CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME

An Ignatian Perspective

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Caring for Our Common Home as True Companions of All Humanity and All Creation

Introduction

As our Global Jesuit Network of schools continues discerning how to act as a universal body with a universal mission (GC35, D. 2, #20) the cry of mother earth cannot go unheard. On the contrary, it should become central to any Jesuit educational work that wishes to align itself to the mission of the Society of Jesus. Jesuit schools across the globe have been discussing and reflecting on the importance of forming students who understand that being persons for and with others today also means embracing the care of our common home as a fundamental dimension of our humanity.

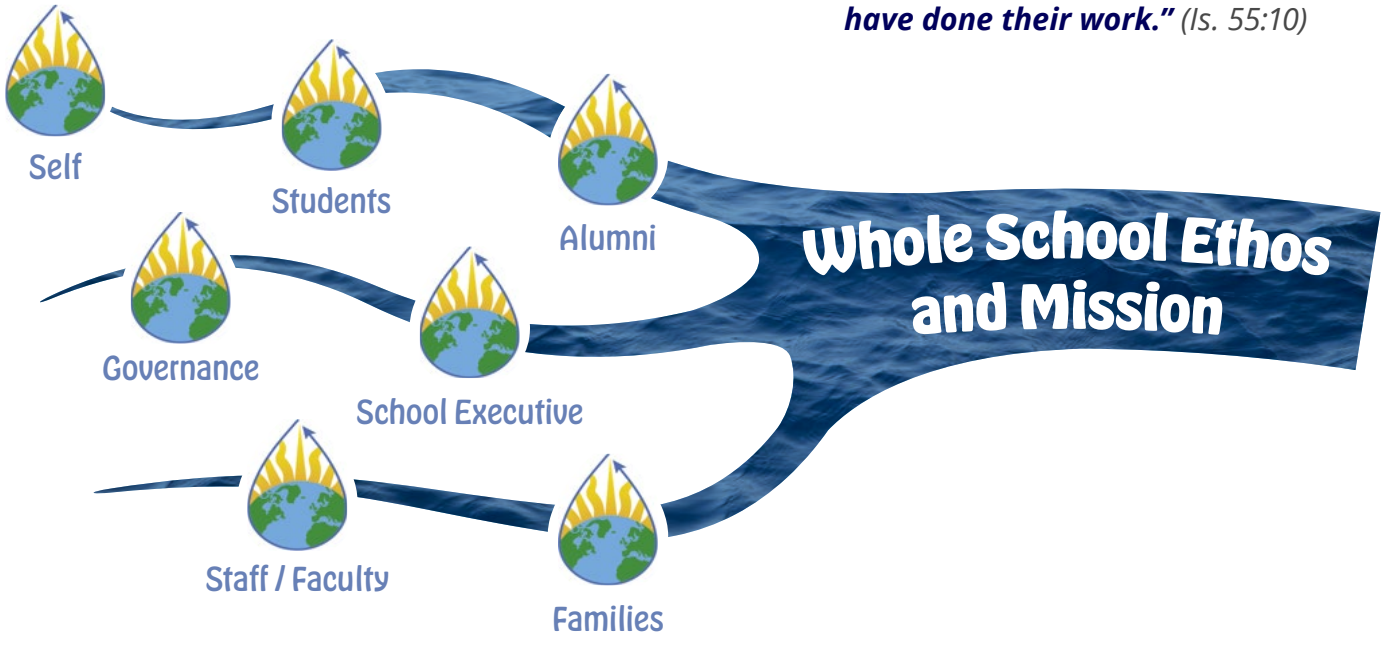
In 2020, the Secretariat for Jesuit Education took these discussions one step further and convened a global taskforce to create an ecological framework for Jesuit schools to give meaning, direction, and guidance to our work as we care for our common home, individually and collectively, both locally and globally. Uniting the diverse voices and realities of the six regions of the Global Jesuit Network along with Fe y Alegría, this taskforce has created an Ignatian vision of caring for our common home together with a framework for the various stakeholders within the school communities as we journey together as an Ignatian community in this important task.

This framework serves as a reminder that each of us is a significant part of God's Creation and each of us has our own personal role to play in animating God's vision for the care of our common home. Aligned with our Jesuit mission of reconciliation and justice in Christ's command to love one another, this framework encourages us to examine our individual and collective actions and habits through key reflection questions and suggests practical actions we can take to heal our earth. The work of this taskforce has incorporated the urgent call to care for our common home outlined in Laudato Si', the Universal Apostolic Preferences, A Living Tradition and the JESEDU-Rio2017 Action Statement and is designed to complement and enhance the wonderful work already being done in our Jesuit schools. It is an invitation, as global citizens, to continue and to deepen our care for Creation, even more during the celebration of the Ignatian Year which calls us to see all things new in Christ.

As persons for and with others we also strive to be for and with all of creation. With an awareness of our interconnectedness and with compassion and commitment, we walk together to transform our knowledge, attitudes, habits and practices in order to reconcile ourselves with all beings, all elements of the world, and with the Creator. We do this individually and collectively, both locally and globally, with the Ignatian spirit of faith and joy for a sustainable and hope-filled future.

For Christians this is an ecological conversion ***"whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue."*** (LS 217)

"The prophet Isaiah imagines similarly that God sends rain and snow upon the Earth that do not return until they have done their work." *(Is. 55:10)*



As we continue to deepen our care for Creation it is important that we do this together as a whole school community. As global citizens we all have a responsibility to care for our common home and each of us has an important role to play. Much like a river whose tributaries flow into each other, the work each member of the school community does to care for our common home has a ripple effect, encouraging and enhancing the work others are doing. Ultimately, as this work flows together it serves to strengthen the school's ethos and mission. So while it is important that care for our common home be embedded in our school's mission statement, culture and ethos, it is equally important that each member of the wider school community actively contributes to this care on an ongoing basis.

WHOLE SCHOOL ETHOS & MISSION

"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us." *(LS 211)*

The core of Ignatian Spirituality centers around *"finding God in all things."* According to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, finding God *"is falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything."* (ALT 277-278) *"Therefore, our schools must offer opportunities, in and out of the classroom, for our students to experience the world like this: to fall in love with it."* (ALT 281, Global Identifier 10).

Pope Francis reminds us that an awareness of our common origin, our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared by everyone will enable the development of new convictions, attitudes, and forms of life. As schools, we have a unique opportunity and an important responsibility to help instill this awareness in our school communities. This responsibility begins by integrating our commitment to care for our common home into our school ethos; our school culture; our mission statement; our promise to educate persons for and with others and all of creation.

Reflection

- In what way(s) does your school mission statement promote the integration of reconciliation, justice, faith, and care for the environment?
- In which ways does your school collaborate with other schools, networks, marginalized groups in your area and agencies in caring for our common home?
- Does your school have an environmental and social policy (Rio Action Statement #8)?
- Who is responsible for incorporating caring for our common home into your school's manner of proceeding?
- What actions is your school taking to address the ecological challenge at the local and global levels?

Action

- Appoint an empowered environmental officer/ coordinator for your school.
- Create an environmental mission statement or revise your school's mission statement to include care for our common home.
- Create an environmental and social policy for your school which informs decisions related to school purchasing, consumption and end of life use of products (products, meals, waste management).
- Reach out to your Education Delegate to connect you with other schools/groups in your Province or Network that are working to care for our common home.

INDIVIDUAL / SELF

"An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it... the earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters." *(Evangelii Gaudium; ALT 203, Global Identifier 5)*

Our Ignatian worldview reminds us that God is present in all things, including ourselves, our relationships, our work, and our interactions with the world. Each of us is a significant part of God's creation and each of us has our own personal role to play in animating God's vision for the care of our common home. As we examine our individual actions and habits, we are often led to a transformational process, which taken collectively and in aggregate, has tremendous impact over time.

Reflection

- In what ways is caring for our common home important to me?
- How do I make time, away from distractions, to nurture a relationship with creation?
- How can I participate in my school's mission to care for our common home?

Action

- Inventory my habits and practices: List the small daily actions that consider the environment in my purchases and lifestyle. What changes do I feel impelled to make for a sustainable future? Which of my daily activities reflect my concern for Mother Earth?
- Educate myself about ecological justice issues and sustainable ways of living. Identify where I am doing well and where there is room for growth.
- Celebrate a God-given gift or talent I can use to contribute to the creation of a sustainable and hope-filled future.

"Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded" *(LS 13)*

"I would say that the emergence of the ecological movement... was and continues to be a cry for fresh air which must not be ignored or pushed aside, just because too much of it is seen to be irrational. Young people had come to realize that something is wrong in our relationship with nature, that matter is not just raw material for us to shape at will, but that the earth has a dignity of its own and that we must follow its directives."
(Benedict XVI, Visit to the Bundstag, 2011).

As students of today, builders of the present and the future, we often feel deeply dissatisfied with the dynamics that society has built, in how the earth, our common home, and all her inhabitants are treated. As the youth of this world, we are sensitive and close to the realities of an interconnected world, a world into which we were born, aware of the power that our life and actions can have. Our hearts call us to take action and to build deep and lasting relationships with earth and all of creation through simplicity, love, and justice. With this vision of a whole planet, we are convinced and hopeful to transform our ways of life boldly and creatively. We seek to actively engage in leading stewardship in our school and local community.

Reflection

- As students, do we make time in school, in classes, clubs, assemblies, prayer, worship, and activities, to discern together our relationship with our common home?
- What is our faith asking us to do to protect creation?
- How does our school journey with us in positive and active ecological transformation?

Action

- As students, identify the impact our daily actions, attitudes, and habits have on protecting the environment.
- Act together to influence the school culture to take a more conscious and active stand in protecting our common home.
- Ask the school to support you in generating spaces for reflection and to nurture a love for nature.

Caring for Our Common Home
A Way of Proceeding

FACULTY / STAFF

"Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature." *(LS 215)*

Within our schools we, faculty and staff, have the unique opportunity to practice Ignatian pedagogy. We have the responsibility of providing a curriculum in all subjects that will engage our students in academic, spiritual and ethical thought which leads students to feel the beauty and interconnectedness of creation. We offer students both direct and vicarious experiences of threats to the integrity of creation.

These experiences lead them to opportunities to reflect on the attitudes and habits of consumption of resources that impact those in greatest need. Together with students, we can propose actions to reduce, reuse, recycle the scarce resources and conserve energy by relying on renewable sources of energy within our schools.

Reflection

- How do I model caring for our common home for myself, my students, and my school community?
- How can we, individually and collectively, experience and understand the Ignatian perspective on caring for our common home?
- How can we share the joy, excitement, and mystery of the natural world, and nurture our students' inborn sense of wonder?

Action

- Participate in at least one professional development opportunity each year on caring for our common home.
- Design lesson plans and activities which give students an experience of the inter-dependence of all of creation and model care for our common home, initiating curricular change in all subjects.
- Include service learning and advocacy for local environmental concerns in curriculum.

"What kind of a world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" *(LS 160)*

School leadership plays a key role in shaping school's action on the environment. Major decisions around ecology often start or stop at this level of administration. We include in school leadership executive staff such as presidents, academic roles such as principals, and the collective leadership of teachers and other staff. As leaders, we share the responsibility to form ecological awareness across the school's campus, community, culture, and curriculum and to collaborate with different parts of the local and global community.

Reflection

- How does our school leadership shape the culture of caring for our common home among students, faculty, staff, and alumni?
- Where is the promotion of the common good and the care for the environment embedded throughout the school, including in the architecture, curriculum, landscape, and other basic assumptions?
- How can we, as school leadership, better collaborate with school community leaders who have committed themselves for caring of our Common home?

Action

- Organize retreats, seminars, or workshops which promote an ecological Examen, leading to environmental conversion of heart of the school's distributed leadership. Use resources such as Laudato Si', Fratelli Tutti, and A Living Tradition.
- Organize environmental campaigns such as tree planting, conservation of resources, appropriate waste management, or events discouraging the "throw away culture" eschewed by Laudato Si'.
- Conduct periodic audit of curriculum to identify areas in which school curriculum could deepen the promotion of environmental justice. Redesign curriculum using resources such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

"In any discussion about a proposed venture, a number of questions need to be asked in order to discern whether or not it will contribute to genuine integral development. What will it accomplish? Why? Where? When? How? For whom? What are the risks? What are the costs? Who will pay those costs and how?" *(LS 185)*

As school boards or governing bodies, we are responsible for inspiring the school community with a shared vision and mission in the Ignatian tradition. We share the responsibility for leading and guiding the strategic direction in all aspects of campus life to ensure the pursuit of human excellence and the desire to know, love and serve God. In addition, we are responsible for knowing and animating the Universal Apostolic Preferences. Caring for our common home should permeate all decisions we make as a Board, individually and collectively with the Ignatian spirit of faith and joy, for a hope-filled future.

Reflection

- Do we – individually and collectively – understand caring for our common home within the context of the Universal Apostolic Preferences?"
- What policies and procedures do we have in place to ensure that caring for our common home is considered in all school decisions, including budgets and funding for sustainability?
- How do we, evaluate the progress of school efforts in implementing actions that help care for our common home?

Action

- Commit to board or governing body formation in Laudato Si, the Universal Apostolic Preferences, and the Ignatian Perspective on caring for our common home.
- Include caring for our common home as a regular agenda item for governance meetings.
- Regularly evaluate and report on the effectiveness of sustainability programs and policies.

FAMILIES

"Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone." *(LS 202)*

"For our schools, this means preparing students and their families to identify with and feel responsible for all creation; to assume God's loving view of the world."
(ALT 190, Global Identifier 4)

As a family, we are the single most significant influence in the life of our child. From their first moments of life, our children rely on us to safeguard them and to provide for their needs. Parents are a child's first teachers and act as role models in how to act and how to experience the environment around them, playing a vital role in our child's ecological awareness and education. By encouraging positive ecological justice attitudes and practices at home, we model and foster a respect for the environment, and care for all living and non-living things, for our family.

Reflection

- How does our family reflect upon the environmental problems/challenges of our planet?
- As parents, how will we connect care for the environment, our faith, and our family?
- In what ways can we, as parents, help our child understand how to incorporate caring for our common home in all areas of life: cooking, purchasing, transportation, services?

Action

- As a family, discuss the most serious environmental challenges facing your community and/or the world.
- Identify and list the current environmental practices of your family members.
- As a family, commit to one environmental practice (habit/lifestyle) you will change to care for our common home.

ALUMNI

"Thus, the ultimate success of our educational endeavor cannot be measured by who the graduate is at the moment of graduation. Instead, the gift of Jesuit schooling is best measured by how graduates engage life in the decades after graduation. Did the partly answered questions that were sparked in the classroom continue to be asked and re-asked throughout one's life? Did the possibilities fostered by networking and authentic encounter bear fruit in future decisions in business, personal life, and the religious quest?"
(ALT 285, Global Identifier 10)

As alumni/alumnae, we are an integral part of our educational community. Through our connection to our Jesuit alma mater, we support the Ignatian vision and the Catholic faith of the institution for which caring for our common home is an integral aspect. We support our schools financially, symbolically, and relationally and, as such, can and should act as role models for the next generation, especially in taking care of our Mother Earth. Through ongoing collaboration our experience and connections will help support the environmental mission of the school and offer mentorship to current staff and students.

Reflection

- How do I, as an alumnus/alumna of a Jesuit school, embody compassionate commitment towards all of creation?
- How do we alumni deepen our understanding of the Ignatian perspective on caring for our common home?
- How can we alumni transmit the value of the natural world and keep the young person's appreciation of their non-utilitarian values?

Action

- Define ways to engage in actively caring for our common home: personally, in my work, in my community, and in my former school.
- Connect with the Jesuit network to mentor students, teachers and staff on best ecological practices.
- Commit to sharing time, talents and/or finances to aid my school's transition toward environmental sustainability.

Encyclical letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home:
https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf /encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf

Universal Apostolic Preferences:
https://www.educatemagis.org/mission-and-identity-in-jesuit-schools/universal-apostolic-preferences

Healing Earth:
https://healingearth.ijep.net

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:
https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustain able-development-goals

Laudato Si' Action Platform:
https://laudatosiactionplatform.org

Laudato Si' Movement:
https://laudatosimovement.org

Ecojesuit:
www.ecojesuit.com

Reconciling God, Creation and Humanity: An Ignatian Examen:
www.ecologicalexamen.org

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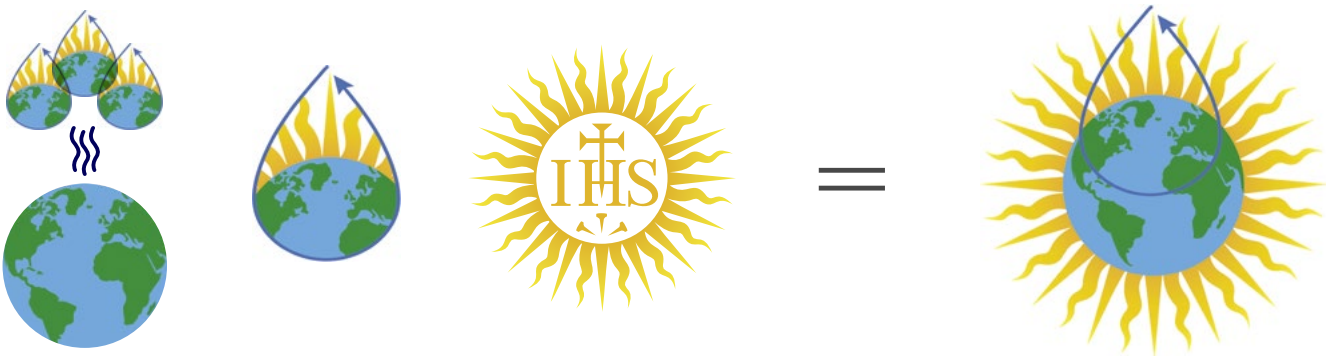
Caring for Our Common Home
A Universal Logo



The Meaning Behind the Logo

The water cycle represents an Ignatian approach to caring for our common home through our schools.

God, as represented by the sun, is the source of all life, constantly shining onto each part of the Earth to initiate and sustain the cycle. The individual raindrop refracts the light of the sun and carries nutrients and life throughout the Earth. The raindrop represents each person in our schools. The prophet Isaiah imagines similarly that God sends rain and snow upon the Earth that do not return until they have done their work. (Is. 55:10)

Just as the raindrops come together to form clouds, rivers, and vast oceans, individuals in our schools collectively form different levels of the local community networks through our curricula, ministries, activities and institutional involvements. These groups collaborate to work at different levels for the transformation and care of our world.

Finally, these collections of raindrops cover the whole face of the globe, uniquely adapted to local ecosystems yet sharing the same qualities and source as a global network. This cycle of Ignatian education continues as these raindrops flow and transform through their interactions with the Earth, and each other, before returning back to the source of all life to begin again.

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.

– Universal Apostolic Preferences