Editorial: This issue shares some of the ways through which we care for the needs of the Earth and the Poor: how religions have been contributing to the realization of the SDGs 2030 Agenda; ways in which people of faith can come together to enjoy and protect creation; and how our consecrated life prepares us to be effective advocates on many issues affecting vulnerable members of our society, especially immigrants and refugees.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you in these days as you enter into intense spiritual reflection of the paschal mystery of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. We wish you all a very Happy Easter!

LINKS: Click underlined blue text to open a link or copy and paste the url on your browser window.

RELIGIONS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Throughout the event, Vanessa Jane Smith illustrated essential messages of the presenters on an engaging and beautiful mural. This process allowed participants to visualize the information shared at the conference sessions and its impact. For more information on her work go to www.craftingconnection.com

The International Conference on Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral human development (DPIHD) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was held at the Vatican from March 7-9, 2019. Each of the 17 SDGs fall within these five basic goals: people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace.

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The participants represented world religions, international organizations of government and non-governmental natures, including those already in the process of implementing one or more of the SDGs. One of the common messages echoed in the opening remarks was that the role of religion was not clear in the creation, implementation or realization of SDGs. Religions play an important role in promoting peace, dialogue and common good, and therefore they hold a special place in the public square. This needs to be recognized by the SDGs by having a religious dimension. The lack of political will or scarcity of economic and human resources to achieve the SDGs, world religions can work in implementing and realizing the 2030 agenda through belief and conviction. By including many religions in the conference, the Dicastery has initiated a partnership to promote human dignity, to protect the planet and promote peace, so that all people can enjoy a prosperous life. Speakers unanimously stressed the urgency of achieving the SDGs and reminded the participants that four years into 2030 agenda the imperative is clear; we must accelerate our actions and we must do it together or fail to achieve these goals. Mr. Michael Moeller, Director General, United Nations, Geneva, called upon all participants to demonstrate that we can come together and rise to meet the global challenges we are facing today.

Cardinal Turkson, Prefect for the DPIHD, invited the participants to commit themselves from their various moral persuasive strength and their point of views in their implementation of SDGs. He reminded us that our presence in this international event is an indication that religions and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) can contribute in promoting dignity and development of all. He urged the participants to keep the sense of urgency in their discussions and deliberations. Speakers from different religions, activists, and those who have already forged partnerships with other religions in addressing the 2030 agenda, asked the participants to focus on what unites them and not what divides them. The conference ended with a renewed sense of optimism and purpose, though being aware that the problems we are facing are interconnected and the solutions are often fragmented. If we do not take immediate action to reverse it, we will be worse off than we are today.

The Call for Action session on the final day had five working groups meeting separately and sharing their plan of action in the plenary session.

The group on Partnership suggested that in the next six months every single organization present must create a new partnership with a group they have not heard of before, which would result in 200 more partnerships in six months.

The working group on People, urged that all religions share their resources in building and supporting young leaders, women and indigenous people. The Prosperity working group sought to ‘redefine prosperity and good investment’. All religions and FBOs need to ensure that our ethical financial structures share the wealth and redistribute it among all sections of society. Faith communities should walk the talk when it comes to ethical investments. The group on Peace suggested that religions and FBOs find concrete ways to give more space for young people to act. Grassroots action must be undertaken by religions for peace and technology and social media must be used to promote peace. Policymakers at all level need to dialogue with civil society organizations on promoting peace. The group on the Planet encouraged participants to celebrate our good experiences in protecting our planet, and to give visibility to those experiences. In the urgency to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor, partnership with interfaith groups and the science community is the need of the hour to keep a check on global warming.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Moeller reiterated that the strength of the SDGs rests on three strong principles: first is to leave no one behind; second, the 17 goals are indivisible and completely integrated, we cannot address one without addressing the other 16. Third, every single one of us is responsible for the implementation of the SDGs and all have to be active participants in achieving the 2030 agenda.—Contributed by Gretta Fernandes, SSpS, Mission Secretary

IMPLEMENTING LAUDATO SI

The JPIC Secretariat met in the DPIHD office of Fr. Joshtom Kureethadam, SBD to share plans for implementing Laudato Si. The encyclical is receiving enthusiastic responses in many areas of the Catholic Church. Still, much work needs to be done to realize its message. Fr. Josh will be speaking at the JPIC
Promoters meeting May 15, so we can join our efforts to actualize plans moving forward. In 2020, we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si. Both events deserve a grand recognition.

SYNOD ON THE AMAZON

In March, the Red Eclesial Panamazonica (REPAM) gathered representatives of men and women religious and those of congregational general houses in Rome, the JPIC Secretariat, and entities for Mission in Italy. The meeting was held at the Consolata Missionaries General House to discuss the forthcoming Synod on the Amazon: “Sharing this Path in the Service of Life and the Kingdom.”

A summary of specific conversations that REPAM members have had with many of the institutions represented at the meeting was presented. Much interest has been expressed that we join one another in combined efforts during the Synod of the Pan-Amazonia.

REPAM, as an articulating entity, acts as a bridge to facilitate this process, but it is the responsibility shared by all of us to carry this plan forward, as well as to make decisions, agreements, define financial means, and manage and coordinate the effort.

Another meeting will take place in April which will continue to develop a plan that defines activities in common. The most important event will be a program of activities outlined in the proposal of a Tent of the Martyrs of the Amazon. This will be a place to honor all martyrs who lost their lives in their efforts to address problems related to the environment and the negative impact on people’s lives.

We will continue to be updated on the various initiatives that will take place during the Pan-Amazonian Synod.

There was much excitement expressed by the participants of this meeting to work together to make the experiences very informative and deeply spiritually moving.

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME RETREAT

The Spanish-Portuguese Promoters Group March meeting focused on the Care for Our Common Home, with Mr. Tomás Insua, Co-founder and Executive Director of the World Catholic Climate Movement, as presenter. He began the session with a reference to Sr. Dorothy Stang, an American member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Namur, who was deeply committed to the care of the Earth during her 40 years working in the Brazilian Forest and prophetically advocating for the protection of the lands, which resulted in her being murdered in 2005. Like Sr. Dorothy, many Christians and non-Christians are committed to the same mission; however, greater awareness and widespread work are required to counter the damage we are causing to the earth with our consumerist way of life.

The methodology applied was that of a retreat, with the use of quotations from Laudato Si, videos and testimonies. The session was divided into three moments. The first moment was dedicated to praying with Creation, during which Pope Francis’ prayer for our Earth was proclaimed, and after which Mr. Insua referred to the importance of praying in silence with creation and encouraged the participants to listen to the song of Creation, to the animals’ sound, the water’s sound and the wind’s sound. He then invited them to share
in small groups the following question: how much do we pray with Creation in our communities? “For the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice.” (LS 85).

The second moment was dedicated to listening to the clamor of the earth and the cry of the poor. After reading paragraphs 15, 53 and 61 of the encyclical, Mr. Insua referred to the two warnings made by more than 16,000 scientists to humanity on the damage suffered by the earth through consumption, waste and disruption in ecosystems… Based on several examples of natural disasters and their consequences, he justified Pope Francis’ emphasis on just looking at reality, when he says: “we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair” (LS 61), and “to 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)

The third moment was dedicated to orient us to respond with hope and action. Based on the moving impact of the young Swedish, Greta Thunberg, 15 years old, who participated at COP 24 in Poland, Mr. Insua referred to the commitment we must and can undertake, and the important role each of us have for repairing our common home. At the end of his presentation the groups reflected on commitments that could be undertaken. His final invitation summarized the meeting: Praying for and with Creation; living with simplicity, and advocating for the care of our “common home”: “Truly, much can be done!” (LS 180). “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)—Contributor: Sr. Lilia Celina Barrera, HTCSF, Congregational JPIC Promoter

Praying with Creation PPT and other resources in Spanish.

**VOTE TO SHAPE THE EUROPE YOU WANT**

A recent seminar hosted by the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) and chaired by Cecilia Nya, SHCJ, AEFJN Vice President was held on the theme, The EU Elections, AEFJN Awareness Campaign. AEFJN Executive Secretary, Fr. Chika Onyejiuwa, CSSP, spoke strongly on how much power is invested in people who have the right to vote and the great impact one can have on government, parliament, governance and ultimately, on national/global policies, when people proactively participate in elections. This, he said, is very vital, as he challenged all religious, particularly members of congregations in Europe with voting rights, to be actively involved in the forthcoming EU Parliamentary Elections.

He supported the challenge put forward to men and women religious to be more involved in exercising their civic responsibilities with the following points:

- Voting is an action done locally but has to be informed by global awareness. “Think Globally, Act Locally” as stated by Bishops of Europe.
- Pope Francis and Bishops of Europe reiterate the same challenge when they say, “we call on all citizens, young and old, to vote and engage during the run up and at the European Elections; this is the best way to make of Europe what they deem right and just… (cf. www.comece.eu)
- Politics, Elections, Church all contribute to shape our world. We are citizens of the world.

Fr. Chika stated that there is a Standing EU Law (Article 17) that compels EU institutions to maintain a transparent dialogue with Religious institutions. This policy space is available to AEFJN through the Commission of Bishops Conference of Europe (COMECE). It is a tool available for us to reach out to EU policy spaces for information/interaction, making it mandatory for EU institutions to oblige.

He pointed out that the possible factors that will affect the political re-alignment in the coming European Parliamentary Election will be migration, climate change, unemployment, brexit, and globalization/fiscalism.

The big challenge now is: What can we as religious do to make a big impact on the forthcoming EU Parliamentary Elections to ensure justice for the common good: “Think Globally, Act Locally”. Get Involved!—Contributed by Cecilia Nya, SHCJ, Vice President of AEFJN and General Councilor with a JPIC focus

**BUILDING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS**

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” (Dom Helder Camara, Catholic Bishop of Brazil)

Fr. Chika Onyejiuwa, CSSP presented on the topic of Consecrated Life for our Mission in Africa at the March JPIC Commission Seminar. With a slideshow titled “A Bridge Linking Africa and Europe,” he spoke about Building right relationships with global connections as foundational in this effort. He encouraged participants to continue developing as Gospel value activists who promote the fulfillment of human needs and environmental sustainability. By being in
solidarity with one another, our response to the global ethical crisis would consider that the common wealth enriches everybody and results in peace.

To further illustrate this point, Fr. Chika showed Pope Francis’ TED Talk “The Future You” which emphasizes the future worth building is one that includes everyone. Peace is achieved when no one is left behind. Pope Francis stresses the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which interconnects individuals, peoples and countries as well as considering necessary choices in the areas of science, politics and economy.

As advocates, it is necessary to go to root causes and focus on systemic change for the common good and not for profit gains. For Africa, Fr. Chika was proposing a partnership model rather than one that only provides aid relief. Such a partnership could be tailored to realize the SDGs. The model would promote a production economy not based on the resource economy which has left so many African countries poor. The model would also include labor and community rights, environmental protection, and effective tax systems as integral parts of the partnership. The alliances in these actions would include other church actors.

Such an advocacy can be a faith experience and a way of incarnating Gospel values that seek out ways to promote the common good of all; it is a way of attending to the special needs of persons who are not receiving their basic human rights.

**CHURCH TEACHING ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES**

The third Reflection on the Pastoral challenge of Migration for a prophetic religious life was given by Prof. Gioacchino Campese who teaches at the Scalabrini International Migration Institute (SIMI). He is also Director of Casa Scalabrini 634, a center for the promotion of the culture of hospitality and integration in Rome. The theme for this session was “The Church Teaching on Migration and Refugees”.

He began his presentation with a video, “The Sea Cemetery in Memory of Syrian Refugees”, in which a memorial and symbolic floating sea cemetery was created on the shores of Turkey by relatives of Syrian refugees who died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

Migration is a very divisive issue in our contemporary secular and church narratives. This is just a tip of the iceberg on the issue of migration and the injustices underlying its causes are calling for our Christian response. The opening prayer reminded us of our theological roots: “Jesus, Traveler and Migrant, we feel the pain suffered by our sisters and brothers who stagger under the weight of the cross of injustice”. However, there are people who consider themselves Christians and consider the teaching of the church on migration as mere opinion and not as part of revelation!

The rich collection of the teaching of the Church is very clear: welcoming people in need is Gospel value and it needs to be treated as part of our Christian faith, therefore not a matter of opinion. Prof Campese provided a list of documents for Pope Leo XIII’s Quam aerumnosa, 1888 to the last document issued by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development, 2019.

He gave a sketch of principles contained in Church teaching, which offers a Christian vision of human mobility and tools to interpret these phenomena and pastoral and canonical guidelines to the ecclesial communities. In the second part of the session, a rich discussion developed from the list of principles found in Strangers No Longer. The five principles are:

1) persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland; 2) persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families; 3) sovereign nations have the right to control their borders; 4) refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection; 5) the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.
**APRIL INTENTIONS OF POPE FRANCIS**

April—Doctors and their Collaborators in War Torn Areas. For doctors and their humanitarian collaborators in war torn areas, who risk their lives to save the lives of others. The video becomes available the First Friday of the month.

21 April—Easter Message of Pope Francis of joy and hope in the Resurrection of Jesus.

28 April—Mercy Sunday Global Catholic Climate Movement 2019 Plans: Mercy2Earth Week

April 2—release of the Apostolic Exhortation, Vive Cristo, Esperanza nuestra.

**INTERNATIONAL DAYS OF OBSERVANCE IN APRIL**

4 April—International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action calls for continued efforts by States, with the assistance of the UN and relevant organizations, to ensure that landmines and explosive hazards in war torn countries are found and destroyed. Mines pose a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of citizens in those areas.

6 April—International Day of Sport for Development and Peace signifies the positive influence that sports can have on the advancement of human rights, and social and economic development.

7 April—World Health Day [WHO]: “Universal health coverage is WHO’s number one goal. Key to achieving it is ensuring that everyone can obtain the care they need, when they need it, right in the heart of the community.”

22 April—International Mother Earth Day stresses the interdependence of all of creation—www.earthday.org. The 2019 theme, “Protect our Species”, focuses on species which are being endangered by human activity and the interdependence of all life. Many resources are available on the JPIC website and Sowing Hope for the Planet campaign event resources—Sowing Hope Earth Day Event.

Other resources with a focus on earth and *Laudato Si’* are available on www.sowinghopefortheplanet.org:

- Ponte Sant’Angelo Methodist Church, Rome offer their process and action for avoiding single use plastics—using real dishware and compostable disposable items in church meals.
- Twenty-Third Publications, Author S. Mary Elizabeth Clark offers a booklet for teaching children how to care for God’s creation.
- Wheaton Franciscan’s in the USA offer a “Praise for the four elements,” a prayer rooted in their Franciscan heritage and based on the Native American tradition of honoring the elements of creation—earth, wind, fire and water.
- Sisters of the Holy Cross offer their carbon footprint reduction fund, climate change statement, and PowerPoint.
- Sisters of Saint Joseph offer resources on their Earth Centers which focus on sustainability and offer programs for women.
- Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Cameroon offer a report on their many activities with a focus on interconnection, environmental responsibility, youth interaction, community action, education.

**JPIC PROMOTERS MEETINGS IN MARCH**

1 April—English Speaking CORE Group, 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

3 April—Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Promoters Meeting “Justice as a Lifestyle” 9 am to 12 pm at UISG.

6 April—Last of four training sessions on “Migrations and the Challenges of Christian Community.” Testimonies of people working in concrete projects will help the participants to think about the future, action now: pathways of welcome and integration. Online will be Maria Gaczol, rscj from Sicily and Carmen Bandeo, SSpS from Greece and in the room Emanuele from Casa Scalabrini 634. The session will be from 9 am to 12 pm at the UISG. The course is conducted in English, Spanish and Italian with simultaneous translations. People don’t need to register to participate but they can participate online always with the same links.

- Español: https://zoom.us/j/2983023333
- Italiano: https://zoom.us/j/898176800
- Ingles: https://zoom.us/j/2983021111

11 April—UISG Sowing Hope or the Planet Webinar #5. “Growing Seeds of Hope: Listening to the cry of the Earth and the Poor.” The session engages experiences that have integrated responses to the Earth and the poor, bringing to light common messages from Laudato Si. It is an opportunity for developing connections among religious. at 10:30 am (EN, PT, IT) or 3:00 pm (EN, FR, ES). To register: Webinar Registration

13 April—Stations of the Cross organized by the JPIC Secretariat, all men and women religious are invited to join in the prayer. The meeting time is 14:30 at PIAZZA DEI PARTIGIANI, near Stazione Ostiense. From there, at 15:00 we will prayerfully walk towards Trastevere. We will finish in the Chapel of Fatebene Fratelli Hospital in the Tiberine Island. Prayers will be
in Italian, English and Spanish and will be posted on the website. See the English, Spanish, Italian flyers and a Map for the route. We plan to conclude at 6 pm.

26 April—Prayer “Justice as a Lifestyle,” 7 pm to 8 pm at San Marcello.

SAVE THE DATE

December 2–6—2019 Formation Workshop for JPIC Promoters. Theme: “Call to holiness as contemplatives in action: promoting God’s reign of justice, peace and love.”

This JPIC Formation Workshop provides new JPIC Promoters with the tools needed to animate members of their congregation. Others engaged in JPIC-related ministries are welcome to attend the full workshop or individual sessions.

We are starting a new format this year. The workshop sessions will take place at the UISG Formation Center, Lungotevere Tor di Nona, 7, Roma and will be live stream online in English and Spanish. We encourage those who are in Rome to attend the sessions in person for more effective interaction with other JPIC Promoters who are in Rome for the workshop. Let us be creative with the possibilities for personal and online connections during this time. Please feel free to share the live stream with other members of your community/ministry and invite them to join the online discussions through Skype. Also, you may wish to gather in groups and be a part of the online experience throughout the day. Sessions will be recorded for future usage.

We will continue to share the details of the workshop/webinar in the coming months.

The celebration of the Paschal Triduum of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, the culmination of the liturgical year, calls us yearly to undertake a journey of preparation, in the knowledge that our being conformed to Christ (cf. Rom 8:29) is a priceless gift of God’s mercy.

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