

9 Building Peace

through Sustainability and Environmental Justice

Check in

Grace: I ask for wisdom to understand the relation between environmental justice and peace

Hymn: Make me a Channel of your Peace

Scripture: Amos 5: 21 – 24

²¹ The Lord says, “I hate your religious festivals; I cannot stand them! ²² When you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; I will not accept the animals you have fattened to bring me as offerings. ²³ Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps. ²⁴ Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry.

²⁵ “People of Israel, I did not demand sacrifices and offerings during those forty years that I led you through the desert. ²⁶ But now, because you have worshiped images of Sakkuth, your king god, and of Kaiwan, your star god, you will have to carry those images ²⁷ when I take you into exile in a land beyond Damascus,” says the Lord, whose name is Almighty God.

Explanation:

It is absolutely urgent to promote a transition in our society towards living within the limits of the biosphere. The continued destruction of the ability of nature to sustain our lives and the economy is the primary source of social displacement, wars, scarcity and inequalities. Overconsumption on one side, deep scarcity on the other side – this current model of development cannot be sustained any longer. The path to peace lies in promoting a sound relationship with Mother Nature and in providing for the needs of all. More than anything we need to change our lifestyle. The rest would flow as consequences of this fundamental attitude. Human behaviour needs to be changed if we want to avoid strong ruptures that have already been initiated and can throw our society into great despair and suffering. However, we have to recognize that as yet there is no social and political demand for such a change in human behaviour. Herein lies our challenge – how do we bring about this demand for fundamental changes in our behaviour? The answers lie within us and comprise a wide set of ethical, spiritual, political and practical issues. But it will be impossible to initiate a process of transformation without understanding the sacredness of creation ... without solid ethical and spiritual fundamentals. Accelerating a transition for sustainability – and thereby for justice and peace – depends on a new human attitude centred on respect for creation and a concern for the common goods. That’s why discussing about sustainability, justice and peace demands a reflection under the light of our spirituality.

Without neglecting the real need for material goods, we must promote a concept of prosperity where human beings can flourish as human beings with a focus on health, quality of life, happiness and good relationships. This new concept of prosperity must include the regenerative capacity of the environment and the ecosystems, the role of biodiversity, the integrity of the atmosphere, the soil and the oceans. These resources are not infinite and if not properly treated will condemn the entire humanity to live in an impoverished planet. We need to act in the most collective and comprehensive way possible to create a strong demand in society for a this transition towards sustainability.

Prayer Exercise: Take some minutes to think about the social consequences of environmental disasters ... how communities and entire countries are suffering with prolonged droughts, floods, typhoons. Who are the ones who are the most affected? Take some minutes to think about the consequences of the erosion of soils and desertification... What are these people doing; where are they migrating to? Take some minutes to think about fishing in ocean and inland waters... How will these people survive; what will be their occupation? Think about the municipalities and metropolitan regions without a water supply... how can we organize a city without water? Talk to God about this.

Sharing

Final Prayer (from St. Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Ongoing practice: Am I ready to build a great future based on sustainability, peace and justice? The price is our personal commitment. I commit myself to finding out more about an issue of environmental justice in my neighbourhood.

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