

*"Silver and gold
I have none;
but what I do have,
I give to you . . ."*
(Acts 3:6)



**RESOURCES TO ENCOURAGE
NON-CONSUMERIST
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SEASONS**



***These resources come from
a variety of sources.
Acknowledgement of the source
is indicated with the material provided.
We are grateful
for the use of these materials.***

*The Economic Justice Working Group,
JPIC Promoters, Rome, Italy*

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Advent Prayer on Consumerism

By: Education for Justice

Slow us down, O Lord, this Advent,
So we may understand the darkness we are in,
The darkness of fear that comes with wanting more,
And the fear of having less.
Grant us the light of transformation,
As we wait for your true abundance
The love of the Incarnation,
A love that brings us true dignity and security,
A love that embraces all, that enriches all,
That calls us all to share justly and celebrate joyfully.

Slow us down, O Lord, this Advent,
So we may understand the darkness we are in,
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Grant us the light of transformation,
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That calls us all to share justly and celebrate joyfully.
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Simplifying Christmas and Fair Trade Gifts

Resources to help “de-consumerize” Christmas and to promote positive gifts made in a just manner.

Steps to Simplifying Christmas

1. Plan ahead to ensure appropriate ways to celebrate the birth of Christ. Have a meeting to decide how your school, class, parish, group and/or family can celebrate Christmas in a way that is joyous and simple.
2. Reflect carefully on all kinds of gifts you give or donate during the holiday season. Refrain from supporting companies that deny fair wages, healthcare, and other rights to their workers.
3. Give alternative gifts, such as crafts made by U.S. community groups or fair trade gifts from developing countries. Give a non-tangible gift, based on a donation to a non-profit: for example, Catholic Relief Service offers gifts that will provide education for children in poverty or provide aid in poor countries. See the lists on the following page for such gifts.
4. Give a percentage of your Christmas gift budget to an organization working for a just society.
5. Give of yourself—something you made or created, or a coupon book for future services you will personally provide.
6. Draw names in your giving circle, rather than everyone giving a gift to everyone else. Set a price ceiling.
7. When buying gifts for children, choose gifts that will help develop their creativity. Art supplies, building materials, music and books promote children’s development. Encourage multicultural books and toys.
8. Avoid gifts that promote a consumer culture, gender stereotypes, or violence.
9. Avoid stress. Stay away from overly-stimulating stores, malls, shopping centers, or at least give yourself a time limit in such places. Keep decorations simple (remember the stable). Have everyone do part of the work involved with your celebration. Give the gift of your peaceful presence to others—and the gift of peace and quiet to yourself. Enjoy music, good food and good company in a relaxed way.
10. Avoid debt. Set spending limits on gifts, cards, decorations, etc. Refuse to be pressured to overspend.
11. Remember to focus on the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus, who came into the world bringing a radical message about loving God and our neighbors. Remember also that Christ came with a special concern for the poor and the marginalized. Make them an important part of your Christmas celebration in any ways possible.

Adapted from “Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?” Alternatives for Simple Living, at <http://www.richmonddiocese.org/ojp/ojp119.htm>.



(from Education for Justice,
www.educationforjustice.org)

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSUMERISM IN “DEVELOPING” COUNTRIES

Is there any consumerism in developing countries? The purchase of goods and services is on a remarkable increase especially among the middle class. This really shouldn't be a surprise with new products being introduced almost daily, especially when it comes to technology products and luxury goods. Buying just the necessities is a thing of the past. This is a challenge for the developing countries where many people hardly meet their daily basic needs. We want to consider Alternatives to Consumerism for Advent and Christmas. The objective is not only to save some money for future use but to promote the well-being of our brothers and sisters, living with gratitude and harmony while enjoying the God given gifts.

All over the world, Christmas is a time of giving. No one is so poor that he cannot give anything. This giving should not be simply exchange of gifts between a certain category of people; friends, relatives, etc. but to whoever in need of food, clothing, house, education; also giving one's self through the visit of the sick, aged, lonely and abandoned. In most of the developing countries, the pain of war and violence has become a day to day reality. Advent season can also be a moment of renewal of our commitment for transmitting human, Christian and moral values necessary for reconciliation and peace building. Last and not least, it is a time to become the voice of the voiceless. These charitable deeds are not new. Many people of good will, as individuals, groups and associations have practiced them in the past making advent and Christmas truly meaningful. “The poor are always with us.” Sacrifice yourself and your time not only during Christmas but throughout the whole year.

(Joyce NJOGU, LSSC)



A SUBJECT¹ BECOMES AN OBJECT AND AN OBJECT BECOMES A SUBJECT

(original in Portuguese)

FreiBetto*

Neo liberal consumerism today generates a feat which causes philosophers much perplexity: the human subject becomes an object and an object (merchandise) becomes a subject.

Consumerism is no longer determined by need. Merchandise carries a brand and status and gives value to those who use it. When he obtains it, the consumer permits himself to be possessed by it. The value it holds, created by advertising and by fashion, emanates, and impregnates the consumer.

In the universe of consumerism, if someone desires to be well accepted by others in his social circle, he must equip himself with all the luxury objects which will give him an aura which can show, socially, his high level and status. Poor him if he does not use certain makes of car, watch and clothing. Poor him if he does not go to select restaurants. Poor him if he does not travel in executive class to New York, Paris or to some Pacific island which is the “latest spot”.

If the subject decides to refuse to use the list of objects which are considered perfect, he runs the risk of being excluded, deleted from the social circle which establishes a certain minimum standard for consumerism as a code of identity.

Summing up, the subject starts to be treated as an object. Doubly an object: for subjecting himself to merchandise and for being rejected by his peers. For in the consumer system only those who move shamelessly in the universe of luxury and the superfluous are accepted.

This dehumanizing process stimulates the obsolescence of merchandise. Now production must cater not to a need, but to a dream, a desire, a longing for social climbing. The product acquired today – car, computer, Ipad – will be obsolete tomorrow.

You may want to insist on keeping the electronic equipment which is adequate to your present needs. All who surround you will notice your anachronism. You have lost your identity with the tribe which moves towards the acquisition of merchandise which is ever more sophisticated, with a bolder design.

The only way to be accepted by the tribe is to acquire the same objects which, as subjects, will rescue you from the grey and mediocre universe of ordinary mortals.

This inverts a human subject into an object and transforms the object into “human” or even “divine”. This is disseminated through advertising – which does not distinguish class. The appeal is the same for all. The billionaire in his executive jet and the young semi illiterate person from the favelas (shanty towns) suffer the same impact from advertising.

¹In Portuguese, the word “sujeito” which translates as “subject” is much used when referring to a person (male) whose name is not mentioned. A “sujeito” is also a subject - a “national or citizen”; a “fellow, chap, bloke, beggar”, etc., as well as a “subordinate, dependent, dominated person”. It has been hard to translate this concept properly.

The difference is that the former has easy access to new consumer icons. The young person absorbs the icons in his knapsack of desires and recognises how he is socially discarded and disposable for not investing in objects which give value to persons. Hence frustration and rebellion.

Frustration can be compensated by the healthy envy of those who perceive the radiance of others: readers of celebrity magazines and those who surf the net, attracted by their idols' call of the mermaid. Rebellion leads to crime – "I am not like them, but I will, come what may, obtain what they have".

Are there any limits to obsolescence? Will super production one day make the supply alarmingly greater than the demand? It seems not. Industry years ago learnt that the consumer is irrational and is not moved by principles, but by effect. Which moves him to shop.

It also learnt to make production follow concentration of wealth. Popular cars are no longer manufactured. Those who mostly purchase vehicles are families who already possess at least one.

Now, in post modernity, people no longer relate to each other, they connect. Encounters are not real, but virtual. We no longer live in society, but in networks. Nobody is excluded, simply deleted.

Intimacy gives way to "extimacy", as expressed by Bauman. It knocks down all walls of privacy. To the point of people becoming saleable merchandise, walking shop windows who expect to be admired, desired, envied and coveted. Thus the heavy investment in gyms, cosmetics, plastic surgery, etc. Many anxiously seek to be objects of desire. Because their self-esteem depends on what others can see. And the market well knows how to manipulate such low self-esteem.

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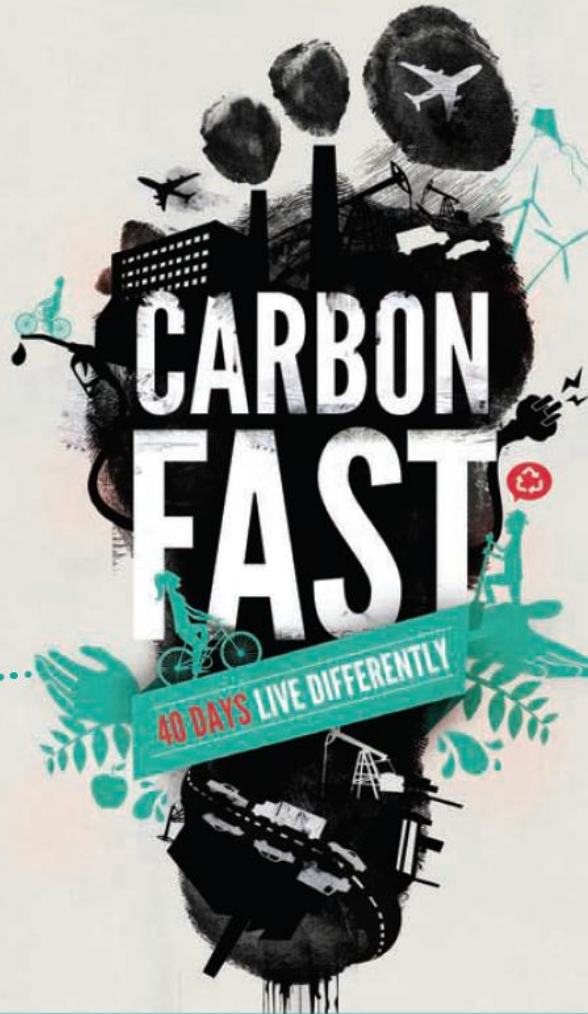
**ABOUT FREI BETTO*

He is a Brazilian Dominican with an international reputation as a liberation theologian. Within Brazil he is equally famous as a writer, with over 56 books to his name. In 1985 he won Brazil's most important literary prize, the Jabuti, and was elected Intellectual of the Year by the members of the Brazilian Writers' Union.

FreiBetto has always been active in Brazilian social movements, and has been an adviser to the Church's ministry to workers in São Paulo's industrial belt, to the Church base communities, and to the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST).

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The **Carbon Fast** is a 40 day challenge that enables you to **learn, live, give, pray** and **advocate** for justice in a changing climate.



Live differently. **Learn** about God's creation and climate justice for the poor. Be the change, by living more simply, justly and sustainably. The Carbon Fast offers 40 simple action ideas for daily living. Study resources explore 7 themes: Creation, Love, Simplicity, Community, Conversion, Justice and Sacrifice.

Register as a group or individual to get the full Carbon Fast action & study guide. Visit www.tear.org.au/carbonfast or email advocacy@tear.org.au.



This year, thousands of Christians around the world will take the Carbon Fast. Join the movement at www.tear.org.au/carbonfast

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YEARS | LIVING & GIVING
FOR GOD'S WORK OF
JUSTICE & COMPASSION



Theme 1. Creation: Creativity and our Creator

“God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

Learn

Genesis 1 tells us that God intimately created our world and lovingly declared it ‘good’. God’s loving attitude to creation indicates that it is precious and wonderful, in and of itself. To love God and to be like Him is to care for the things that He cares for.

In Genesis 2 there is no one to till the ground, so God forms man (adam) from the ground (adamah) to care for it. This Hebrew wordplay (adam/adamah) expresses humankind’s solidarity with the earth; we are connected and dependent upon it for life.

Q. In what ways are we dependent on the environment? In what ways has our society insulated us from this dependence?

Q. What does it mean for humans to ‘rule over’ the earth as God’s stewards? How do we rule not in the world’s ways of domination, but in Christ’s self-sacrificing way of servant leadership?

In Genesis 3 the original harmony between humans and the earth was ruptured by the fall. The earth becomes difficult to farm, cursed because of human sin. God says to man, ‘Cursed is the ground because of you’ (Gen 3:17).

Q. Why might human sin impact the earth? Read Jeremiah 2:7, 12:4, Hosea 4:1-3, Isaiah 24:4-6. These suggest that the earth suffers as a result of human wrongdoing... where can we see this in the world today?

Get the full ‘Creation’ study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

1. **LIVE** a “one Earth” life. Calculate how many Earths would be required if everyone in the world lived as we do. See footprintnetwork.org/calculators
2. **LIVE** a less fuel-intensive lifestyle. Commit to a car-free day each week.
3. **GIVE** some time to grow your own vegetable garden at home.
4. **SAVE** water. Reuse shower water to wash the car. See council guidelines.
5. **LIVE** in the image of the Creator God and get creative! Make cards and presents out of recycled items, or come up your own creative ideas.
6. **PRAY** for God to restore his creation. Spend some time outdoors and worship God amongst nature.

“You can’t be a Christian and not be an environmentalist.” Tony Campolo

Theme 2. Love: Who Is My Neighbour?

“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

Galatians 5:14 (NIV)

Learn

Decreasing our carbon pollution is a real and effective way to love our neighbours and keep our earth safe for humankind. When we release pollution into the atmosphere, these gases hold the heat of the sun, which results in changed weather patterns. As we've seen in floods, droughts and cyclones, an unpredictable climate can cost lives. **The impacts are hitting the poor first and hardest.** The Carbon Fast isn't just about the environment, but about God's call to love our neighbours and the poor.

Usula lives on one of the Carteret Islands, just near PNG. Due to climate change, seawater is swamping the islands making them uninhabitable. The people have realised they will have to leave. For more stories of how climate change is affecting poor communities, watch TEAR's Climate of Change DVD at www.climateofchange.tv

After calling Christians to love their neighbour in Romans 13:9, the Apostle Paul states, 'Love does no harm to its neighbour' (Romans 13:10).

Q. What does it mean to love our neighbours when our carbon intensive lifestyles may be harming the planet and its poorest inhabitants? How could we live differently to love our global neighbours more in this context?

Get the full 'Love' study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

7. **PRAY** for our poorest neighbours who are suffering from climate disaster.
8. **GIVE** an individual gift of \$40, or give \$400 as a household, to support TEAR's work in poor and climate-affected communities overseas.
9. **CHOOSE** fair-trade organic chocolate and coffee to support sustainable farmers in poor neighbouring countries like PNG and East Timor.
10. **GIVE** away your unwanted possessions to a local op-shop.
11. **CREATE** a car-pooling scheme in your church, workplace or school to reduce pollution, save money, and build friendships.
12. **ADVOCATE** for the Carbon Fast. Encourage others in your church or community to join you in seeking to live justly and sustainably.

“While the citizens of the rich world are protected from harm, the poor, the vulnerable and the hungry are exposed to the harsh reality of climate change in their everyday lives.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Theme 3. Simplicity: The bare necessities

Jesus said: Freely you've received, now freely you will give. Take no belongings for the journey...

Matthew 10:8-10

Learn

Christian sociologist Tony Walter wrote a book entitled *All You Love is Need*.

Q. What do you think you could not possibly do without? How often do you say, 'I need...' when you really mean 'I want...'?

Australia is reported to be the biggest per capita carbon polluter in the developed world.¹ The average annual carbon emissions per person in Australia is 14 tonnes, compared with just 0.3 tonnes for the average Bangladeshi.²

In contrast to our Western society's consumer mindset and endless hunger for more, Biblical discipleship often emphasises simplicity. Simplicity is not just frugality, but being content with what we have and focusing on God.

In Timothy 6:6-12, the Apostle Paul writes that "contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into destruction. For the love of money is a root of all evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith."

Get the full 'Simplicity' study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

- 13. GIVE** up a regular luxury. Eat or have coffee at home, instead of going out.
- 14. LIVE** simply. Wash your clothes in cold water instead of a machine.
- 15. SAVE** water by taking a shorter shower.
- 16. COMPOST** food scraps to fertilise your plants and cut your landfill waste.
- 17. PRAY** to express your thankfulness and contentedness for what you have.
- 18. GIVE** up TV, computers or mobile phones after work, for the week or a weekend. Consider it a technology fast.

¹ ABC News, 'Australia leads world in carbon emissions', 18/11/2009

² UNDP Human Development Report, 2006

"Under certain circumstances, fasting is the one weapon God has given us." Mahatma Gandhi

Theme 4. Community: Inter-dependent living

"All the believers were together and shared everything in common... they gave to anyone as he had need."

Acts 2:44-45

Learn

The early church (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37) lived a community life which was radically different to our experience. This session we talk about our inter-dependence on God, on each other and on the environment.

Q. What are the challenges of living in an inter-dependent community, in a society which emphasises independence and individualism?

At the centre of community is relationships and inter-dependence. In Africa, there is a concept called, "Ubuntu". Desmond Tutu describes it like this: "Ubuntu is saying, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.'"

Q. Climate change and global weather events have no national borders. How do these global challenges reinforce this concept of 'Ubuntu'?

Get the full 'Community' study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast



Action Ideas

- 19. SWAP** your wardrobe. Arrange a 'swap meet' to exchange pre-loved clothes or other items at your church, school, office, or amongst friends.
- 20. SHARE** more meals with friends, family and neighbours.
- 21. LIVE** local. Choose shops closer to home. Work from home if you can.
- 22. RIDE** to worship. Ride a bike, walk, or catch public transport to church.
- 23. EAT** local. Buy locally grown and organic food from Farmers' Markets.
- 24. ADVOCATE** by encouraging local businesses or shops to switch off lights each evening, insulate their buildings or switch to green energy.

"We are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation." Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Theme 5. Conversion: Making the Switch

"If my people humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their wrongdoing and will heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Learn

Christ invites us to repent and change our ways, and then to come and follow his way. This session aims to explore how the ways of our modern Western lifestyle could change and become more like Christ.

Q. In what ways does our lifestyle "conform to the patterns of this world" (Rom 12:2)? How can we transform and renew our lifestyle?

In Jonah 3, the Ninevites did not ignore the urgency of God's call, and acted without delay to change their ways. They repented through fasting, declaring to themselves "Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence."

Q. How might this apply to the urgency of climate change? What can we learn from the Ninevites?

Get the full 'Conversion' study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

25. **SWITCH** your power. Change your gas and electricity to a green plan.
26. **SWITCH** your lights. Change old light globes to new compact fluorescent.
27. **SWITCH** your warmth. Switch electric hot water systems to solar hot water.
28. **SWITCH** your water. Change the showerhead over to a water-saving one. Even better: get a rainwater tank. It's the biggest single way to save water.
29. **SWITCH** your meat. Try kangaroo; it's more environmentally-friendly.³
30. **SWITCH** it off. Instead of leaving TVs, computers and appliances on standby when you're not using them, turn them off at the switch.

³ ABC News, 'Australia leads world in carbon emissions', 18/11/2009

"Climate change has a moral dimension which calls for repentance and change. Repentance involves turning away from those things that have unnecessarily contributed to global warming." Dr Brian Edgar, Australian Evangelical Alliance

Theme 6. Justice: Defending The Poor

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and provide the poor with shelter... and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

Isaiah 58:6-7

Learn

Climate change is hitting the world's poorest the hardest, through increased drought, flooding, and extreme and unreliable weather, directly threatening the homes and livelihoods of millions of people. This is despite the fact that the poor have contributed the least to carbon pollution.

Across many of TEAR's partners around the world, communities are suffering from changes in the weather. For example, in Nepal, participants of TEAR's partner projects (many of whom have not even heard of 'climate change') are reporting that the monsoon comes late, rain is more intense when it comes, and flooding is more frequent. These changes have resulted in a range of negative impacts, including failed crops and the severe disruption, or loss, of lives from flooding. Similarly, in Bangladesh, TEAR's partners in coastal communities are facing more frequent cyclones and flooding. Salt water from the sea is coming in and ruining farm land and drinking water.

Q. How are climate issues facing poor nations relevant to 'justice'?

Get the full 'Justice' study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

- 31. SPEAK UP** Write to or visit your local MP and encourage our Government to address climate change. Register for 'Voices for Justice' in Canberra.
- 32. VOLUN-TEAR** Join a TEAR Group, or become a TEAR ChangeMaker, or contact us to find out about opportunities for volunteering.
- 33. ADVOCATE** for your church, school or work to become greener.
- 34. GIVE** an individual gift of \$40, or give \$400 as a household, to support TEAR's work in poor and climate-affected communities overseas.
- 35. REUSE** containers to avoid unnecessary packaging. Bring your own bags when shopping. Plastic bags take up to 500 years to break down.
- 36. PRAY** for justice and that poor nations will not suffer climate disaster.

“We are in serious danger of perpetrating one of the gravest injustices of our times. Those who have done the most to cause climate change will suffer the least from its consequences, while those who have done the least to cause it will suffer the most.” Steve Bradbury, Chair of Micah Challenge

Theme 7. Sacrifice: Living sacrificially, rising to new life

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your act of true worship.”

Romans 12:1

Learn

Following Jesus is costly and sacrificial. Jesus said, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’ (Mark 8: 34). However, Jesus also said, ‘whoever sacrifices their life will find life’. In the same way that Jesus sacrificed himself and rose to new life, we can choose to live in self-sacrificing ways, and in doing so, discover new life.

Q. What does it mean for you to live sacrificially in the context of climate change and poverty? How might sacrifice in this way bring new life?

In the beginning of the Carbon Fast, we saw the solitary between humanity and the earth. People and the earth became broken together. Looking to the future, Romans 8:19-21 says “the creation eagerly awaits” its restoration and “liberation from decay”, which will come only when we too are redeemed. In Christ, all things on earth and heaven are reconciled and made new (Col 1:20).

The Biblical hope sees both people and planet restored together.

Get the full ‘Sacrifice’ study resource at tear.org.au/carbonfast

Action Ideas

- 37. **SACRIFICE** a day’s pay. Donate the money to TEAR’s partners overseas.
- 38. **GIVE** up meat for a week. An Australian Government website states: “it takes at least 50,000 litres of water to produce just 1 kilogram of beef”.⁴
- 39. **ADVOCATE** to your friends. Share a vision of hope and renewal. Invite others to join in with positive actions to care for creation and the poor.
- 40. **PRAY** to praise our Creator! Be a living sacrifice as worship to God. Praise God for working through us to bring hope and restoration to all of creation.

⁴ <http://www.livinggreener.gov.au/waste/kitchen-food-waste/minimise-food-waste>

“Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds.” Psalm 148:7-10

Open Our Doors! (Year of Faith; New Evangelization)

FORUM LSSC

(Little Servants of the Sacred Heart)



On 22 September, Mother Consolata and I, along with about twenty religious men and women from various international congregations, spent about two hours at Astalli Centre, where the Jesuits provide services for refugees in Italy.

The president of the Astalli Center, Father John La Manna, helped us to understand the intensely human and dramatic situation that characterizes this service, performed in the center of the ancient Rome. This City of Rome is the headquarters of Italian government institutions and other prestigious organizations of the world. It is the heart of Christianity particularly obvious in spires, domes and bell towers, alive with the culture of many Pontifical Catholic universities, and populated by hundreds of male and female religious institutes.

After presenting the life 'throbbing' within the walls of the first floor of the Jesuit house next to the "Chiesa del Gesù" (Church of Jesus), Father John described the organization. It serves a large number of people (about 450) who attend daily meals and who are provided a variety of services: listening to each person; framing his/her situation; identifying the aid required and / or requested. Such dialogues come to an intersection of many possibilities: health, food, clothing, identification documents, housing, employment, transit to another European country, etc.

From Rome, with the help of a geographical map, father La Manna showed us a territorial network across Italy that connects different services of the Society of Jesus or services of other collaborating church organizations. These range from Trento to Palermo, from Catania to Padua, Vicenza and Milan, etc.

At the end of the presentation, the testimony of a journalist (a political refugee from Cameroon) followed. A question arose spontaneously from a Filipino Sister, a question that all those present had in their heart too: "Father John, is there anything we can do?"

Father looked around; perhaps it was the question that was expected!

Calmly he told us that, for much of the aid needed (food, clothing, medicine, etc.), Divine Providence is at home in the Center Astalli. Elsewhere, Divine Providence meets great difficulties in finding collaborators willing to open the doors of their homes and provide lodging. With this, Father La Manna touched a crucial point and a sensitive nerve.

It is a crucial point because the refugees, even though they are accompanied legally and administratively, live in situations of extreme vulnerability. Such situations may frustrate their attempts to get back on their feet and build a life on their own. For this reason, the Centre Astalli-JRS Italy has taken the initiative to create a network of communities that can offer a refugee, man or woman, welcome (one room) for a fixed period of time according to the availability of space in the community. As for the other needs of any person helped, the Centre Astalli remains actively involved. Father touches a "sensitive nerve" by inviting us to reflect on the reality that in Rome there are many homes owned by religious institutions, with empty spaces full of silence. Why not make them again lighted places, echoing with voices, songs and love?

A deep silence falls in the heart of each one, some whisper, others look around to interpret from the faces a message of hope. All of us secretly conclude, "How nice it would be to be able to do so!" All of us recognize the urgent need to do something more, in addition to what is already done!

The heartfelt plea coming from millions of people stripped of their dignity is especially penetrating as it resonates within the Church today. This Church 'celebrates' 50 years of Vatican Council II and 20 years of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; it has proclaimed a "Year of the Faith" and has held a Synod on the "New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith."

We are all asked to do something more, but perhaps we have to begin to be something more: more consistent with our faith, deepening and living the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism, accompanied, as were the two disciples of Emmaus, by the risen Lord Who at the breaking of bread will reveal to us his face.

(Sr Giusy LSSC – *Original in Italian*)

ADVENT CAMPAIGN

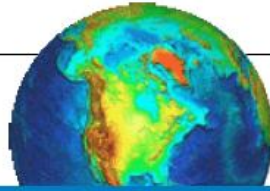
What kind of Christmas are we going to celebrate in the Year of Faith, 50 years after Vatican Council II?

There was no room for them in the Inn. (Lk 2:7)

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. (Gaudium et Spes, 1)

Here are some suggestions:

- Today, although our homes are often empty, our doors remain closed to Jesus present in the refugee and in the immigrant: there is no room for them! How beautiful it could be if we would **open our door!** For Christmas we can do something more to make our own *the joys and hope, the grief and anguish of the poor*.
- Buying **Fair Trade** products can help millions of people
 - * to feel respected in their dignity;
 - * to remain in their land and enjoy the simple and real joys of life;
 - * not to venture into foreign countries, out of despair.
- Let's say "NO" to **Christmas consumerism**, by
 - * offering presents which respect both human beings and creation;
 - * giving a donation to humanitarian associations.



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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Choosing Simplicity in a Context of Deep Time

Miriam Therese MacGillis, OP

Director/Founder of Genesis Farm

The first part of this article was published in July 2009. The primary source of these reflections are the writings of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme as they have articulated their insights on a new cosmology.

REFLECTION

From the perspective of deep time, we see our unity with everything that has come before us. We can see the significant patterns which have guided the natural world, from its humble beginnings in single cells, through its increasing *complexification* into the beautiful community of ecosystems, by which Earth continues the elaboration of life expressions as a single living being. All the relationships by which these patterns of life have developed are remembered in the exquisite strands of DNA wrapped within the vessel of every living cell in the totality of Earth's being. Earth is a single organism expressing life as a seamless garment of being of which humanity is a single strand.

We might then reflect on how the deep mystery of unity about which Jesus spoke and on which he fash-

ioned his life had its inspiration in the Universe itself. "Behold the lilies of the field..." is not just a beautiful reference to the outer world of Earth, but an attempt to bring the human heart into alignment with the fundamental physics, chemistry and biology of Earth's intrinsic unity with the past present and future.

When Jesus speaks of the "reign of God", and his interrelatedness to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, he speaks of a fundamental understanding of the Triune nature of the Divine and therefore reflected in what the Divine has created. He reveals one of the most profound discoveries of contemporary science: that the original pure energy of the Universe emerges into a greater complexity through the dynamics of differentiation, subjectivity and communion. The entire universe, especially amplified in Earth is the result of these dynamics at play throughout all time and space. They reveal the inner life of the Trinity.

And why has this immense journey of energy emerged in the miracle of life if not for life to contemplate itself in its total mystery, fall in love with its Source and participate in its ongoing mystery? The thrust for conscious life lived in freedom seems to have been inevitable from the

beginning. "I place before you life and death; choose life". This covenant with life is central to the depth of the western religious mind....

The evangelical life based on the deepest teachings of Jesus, have been lovingly contemplated and drawn from his insights on the beatitudes. We religious so valued these teachings that we publicly vowed to make them the core practices of our lives. We might consider that there are deeper meanings to poverty, chastity and obedience when considered through the lens of deep time, rooted in the basic chemical, biological principles by which all other species live in relationships which bond

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them and their activities to the greater good of the whole, the commons...

What would they mean and how would they be expressed in this context? Is our contemporary struggle with their meaning a result of too small a context for them to be the eschatological witness of what is possible, even in these dark days of planetary crisis?

ACTION

Our actions, as always, must be a personal commitment to our own transformation and to the transformation of our human culture. Human thought shapes the institutions and structures which reflect our presence and impact on the natural world. When we realize that our *primary identity* is to be Earth and Universe become self-consciously aware

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in, by and through our very person we awaken to a truth profoundly transformative. This truth can empower us to awaken from our own addiction to the industrial, consumerist economic way of life which so violates the sacred web of life. Here are some simple actions to consider.

Personal actions:

- Enter the informal economy. As much as possible refuse to buy new things. Give extended life to what is still useful; everything is

Earth in that form. It should not be condemned to a landfill where it is unable to re-enter the flow of life.

- Wherever possible support main street businesses and avoid box stores and chain outlets. Dollars spent on main street can remain in the community contributing to its human and natural well-being.
- Withdraw from the corporate industrial food system. Support local food and farmers' markets. Support Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA); form community gardens in your own neighborhood and grow some of your own. We must discern everything we put into our bodies and the bodies of our children and the children of other species.
- Look around our homes and convents. Simplify and de-clutter. Create an oasis which is spare and beautiful with spaces where the spirit finds rest... Resist the lure of "House Beautiful" marketing, which amplifies the disparity between rich and poor, and demands enormous use of Earth's materials.
- Resist the privatization of water. Demand that "tap" water be made safe and accessible to all. Filter it and drink it. Examine how often we bathe when we don't need to

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and launder our clothes when unnecessary.

- Conserve energy and commit to studying the sources, as well as possible alternatives to the energy coming into our homes.
- Resist unnecessary air travel. Commit to using and helping to

improve public transport, energy efficient cars and safe and easy conversion to bicycle travel. Initiate car-sharing plans for your neighborhood.

- Give retirement years to a greater cause. We have skills and resources that are needed now more than ever.

Collective actions:

- Bring our congregational institutions into alignment with these new understandings as we plan for our future. Commit to a more effective presence in our local and bioregional places.
- Fundamentally and radically rethink our relationships to the lands we hold in common. Collaborate with others in the public and private sector of the land conservancy movement and endow these lands to the future where they may become vital sanctuaries of life. Open the use of our lands to sustainable farming for our own institutions and local communities.
- When we renovate or construct new buildings, make them green and sustainable. Model innovative practices and teach others in the process. Utilize green cleaning supplies and reject disposability. Design with qualities that value what is spare, authentic, functional, natural and beautiful. Reject the superficial. Commit to salvaging and reusing all possible materials.
- Enter into civic and parish communities as we struggle to break our dependency on fossil fuel to a dependency on each other.
- Find spiritual practices that unite us in our diversity and draw us into deeper communion with each other, other faith traditions, and the natural world.