

Ecojesuit: Contributing to the moral suasion for reconciliation

Responding to the state of the world's environment and its most vulnerable peoples is now a moral imperative, and that is to do what is right. Wrong decisions and actions have brought the world to a runaway global temperature, biodiversity loss, land and ocean degradation and pollution, among many other planetary boundaries breached. Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and refugees of human conflicts show us the millions who are most vulnerable and suffering. The world does not suffer for lack of funds nor lack of food, yet poverty and malnutrition persist. As the pandemic circulates, the world systems highlight the exclusion. The appeal to a behavioural change and depth of faith conversion has never been more urgent.

Ecojesuit, the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network on Ecology launched in 2010, is a response to the global invitation (GC35 Decree 3) to understand the universal importance of engaging in ecological concerns and the need for reconciliation with creation in a broken world. This call for reconciliation assumed renewed urgency in *Laudato Si'*, GC 36, and with the promulgation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs). Ecojesuit has a process for networking, a platform for communicating, and people actively engaged and genuinely seeking collaboration to explore better ways of responding to the cry of the Earth, the cry of the poor, and the dreams of the youth. Ecojesuit is encouraged with these words from the letter of Father General in his letter *To the Whole Society, 2019/06, Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029*:

“We resolve, considering who we are and the means that we have, to collaborate with others in the construction of alternative models of life that are based on respect for creation and on a sustainable development capable of producing goods that, when justly distributed, ensure a decent life for all human beings on our planet. The preservation over time of the conditions of life on our planet is a human responsibility of immense ethical and spiritual importance. Our collaboration should include both participating in efforts to analyze problems in depth and promoting reflection and discernment that will guide us in making decisions that help to heal the wounds already inflicted on the delicate ecological balance. We are especially concerned about areas that are so crucial for maintaining the natural equilibrium that makes life possible, such as the Amazon region; the river basins of the Congo, India, and Indonesia; and the great extensions of open sea. Caring for nature in this way is a form of genuinely worshipping the creative work of God. Bold decisions are required to avoid further damage and to bring about lifestyle changes that are necessary so that the goods of creation are used for the benefit of all. We want to be actively present in this process.”

Learning from networking

Ecological concerns are local and global, and Ecojesuit's efforts have always been to share the voices of communities and their experiences so that these reach global venues such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change which is holding its 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, UK in November. Since the Earth Summit in 1992, Jesuits have participated in global discussions on the environment and development, and Ecojesuit followed this through in the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, COP21 in 2015 in Paris, COP23 in 2017 in Bonn, and COP25 in 2019 in Madrid.

Networking is a challenge, as this is not merely about being technologically “wired” with the ease that online platforms and social media provide. Networking as a strategy for collaboration amongst Jesuits involves dialogues with Conference Coordinators and focal persons for ecology where these exist, partners in Jesuit universities and social institutions and from the Ignatian family, as well as individuals beyond the Jesuits who want to engage and contribute. Strategies and plans for local,

regional, and global actions are discussed and reviewed, encouraging ecology efforts where these are going well, and exploring ways to assist where there is interest but limited capacities.

[Ecojesuit online](#) provides the communication platform for sharing analysis, reflections, events and programs, primarily coming from Jesuits and partners, but also open to others who want to contribute and deepen the conversation. Mainly published in English, efforts to sustain the Spanish and French have difficulty. Communication is a key strategy also for networking, and Ecojesuit online can contribute more with a wider reach, with the newsletter currently reaching 3,000 email subscribers, and with around 12,000 followers in Facebook and Twitter channels.

Contributing to care for Creation and to the UAPs

There is greater awareness of the ecological concerns and spiritual interconnectedness as the different regions experience the diverse impacts of a warming climate in a fragile planet whose ecological balance is critically compromised. But the critical actions that can bring about the change needed in seeking the balance between the economy and ecology are, quite frankly, not there, primarily the decisive actions to cut down on carbon emissions and increase finances to reduce the vulnerabilities of communities and societies.

There are Jesuit contributions to ecological efforts in the different apostolates, but these are not generally sensed as universal contributions. The UAPs serve as a common platform that posits very strongly the urgency to commit to act, and in June 2021, Ecojesuit presented a statement [Towards COP26: Advocating for Climate Justice, A Commitment from the Ignatian Family](#) that was signed and supported by all the Conference Presidents, among many others. This is a crucial commitment by which we need to find a dialogue with valued partners, stay engaged, and integrate the different concerns that reflect the same fundamental issues across the Conferences.

A recent initiative is the engagement with ecclesial networking and for which the [River above Asia and Oceania Ecclesial Network \(RAOEN\)](#) was launched in November 2020 with Ecojesuit regional support for a non-Jesuit context. Inspired by REPAM and work in the Amazon and its peoples, RAOEN is also an effort to actualize synodality in the Oceania and Asia regions where the Catholic Church needs to listen to its forest and ocean peoples. These Ocean States are among the most vulnerable to sea level rise, and many of these areas host indigenous communities whose voices need to be heard globally. The Ecclesial Network Alliance connecting all territories is a response to the global call where Ignatian commitment is active.

The commitment of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) to the Laudato Si' Action Platforms for universities engages Ecojesuit in the learning process. The involvement of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) in the Laudato Si' Movement also contributes to a stronger networking. The support of Christian Life Community (CLC) as a local to global community shares the voices and actions of many and strengthens the sense of communities of practice. Conferences like "Transitioning to *Integral Ecology*? Transdisciplinary Approaches for the Grounding and Implementation of a Holistic Worldview" contribute to a process that seeks to be both intellectual and inclusive. The Pontifical Gregorian University, the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Club of Rome and other partners are organizing this in Rome, January 2022.

Building from what is already growing: Jesuit collaboration for reconciliation and hope

Jesuit collaboration and commitment are urgently needed in this ministry of reconciliation and hope. Indeed, the environmental situation is vast and complex, seemingly beyond an individual's grasp. The vulnerabilities are extensive, especially for those in the margins. There are many Jesuit institutions who work closely on the ground, who are listening. This experience of synodality, of *parrhesia*, is present as it is the same world shared with migrants, the youth, the indigenous, and those in Jesuit schools, universities and colleges, parishes, social institutions.

Maintaining an active presence in the process of change

Part of being actively present and building with what is growing is to identify focused groups and focused agendas. In this process of change that seeks reconciliation with God, humanity, and Creation, Ecojesuit contributes or is challenged to contribute to the following actions.

Collaborating in the construction of alternative models of life based on respect for creation and a sustainable development

- Animating Laudato Si' by continuously echoing the messages of Pope Francis and sustaining his words (most immediately in preparing for his visit to COP26 in Glasgow)
- Providing a platform, however limited, for the voices of the indigenous who have and who can share nature/culture-based solutions to the ecological crisis
- Examining our sense of poverty according to the circumstances of persons, times and places, and deepening "the spiritual experience that we are called to incarnate in today's world" in the face of structural injustices that call for a nurturing of spiritual life and "self-gift" *
- *Advocating the production of goods and their just distribution*
- Engaging with civil society as a very important dimension of this process of change
- Seeking greater accountability of global funds so that these reach people and not corporations

Promoting a rights-based approach to climate action and justice that ensures a decent life for all human beings on our planet

- Standing up for human rights and human dignity integral in the pursuit of climate justice

Ensuring the ethical and spiritual dimension in the human responsibility to sustain the conditions of life on our planet

- Participating in interfaith dialogue and collective action

Participating in efforts to analyze problems in depth and promoting reflection and discernment to guide in making decisions that help to heal - bold decisions to avoid further damage and to bring about lifestyle changes so that the goods of creation benefit all

- Lobbying for environmental policies much needed in the developed world (such as in the EU and the US) while providing voices from the territories to strengthen these lobbies
- Forming a working group for focused analysis on migration and environmental degradation
- Connecting working efforts in education and environment, both with IAJU and Basic Education in journeying with this generation
- Working for greater commitment in Conferences to collaborate and engage with Ecojesuit, clearly witnessed in South Asia that is now the lead collaborator for Ecojesuit. With every Jesuit province in India having an identified Ecojesuit coordinator with accompanying organizational structures that integrates Ecojesuit, this is an effective example of local Conference actions that relate with the universal.

All of these concerns and actions come from the same source of urgency seeking wellbeing and spiritual integrity. We are called to live more deeply in authentic solidarity and hope trusting God. These strands with multiple hands are weaving the community mat from where local stories can be heard globally, and the dialogue of change action can be built especially with the youth.



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*Fr. A. Sosa SJ. *Our Vow of Poverty in the Following of Jesus Poor and Humble 2021/15, To the whole Society*