



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

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Sustainability

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Introduction

Sustainability has many definitions but all of them include three aspects: living within the limits; understanding the interconnections among economy, society, and government; and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Use of natural resources without adequate replenishment and the effects of climate change caused by poor decisions of governments, institutions, businesses, and individuals have demanded that all people take responsibility for developing and participating in a plan of sustainability. The United Nations (with input from the grass roots) developed 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals) for 2016-30. These goals were developed to put an end to hunger, poverty, and inequality, take action on climate change and the environment, improve access to health and education, build strong institutions and partnerships and much more. The ultimate goal is an equitable, sustainable world. Participation at the local level (and, if possible, at the national level) will support participation in the worldwide goals. (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals>)

Call to Prayer

Most loving Creator, you embrace with tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty and that we may actively participate in caring for creation. Bring healing to our lives that we may protect the world and not prey upon it, that we may sow beauty, not indiscriminate use of resources and participation in pollution and destruction of our planet. (*Laudato Si'*, 246, adapted from "A prayer for our earth")

Experience

One only needs to look around at the environment, experience the disastrous effects of climate change locally and view the news from around the world to know the need for the planet's people to work together for a sustainable world. In chapter one of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis points out various symptoms of how Earth's inhabitants have degraded one another and the earth. "The impacts of climate change are considerable alongside issues of the depletion of freshwater and loss of biodiversity.... and the negative impact of carbon-intensive economics on the natural world and human life." (Longbottom, Henry, SJ, "[An Overview of Laudato Si'](#)")

One example is the release of the various chemicals which are used in the mining of gold into freshwater. This killed the fish.

Another example is related to deforestation. Approximately 20 years ago, travel from Kumasi to Sunyani was through a forest. Currently, one can see trees but certainly not a forest. It is difficult to find what appears to be good news.

Reflection

Sustainability was not an issue during Jesus time, yet He encouraged his disciples to live simply when he told them: “Do not take gold or silver for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic or sandals or walking stick.” (Matt. 10: 9-10) That was the plan of sustainability they were to follow.

Genesis 1: 28: “God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and care for it.’”

Genesis 1: 31: “God looked at everything God had made, and God found it very good.”

Laudato Si', 86: “Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other and in the service of one another.” (Quoting from *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 340.)

Laudato Si', 91: “A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.”

Love Cannot Wait: “We, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, are profoundly affected and challenged by the many divisions in our world and church today and by the **social, economic and ecological crises of our times**....we are called and sent to address these divisions and crises with audacity and hope...we commit to live more simply, responsibly, and sustainably with one another and with all of creation.”

Action

Looking only at the first aspect of sustainability, living within the limits, what is it we can do to actively participate in saving ourselves and the planet's resources? One process for participation in an action plan includes: becoming knowledgeable about sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals followed by research into the local situation of sustainability concerns. Prayer and reflection follow as the next possible steps of action are discerned.

Plan a community meeting to discuss the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 targets. Determine how your country is planning to develop these goals locally and in the entire country where you are missioned. How will the local SSND community participate?

Daily pray “A Prayer for our Earth” or “A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation” (*Laudato Si'*, 246) or “The Canticle of the Creatures” by St. Francis of Assisi.

Educate. “Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights or any number of other practices.” (*Laudato Si'*, 211)

We are called and we are sent to proclaim and live simply, in a “sustainable” manner. Go, you are sent!