights.

The displacement of the farming families is not the only injustice in this situation. The sugar plantation grows sugar cane. “Part of the process of raising sugar cane involves burning off the fields every few years and starting with new plants,” explained Adrian Dominican Sister Maurine Barzantni, OP, who ministered in the Dominican Republic from 1990 to 2010. “Of course, this smoke is not good for the people.”

The sugar cane plantation also does little to support the lives of the local people. Haitian contract workers generally cut the cane, and few of the local farmers have found jobs with the plantation.

For three years, the farmers have continued to work against the injustice that they experienced. On October 25, 2019, nearly 40 displaced farmers began a march to the capital, Santo Domingo, to meet with Dominican Republic President Danilo Medina Sánchez about regaining their land.

In support of the farmers, Sister Patricia Siemen, OP, Prioress of the Adrian Dominican Sisters, wrote to President Medina, “As president of this beautiful country, you have the power to find a solution that returns the lands to their people and preserves the common good. We pray that you will hear their cries and respond positively to their requests, recognizing them as the rightful owners of the disputed properties and restoring their dignity and respect.”

At first, the advocacy seemed to have had an effect. President Medina met with the farmers several times in November 2019. Sister Luisa said that the next step was a census in El Seibo of “all the people who were established on those lands and who were evicted so the property could be made available” for the sugar plantation. The farmers who had traveled to the capital returned to their land to be part of the census.

On Jan 13, 2020, a Dominican newspaper reported that the government had decided on the side of the sugar growers. The rationale is that the 1975 decree that allotted the farmers lands did not supply titles to the land. In addition, an analyst commented, “The Decree 475 did cede land to some poor farmers. Over the years, their families

grew, others arrived, and a growing population settled beyond the original boundaries, encroaching on private lands without any complaint. In recent years, the private land owner(s) awakened and protested the trespassings and were met by protests from the squatters. The Commission ruled in favor of the private land owners.”

However, that is not the end of the story. The census of the families revealed that provisional titles to land were given to people in the mid-seventies. These could be recognized for the families who held them, and the remaining families have been promised comparable tillable lands in other areas. Sister Luisa remains full of hope that her people can live in peace, cultivate their land and support their families.

Treaty Rights and Sacred Sites

“Who gives us the right to destroy creation? Our culture is not for sale. Our treaty rights are not for sale. The health of our future generations is not for sale.”

BY JESSIE DYE

Author’s Note: In Tribal tradition it is an honor to be called as a witness to events, so to remember the stories and to share them with the people. I am honored to have witnessed all the events of this story and to relay them to the readers of A Matter of Spirit.

Indigenous culture and spirituality throughout the world is based on a deep connection to place. In this generation, native teachings serve as a powerful antidote to the greed of companies that would melt glaciers and burn forests in exchange for profit. In recent years, tribal leadership has been successful in rebuffing destructive fossil fuel projects, standing in protection of the sacred land and



Members of Lummi Community with Totem Pole at St. Mark’s Cathedral, Seattle

Courtesy of Jessie Dye

water and their place on Earth. Both strategic brilliance and spiritual wisdom guide their decisions.

This is a story of the astonishing victory of Lummi Nation against a huge and well-funded coal export terminal in their traditional home.

Xwe'chi'eXen is the ancestral village of the Lummi people and abuts the tribal reservation in the far northwest corner of Washington State on the Salish Sea, a few miles from the Canadian border. Xwe'chi'eXen, called Cherry Point in English, is a traditional fishing area for Lummi Nation whose economic base comes from harvesting the salmon, shellfish and herring in the clean water of the bay. Lummi elders teach that "when the tide is out, the table is set." Besides the livelihood of the people, the abundant ocean is sacred to the culture, spirituality and very identity of the Salish tribes.

In 2011, SSA Marine announced it planned to build the largest coal export terminal in North America at Cherry Point. Coveting one of the deepest saltwater ports on the continent, coal companies expected to profit by shipping Powder River Basin coal by rail from Wyoming through an export terminal at Xwe'chi'eXen to be burned by growing economies in Asia. SSA Marine (49% owned by Goldman Sachs), Peabody, Arch and Cloud Peak Coal Companies, the government of China, and Burlington Northern Railroad worked hard to court Lummi support for the project, touting jobs and donations to tribal causes. Lummi's support or opposition was key to the future of the project and enormous wealth and power lined up to build this coal port.

Coal is the single largest source of global temperature increase and accounts for 30% of all energy-related CO2 emissions. Not only would the proposed coal export terminal dredge and destroy much of Lummi's largest fishing area but it would lock in fossil fuel infrastructure for decades. Local environmental advocates were not in favor of the project.

What would Lummi Nation decide?

For months, Tribal leaders kept their own counsel and their position was unknown. Lummi was subject to a full-court press for approval of the project by coal companies. Finally, in mid-September, Lummi called community leaders with an invitation: "meet us on the beach Friday at noon."

On September 21, 2012, indigenous leaders in tribal regalia gathered on the beach in ceremony, and amid stories, songs and drumming burned a huge mock-up of the \$500,000 check the coal companies had offered them for their treaty rights. "This is the home of the Ancient Ones, and it is up to us to protect Mother Earth for future generations" announced Hereditary Chief Bill James Tsilixw.

Showing powerful and far-sighted leadership, Lummi Nation did not back down despite enormous pressure from wealthy and powerful proponents of fossil fuels. In a series of letters with the Army Corps of Engineers, Lummi expressed opposition to the project based on their fishing rights under the Treaty of 1855 with the governor of the territory of Washington. To each letter the Corps wrote back saying to the effect of "thank you for your support for the project and



Members of Lummi Community Gather for Check Burning ceremony

Courtesy of Jessie Dye

we will try to address your concerns." After several exchanges, Lummi finally wrote to the effect of "what part of NO don't you understand?" The Army Corps of Engineers was ready to steamroll tribal opposition by pretending it did not exist.

Indigenous leaders reached out to allies among faith communities, local environmental advocates, public health care providers and elected officials. While Tribal leaders made every strategic decision throughout the campaign with clear moral and legal rights to the area, community advocates, formidable organizations and religious leaders throughout the region provided a communications network in a variety of smaller communities which the coal trains would impact. Tribes, people of faith and activists spoke at countless rallies, events and hearings while the environmental impact statements were drafted.

Jewell James of the Lummi House of Tears totem pole carvers created a totem pole telling the story of the People and their deep connection to the land and waters of their home. James, Lummi leaders and friends carried this totem pole along the coal train route, stopping in churches and community centers for blessings and ceremonies honoring Mother Earth and in protection from those who would destroy her for profit.

Jay Julius, fisherman and Lummi Indian Business Council Chair, put it this way: "We had more allies than enemies. Outside communities came together and locked arms with us. We stood strong together, with Congressman, Senators, faith groups. We celebrated victory on May 9, 2016." The Army Corps of Engineers rejected SSA Marine's permit request based on indigenous treaty rights.

Lummi Nation led a historic and remarkable victory against enormous odds in defense of their sacred sites and treaty fishing rights. In the words of Julius: "Who gives us the right to destroy creation? Our culture is not for sale. Our treaty rights are not for sale. The health of our future generations is not for sale." With powerful leadership, moral conviction, deep faith and strong coalitions, Native people prevailed.

▲ *Jessie Dye has recently retired from a career as an attorney, mediator, and a faith-based environmental advocate for Earth Ministry in Seattle. For 15 years she has offered her home as a long-term EarthCorps host for young adult environmental leaders from around the world.*

From Ecological Sin towards Integral Conversion



Map of Amazon Rainforest

Wikipedia

BY JESSICA LUDESCHER IMANAKA

Editor's Note: The Spring 2017 issue of A Matter of Spirit contained an article by the author, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, describing the concept of integral ecology in Laudato Si'. Three years later, we invited the author to revisit that theme in light of the Synod on the Amazon.

The Final Document of the Amazon Synod, entitled *Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*,¹ “proposes to define ecological sin as an action or omission against God, against one’s neighbor, the community and the environment” (*Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, para. 82).² The Synod document extends the notion of integral ecology from Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, articulating ecological sin as “transgressions against the principles of interdependence” that “destroy the network of solidarity among creatures,” harm future generations, and “violate the virtue of justice” (82). The Synod document arrives at the notion of ecological sin by building on multiple tenets from *Laudato Si'* and dialoguing with diverse representatives from the Amazon.

Amazonia begins dialogue from a listening stance and hears a call to integral conversion. Integral conversion involves “new paths” of pastoral, cultural, ecological, and synodal conversion. Ecological conversion is also described as “integral ecological conversion” (60). As we consider the notion of ecological sin, it is important to recall that *Laudato Si'* conceptualizes integral ecology as involving environmental, economic, social, cultural, and daily life (human ecology) dimensions, connected to the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the common good, and the need for “justice between generations” (*Laudato Si'*, chapter four). Since the concept of ecology in the Encyclical involves more than the environment, ecological sin must also involve transgressions against the multiple, interlocking domains of life involved in integral ecology.

Amazonia also follows *Laudato Si'* in regarding ecological crises as “one complex crisis” caused by the technocratic paradigm and excessive anthropocentrism. *Amazonia* develops the notion of integral conversion out of the solutions offered in *Laudato Si'* (chapters three through six) of integral ecology, dialogue, and ecological education and spirituality.

Amazon Rainforest Fire Rages

¹ This document is not to be confused with Pope Francis’ post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, which is referenced in the following article.

² References are to paragraph numbers in *Amazonia*, unless otherwise indicated.



Twitter

One Complex Crisis

Laudato Si' states: "We are faced not with two separate crises: one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental (LS 139). This integral ecological vantage point renders a different existential orientation towards ecological crises that opens us to hearing "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (LS 49). Listening in the Amazon Synod generates an awareness of ecological sin. *Amazonia* identifies multiple "threats to life" in the Amazon and the globe, and emphasizes the vulnerability of migrants, especially the "displacement of indigenous groups expelled from their territories", refugees, and women subject to human trafficking (11). Listening also calls us to new ways of conversion integrated in opening up the possibility of grace in healing ecological sin (17-19).

From Anthropocentric Technocratic Paradigm to the Defense of Life

"It is urgent to face the unlimited exploitation of our common home and its inhabitants. One of the main causes of destruction in the Amazon is a predatory extractivism that responds to the logic of greed, typical of the dominant technocratic paradigm" (67). In contrast to the excessive anthropocentrism that makes possible the disregard for people and the environment in "ethnocide" and "ecocidal development," *Amazonia* sees the Amazon as holding a "superabundant life" and its indigenous peoples as great defenders of life (45, 46, 38, 46). "The Church chooses to defend life, the land and the native Amazon cultures" (78). Doing so will require "immediately abandoning the current model" of development (73) and following the solutions proposed by *Laudato Si'*.

An Integral Ecology Viewed as Environmental Justice

Amazonia expresses a "hope of embracing and practicing a new paradigm of integral ecology" (4). *Amazonia* views *Laudato Si'* as representing "a new paradigm of justice" given that the ecological crisis and its solutions are understood in terms of integral connections. "Integral ecology thus connects the exercise of care for nature with the exercise for justice for the most impoverished and disadvantaged of the earth, who are God's preferred choice in revealed history" (66).

Although neither *Laudato Si'* nor *Amazonia* utilize the term "environmental justice," in the framing of these documents, they are both consonant with the environmental justice movement. It is important to remember that the conception of justice in Catholic Social Teaching draws from the Thomist tradition, which regards justice as a virtue. Viewing justice as a virtue enables us to see why character formed by choices and habits is necessary to respond to sin. Viewing justice through the lens of integral ecology enables us to see why character is important in responding to ecological sins. Ecological sins seem to involve a rupturing of the harmonious order of creation, a kind of ecological injustice.

Dialogue, Listening and the Need to Decolonize

"At the present time, the Church has the historic opportunity to distance itself from the new colonizing powers by listening to the Amazonian people and acting in a transparent and prophetic manner. In addition, the socio-environmental crisis opens up new opportunities to present Christ with all his power to liberate and humanize" (15). Deep listening may open up awareness of how the evils of colonization are still at work in perpetrating and perpetuating environmental injustices. *Amazonia* articulates a "preferential option for indigenous peoples, with their cultures, identities, and histories" (27).

Perhaps this move towards decolonization of the Church explains why an entire chapter is dedicated to "new paths of cultural conversion," giving ample space for the cultural dimension of integral ecology. Cultural conversion requires that the Church become an "ally" of indigenous peoples, taking an "inclusive attitude," promoting "integral salvation," "accompanying their organizations in their struggles for their rights" (46, 42, 48). Fostering biodiversity is linked to fostering cultural diversity (41) in a decolonized integral ecology.

Ecological Education and Spirituality: Integral Ecological Conversion

"The defense of the Amazon's and its people's life requires a profound personal, social, and structural conversion. The Church is included in this call to unlearn, learn, and relearn, in order to overcome any tendency toward colonizing models" (81). The conversion *Amazonia* calls for is one that "can only unfold in interconnected dimensions" (19). An integral approach is needed in conversion to counter ecological sin. *Amazonia* suggests we "promote a communicative culture that favors dialogue, the culture of encounter, and the care of our common home" so as to foster "integral ecological conversion" (60).

Ecological Sin and Environmental Racism

Amazonia maps out several pathways to respond to ecological sin. Of particular note is the recognition of "ecological debt," following a point also made in *Laudato Si'*. Ecological debt is an important concept in environmental justice, acknowledging that the beneficiaries of centuries of development causing eco-crises owe reparations to those being harmed by rapid climate change. "As a way of repaying ecological debt that countries owe to the Amazon, we propose the creation of a world fund...to promote their integral and self-sustaining development"(83). *Amazonia* also calls for "responsible habits" and "adopting a more modest lifestyle" along with "education in integral ecology" (84). These solutions offer hope.

Laudato Si' and *Amazonia* do not use the term racism. Such lack of mention may seem puzzling to many in the Global North. The nonuse of the term racism may be due to the framing of the documents out of a South American perspective. The emphasis on the poor, indigenous people's

rights, and the critique of colonialism and neo-colonialism deal with problems that many in the global North attribute to racism. *Amazonia* calls indigenous people “protagonists” and also uses the language of being an “ally” and “accompaniment,” which terms align with what are often referred to as anti-racist practices in the United States. Ecological sin cannot be healed without these and other anti-racist practices.

Integral Conversion

“As a Church of missionary disciples, we pray for the grace of that conversion ‘whereby the effects of the encounter with

Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them’ (LS 217); a personal and communal conversion which commits us to relate harmoniously with God’s work of creation, which is our common home; a conversion which promotes new structures in harmony with the care of creation (18).

▲ *Jessica Ludescher Imanaka is an Associate Professor in the Albers School of Business and Economics at Seattle University, where she holds a joint appointment in Management and Philosophy. She teaches Ethical Reasoning, Ethical Reasoning in Business, Ethics in Business, Spiritual Business, and Philosophy of the Human Person at Seattle University.*



Central Amazon Conservation Complex

Voices from the Amazon

BY JOSÉ GREGORIO DIAZ MIRABAL

In his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, Pope Francis describes the treatment of indigenous peoples—our peoples—in words we know to be true, “as injustice and a crime.”

Pope Francis describes land grabs by businesses, “out for quick profit, that privatize even potable water,” and authorities that open up indigenous lands to timber companies, mining or oil projects, “and other businesses that raze the forests and pollute the environment.”

We see *Querida Amazonia* as a response from Pope Francis to the cry of pain of from the Amazon, its peoples, nations and indigenous organizations.

These are powerful words of understanding, solidarity and a commitment to stand with us against the pain, murders and criminalization of our leaders, the unique and legitimate

defenders of the *pacha mama* (Mother Earth). Pope Francis’s Exhortation is the voice of hope, calling for humanity to heed its values, with a final call to save the Amazon.

So, we have hope, but in the forests of the Amazon, our peoples remain at war.

Throughout the rain forests of Latin America, we are battling governments that treat us like criminals for saying no to projects that would dam our rivers, carve roads of ruin through our forests, turn our land into lifeless deserts and our rivers into liquid poison. Left or right, the ideology is the same: steal our land, destroy the environment, and enrich the rich.

The world is waking up to the rapid pace of destruction in the Amazon. The attention has revealed the hypocrisy of corporations, investors and national leaders who make com-

We ask our Catholic allies to step out of their churches and to join us in our struggle.”

mitments to saving the forests and its peoples, while entering into contracts that will lay waste to the forests and deprive us of our liberty and sometimes of our lives for standing up to their destructive ways.

Pope Francis proposes a solution not only for the Amazon and its peoples, but for all humanity. He has embraced our peoples and our ways. His words will shape the Church's future in the Amazon, and perhaps around the world.

So, we have hope, but it is what happens next that will determine our fate.

Pope Francis urges indigenous peoples to sit down for a dialogue with those who seek to come into our forests. “Starting from our roots, let us sit around the common table, a place of conversation and of shared hopes. In this way our differences, which could seem like a banner or a wall, can become a bridge,” he writes in the Exhortation. “For this reason, interest and concern for the cultural values of the indigenous groups should be shared by everyone, for their richness is also our own.”

We have the support of a powerful ally, in this valiant Pope and his army of bishops and priests. They have promised to walk with us and to help us transform a development model that endangers the entire planet. The Vatican joins the scientific community and a growing army of youth in recognizing indigenous peoples as fundamental to conserving our planet.

But a dialogue must begin from a place of strength. A commitment to equity requires that we have strong rights to our territories. A commitment to conservation requires we have our rights, for where we have them, there is greater biodiversity and more standing forests. The Pope has seen the evidence that our demands must be central to implementing the Church's plan of action. Together we can and will make the world a better, more equitable, more humane and more sustainable place.

Our proposals are based solidly on the work of the world's top climate and biodiversity scientists. They in turn draw on our experience in the forests, on the front lines of a climate movement that has no borders. Our traditional practices protect forests and biodiversity, and hold promise as a source of future health and economic benefits for humanity. But without our land, we too will disappear, and so will these treasures that have no price.

We ask our Catholic allies to step out of their churches and to join us in our struggle. We need them to help us resist development projects that threaten our world. We need them to demand that governments obtain our consent, and only



Author Speaks with Vatican Correspondent at Amazon Synod

after meaningful and full consultation. And if the goal is conservation of our forests, the solution must begin with us and our ideas, rather than with plans developed in isolation on the other side of the planet.

We have told them that change must begin with our children—all our children, indigenous and not. They must be taught, not only to love the word of God, but to love all God's creation and the sanctity of the natural world that indigenous peoples care for better than all others.

This journey will be hard. There are powerful forces of resistance from within the church that seek to harm this valiant Pope and to rob our world of his vision for a spiritual and ecological transformation. We are grateful for the deep respect Pope Francis shows indigenous peoples and our ways, and we will walk with him and the priests and bishops who support his vision.

This Pope invites humanity to live a simpler life and reminds us that the search for material wealth has not brought joy. His message is not just for the Amazon, but for all humanity. We have seen that in the wealthiest cities of the world there are people without homes and families, people who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, and people with a deep yearning for a spiritual life, even when surrounded by riches.

So, we do have hope that the world will see that the Pope's vision is not only for indigenous peoples, but for all humanity.

In solidarity with Francisco, we, the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, will continue in rebellion and resistance.

▲ José Gregorio Díaz Mirabal is the elected leader of COICA, the Coordinator for the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin. He attended the Amazon Synod as a special guest of Pope Francis.

Reflection

Gather as a group to read and reflect on this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*. The following is a suggested process.

Begin with the *Prayers of the People* on the back page.

Leader: In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*, we explore the environmental justice movement and stories from affected communities. Let us take a moment to pause in prayerful reflection for those who have been the most impacted by environmental degradation. Let us hold a space for them.

1. In our first article, Robin Morris Collin addresses the communities, “disproportionality burdened by pollution” (p. 2).
 - ☞ Where have I witnessed or personally experienced this disproportional environmental abuse?
 - ☞ How might I be complicit in environmental injustice?
2. Dialoguing with God, Vince Herberholt confesses his ecological sins.
 - ☞ How do I reconcile my own awareness and knowledge of complicity?
 - ☞ What ecological confessions am I open to share?
 - ☞ How might God be calling me to address my ecological sins?
3. Both the Adrian Dominicans and Jessie Dye share stories of courageous communities who acted, “against enormous odds” (p. 8).
 - ☞ How am I using my voice and resources, even if faced with enormous odds, to speak out against injustice?
 - ☞ How can I uphold and preserve the sacred sites that I live on?



James L. Brown

Jessica Imanaka writes on the necessary work of creating room for dialogue, listening, and decolonizing. She writes, “Deep listening may open up awareness of how the evils of colonization are still at work in perpetrating and perpetuating environmental injustices.” (p. 10).

- ☞ How do I see colonization still at work in my community?
 - ☞ How do I understand decolonization in the context of my own community and how might these structures impact my relationship with others, particularly those from communities that are marginalized?
 - ☞ How might I listen more intentionally to the voices of these communities so as to create a richer dialogue and the space for cultivating growth in understanding among us?
4. We close this issue with the powerful charge of José Gregorio Diaz Mirabal, “We ask our Catholic allies to step out of their churches and to join us in our struggle.” (p. 12)
 - ☞ How can allies best support indigenous communities?
 - ☞ How can I align myself to the struggle of our sisters and brothers?



INTERCOMMUNITY

▶ IPJC Events **Catholic Advocacy Day**



Many thanks to everyone who traveled to Olympia from the north, south and east on February 20 to advocate for the common good. We had meetings with 110 legislators in 36 districts.

“Your One Wild and Precious Life: Women on the Road of Ministry”



Over 125 people joined us to view and discuss the video of Elizabeth Johnson’s presentation at Santa Clara University entitled, “Your One Wild and Precious Life: Women on the Road of Ministry,” on January 25. As a follow-up, participants suggested that we invite Archbishop Etienne to a gathering/listening session to discuss the needs of the Church and how women and men can address those needs in ministry. If you would like the link to Elizabeth’s presentation, contact IPJC.

Thank You 

With Gratitude to St. Joseph Parish & St. Patrick Parish for the use of their parishes for IPJC events.

PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • UPCOMING EVENTS

Modern Slavery: In MY Backyard?

On February 6, 2020, IPJC sponsored an informative and inspiring panel on human trafficking in Seattle and how we can part of ending it in our city.



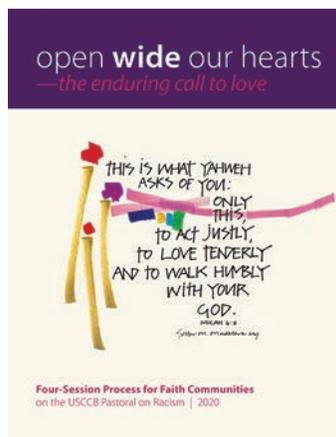
Panelists from left to right:

- ✧ **Billy Huynh**, survivor of labor trafficking, and leader in API Chaya's human trafficking survivor group.
- ✧ **Dannie Nemes**, Anti-Trafficking Advocate and Community Organizer with API Chaya.
- ✧ **Tanya Fernandez**, Education Director for Seattle Against Slavery (SAS).
- ✧ **Detective Megan Bruneau Zentner**, Seattle Police Department Human Trafficking Detective and Task Force Officer with Homeland Security Investigations (Seattle office).
- ✧ **Velma Veloria**, Director of Advocacy and Mobilization for the Equity in Education Coalition.



Patty Bowman was on a panel entitled, **Responding to Climate Change: Science, Religion, and Cultural Practices**, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science held in Seattle.

► New Publication



IPJC is pleased to offer, **Open Wide Our Hearts—the enduring call to love**, a four-session process on the USCCB Pastoral on Racism. Recognizing that “racism still profoundly affects our culture,” our bishops call us to “a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change, and the reform of our institutions and society.”

The Study Guide is designed to enable faith communities to understand individual and systemic racism; to listen to the stories of our brothers and sisters and be moved to restore right relationships; to unpack white privilege; and to work to end racism.

Cost: \$5 + postage per copy, **Contact IPJC**

► Spring Benefit Building Community, Creating Change

Plan to join us to celebrate 20 years of our Justice for Women Program and the many ways in which we build community and create change in our cities and church.

May 13, 2020

Seattle University Campion Hall

6:30 PM Gathering

7:00 PM Dinner

April 1 Invitations mailed & online at ipjc.org/2020benefit

► Donations

In Honor of:

Kit McGarry, Virginia Pearson, OP,
Leadership Teams of Sisters at St. Joseph Residence

In Memory of:

Archbishop Alex Brunett, Mary Anne Cavicchi, Katie Frei,
Pat Howell, SJ, Marjorie Kowalski Cole, Marian Malonson,
Bill Renick, Joan Unger, OP



1216 NE 65th St
Seattle, WA 98115-6724

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 4711

(206) 223-1138 • IPJC@IPJC.ORG • WWW.IPJC.ORG

SPONSORING COMMUNITIES

Adrian Dominican Sisters
Congregation of the Sisters
of St. Joseph of Peace
Jesuits West
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus
and Mary, US-Ontario Province
Sisters of Providence,
Mother Joseph Province
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Tacoma Dominicans

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

Benedictine Sisters of
Cottonwood, Idaho
Benedictine Sisters of Lacey
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel
Dominican Sisters of
Mission San Jose
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
Sinsinawa Dominicans
Sisters of Charity of the
Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of St. Francis of
Redwood City
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon
Society of the Holy Child Jesus
Sisters of the Holy Family
Sisters of the Presentation,
San Francisco
Society of the Sacred Heart
Ursuline Sisters of the
Roman Union

EDITORIAL BOARD

Patty Bowman
Judy Byron, OP
Vince Herberholt
Kelly Hickman
Janice Holkup, OP
Tricia Hoyt
Annapatrice Johnson
Nick Mele
Kathy Nolan, OP

Editor: Samantha Yanity
Layout: Sheila Edwards

Prayers of the People

from St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Medina, Washington, adapted

*We give you thanks and praise, O God of creation, for the grandeur of all that you have made, saying,
We thank you, God.*

*For the healing waters of creation, which bring pleasure and health, purity and life,
We thank you, God.*

*For the richness of the good Earth that brings forth fruits and flowers, a pleasure to taste and a joy to behold,
We thank you, God.*

*For the soaring birds of the air, the crawling creatures on the Earth, the gliding fishes in the seas, for all creatures great and small with whom we share this precious web of life,
We thank you, God.*

*For the invigorating sunlight of day, the deepening mystery of night, the wonder of the stars, and the call of the unknown in the universe,
We thank you, God.*

*From heedless misuse and dishonoring of the wonders of your hand,
God deliver us.*

*From squandering resources, abusing our companion species, and polluting the habitat,
God deliver us.*

*From the folly of imagining ourselves free from the fate of your whole creation,
God deliver us.*

*For the courage and wisdom to confess how little we have cared for your gifts,
Strengthen us, O Spirit.*

*For the conviction that you have called us to love and restore the Earth,
Strengthen us, O Spirit.*

*For repentance and the determination to begin our stewardship anew,
Strengthen us, O Spirit.*

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever, Amen.