

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts
of Jesus and Mary



October 2010

22

Com-Union



*Justice and peace
in our SS.CC. life*

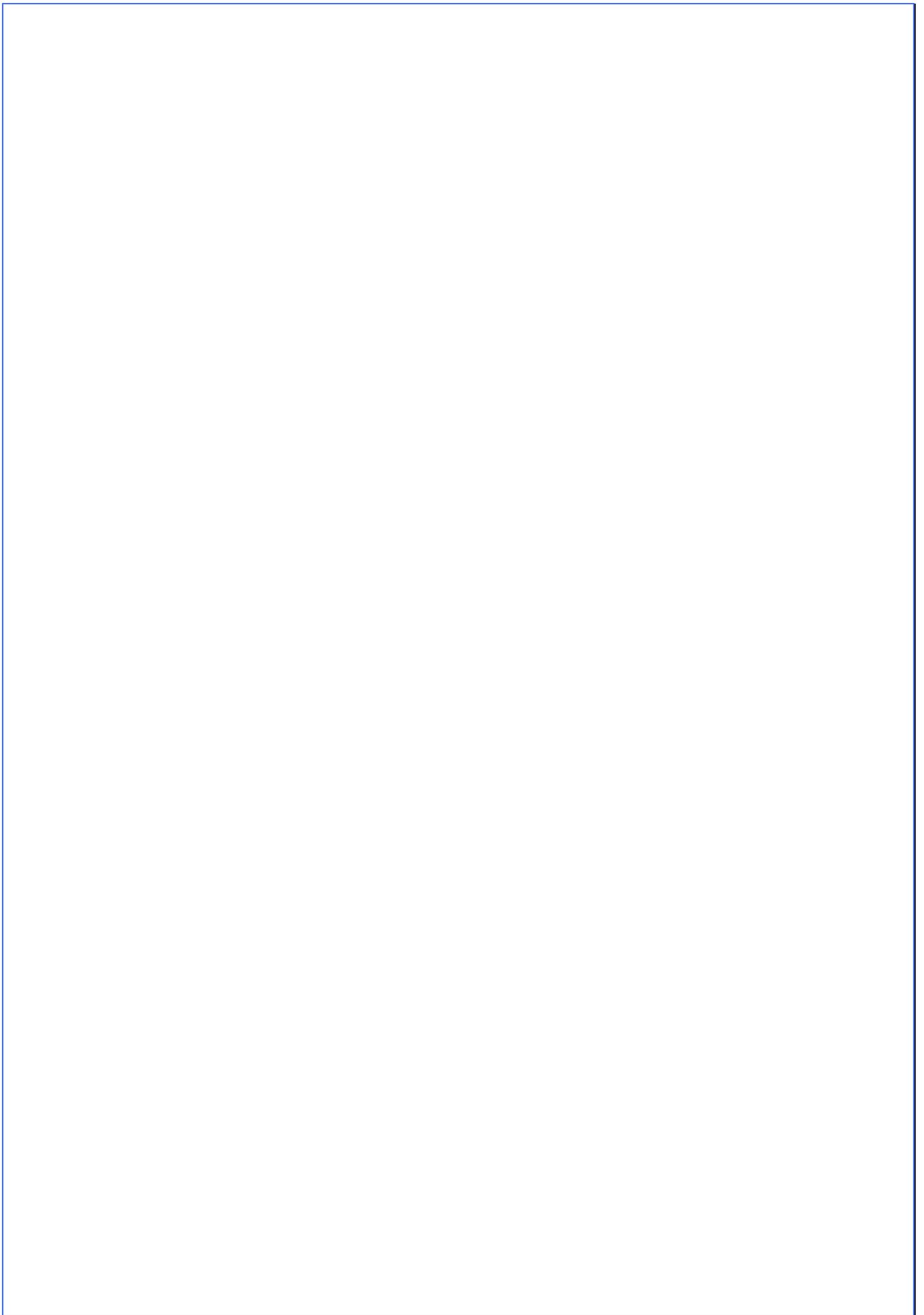
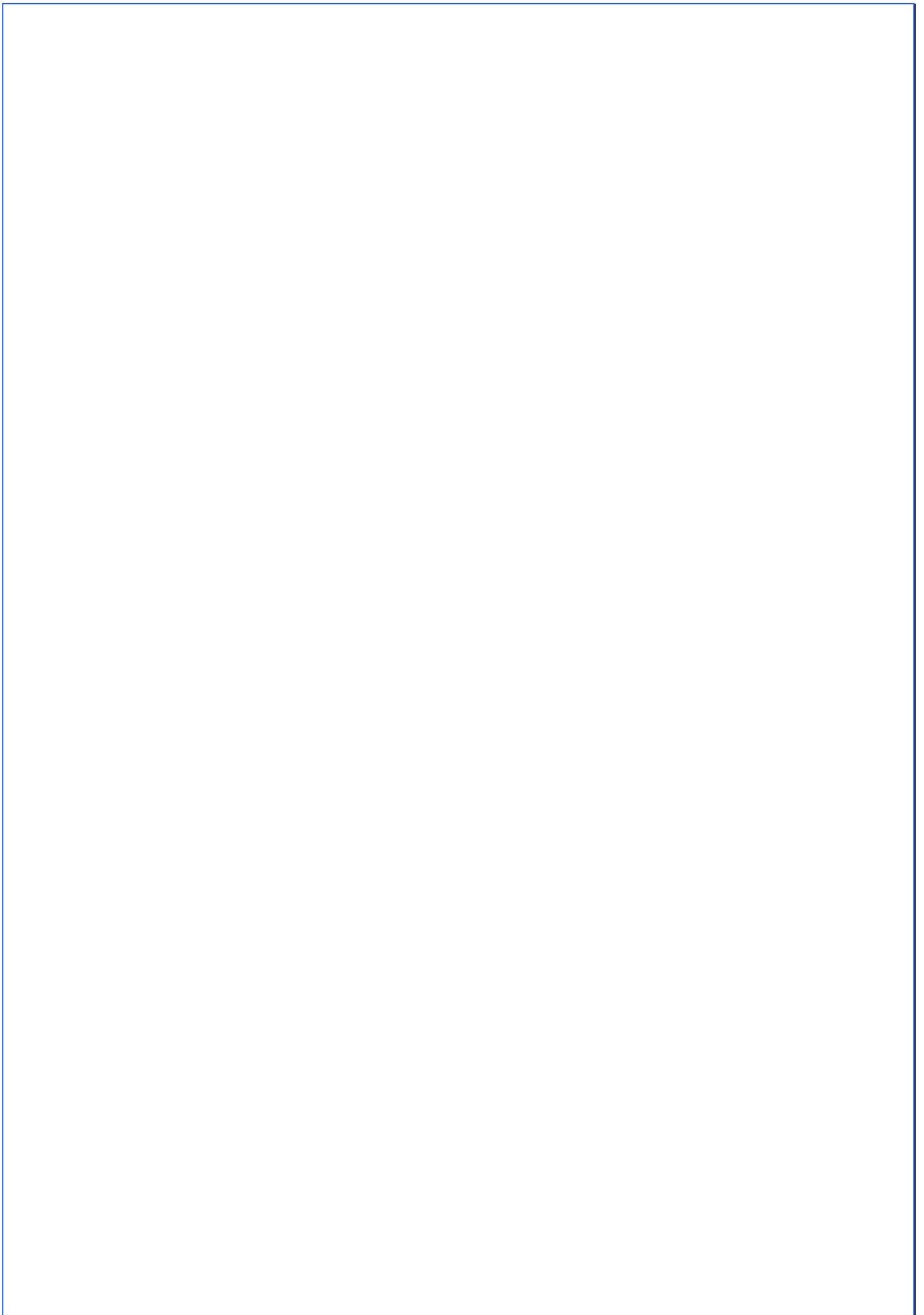


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Introduction:

Justice and Peace in our life as SS.CC.

October 2010

Dear Sisters and Brothers;

This issue of Com-Union presents a series of reflections, from various perspectives, on a very urgent need in our globalized world – justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

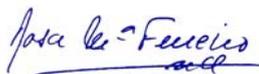
It's more than just a fad that we have heard about in different forums for several years now. For us, it is a mission that we received from the Lord because, in accepting his call to follow, we discover, at the heart of the Gospel, that the sign and presence of his Kingdom is securing justice, peace and the integrity of creation through every means possible.

Today we know that care for the earth cannot be separated from care for people because we depend on the earth in order to have what we need for our lives. Justice, peace and the integrity of creation form an integral whole that is profoundly affected by the values that govern our world today. If it is true that the solutions to the enormous problems which afflict so many countries, mainly in the south of the planet, depend on the governments and important international organisms created for that purpose, it is no less true that each one of us has a journey of conversion to make as people consecrated to God, whose desire is that humanity live.

As a Congregation we have educational, pastoral and other platforms, through which we can contribute to forming a common, shared awareness that fosters a committed sensitivity against war, the destruction of creation and the suffering of the least of the earth.

We invite communities to share ideas and to take initiatives in this direction.

Affectionately in the SS.CC.,



Rosa Mª Ferreiro ss.cc.
Superior General



Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.
Superior General



Our SS.CC. Commitment to Justice and Peace

Giving up the things we like?

Edouard Brion ss.cc.



When we are led to take a stand in the defense of the oppressed, it is almost always because we have come face to face with some situation among the people who are part of the communities with whom we work. This is connected to the well-known fact that the majority of us are involved in parish ministry. And so we, the sisters and brothers of Charleroi, regularly meet people in difficulty, without shelter, without work or begging on our street. It is natural for us to get involved in protest demonstrations when the city authorities want to make rules to forbid this type of activity, which is seen as detrimental to the image the city wants to project. Everything unfolds in a climate of camaraderie that fills everyone with enthusiasm including ourselves.

There are perhaps other kinds of actions for peace and justice which, while being no less necessary, are less attractive from an affective point of view. I am thinking of action in favor of the elimination of nuclear arms, starting in each of our own countries.

In Belgium, as in Germany, Great Britain and Italy, there are some twenty atomic bombs under American control at the Kleine Brogel army base in the province of Limburg. One of these warheads would be thirty times as powerful as the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. Fighting to rid Belgium of these nuclear bombs does not connect me directly to victims. There are only potential victims of such arms and yet, it is for them that I fight. Perhaps it is even against them, against their indifference and even their hostility. As for the victims of Hiroshima, I do not know them. They are an abstraction for me. I will not get any emotional satisfaction from committing myself to such action.

And yet, one does not have to think for long to know that it is a question with such serious possible consequences that a reaction is called for. The idea came to me, when reading the report of the Commission on Arms of Mass Destruction, published in 2006 under the direction of the Swede Hans Blix, President of the Commission on Arms of Mass Destruction. It is available in different languages: *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*. I was struck by the risk of accidents, which is much higher than they let us know. These could cause hundreds of thousands of deaths and wounded and have catastrophic consequences.

I quote, "In February 2009, two nuclear submarines with missile capabilities, one French *Le Triomphant*, and the other British, collided. The two had 32 missiles aboard, each with six nuclear warheads. On January 25, 1995 Russian radar detected the unexpected launch of a missile near Spitzberg, a five minute flight from Moscow...The command/control systems were put in combat mode. Fortunately, in less than five minutes, radar determined that the missile made impact outside the borders of Russia. It was a Norwegian missile that was part of a

scientific program of NASA. Norway had notified 35 countries of the launch, among them Russia, but the information had not been passed on to service personnel manning the early warning system. ...In the USA on August 30, 2007, a B 52 bomber was carrying missiles which were supposed to be unarmed. By error, it flew over the country during hours with six nuclear warheads, on board."

Isn't avoiding a catastrophe that would seriously affect thousands of human beings sufficient reason to do something? By way of illustration, just think of the accident that took place in April on the oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of barrels of oil were released into the ocean, causing harm to the environment and the work of fishers for years. If what was necessary had been done to alert public opinion to the dangers of deep water drilling, that tragedy could have been avoided. There would not have been any victims. You could even say that nothing would have happened, that there would have been no tangible effects...no one would have felt the least satisfaction in preventing such a thing. Isn't that one powerful reason for taking preventative action in other areas, such as nuclear power/weapons? Even if such actions, in and of themselves, give very little gratification?

We are aware of the distinction between short and long-term relationships, suggested by the Protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur. If most of the time we are preferentially involved with the first kind, due to our parish responsibilities, it does not exclude our occasionally lending a hand in the second type, when a call is sent out to us.

How can one experience Justice and Peace within the Sacred Hearts Religious Community?



Pilar Guerrero ss.cc.

Hello dear reader, as you read this article the subject that I wish to share with you will be developed in parts. First, I will refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and then I will mention each of the words that relate to the theme in short reflections that are inspired by some biblical texts and experiences that life has gifted me with in the 17 years I have spent in different communities within our SS.CC. family of sisters and brothers.

To begin, I think it necessary to note that SS.CC. communities are not islands within the larger human community on earth, but are embedded as small cells interconnected with each other and with the rest of the cosmos. The preamble to the Declaration of Human Rights says: **"Considering that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family."** It is almost sixty-two years since the promulgation of this declaration and, in practice it is evident that it is not recognized, given consideration or respected in different places. Not everyone is interested in reading it. In fact, several countries do not support this statement as they are only interested in continuing wars for economic, social and political interests. (Mk 42-45).

It is just and right to recognize that **"everyone has responsibilities with regard to the community, since it is only within it that the person's personality can be freely and fully developed."** (29.1). Responsibilities and rights are closely linked.

Starting with this text that introduces us so beautifully to the subject at hand, I think that it is essential to have a common language and understanding of the semantic meaning of the words within our communities, since the experience that we bring and continue to live or want to live in the community often differs from what we want to live as disciples and apostles of Jesus.

Now, I encourage you to do a little exercise: in 5 seconds answer for yourself: What is the first image or definition that comes to your mind when you hear **"Live"**, **"Peace"**, **"Community"** **"Sacred Hearts"**, **"Justice"**?..... Ready, you can also ask the people around you and check with them to see what they emphasize in their understanding of these gifts in everyday life.

Let us now consider the biblical meaning of these words.

LIFE, TO LIVE: God is the living God and God of the living (Dt 5.26; Jer 10:10; Ps 84.3) (Mt 22.32; Ex 3, 6.15-16). LIFE, in addition to being a biological reality is also a theological-religious reality, which aims directly at the relationship of friendship and closeness to God (Wis 4.1 to 9; Ps 16.10 to 11) that is to say, living in the continual presence of God.

Article 2. Const. Our mission: to contemplate, **LIVE** and announce to the world God's love, which was made flesh in Jesus. Mary has been associated in a singular way with the mystery of God made man and with his saving work.

"Live", how? As Jesus lived, it is the Christian utopia, and to live like Him, you have to spend time with Him, to know, love, follow and do what he says as he indicated to Mary (Jn 2:5, Lk 11.27 - 28). There is no other way. Life is a "miracle", a "gift" and learning to live is an "art" and the art is learned by doing, in our case living from the commandment of love (Mt 18, 15-20, 1 Jn 4.7 to 9, 2 Jn 4-6). No one can live life for me, and I cannot give the art of living life to anyone. For all of the beautiful experiences they tell me about, or the advice and guidance they give me, all that I hear, read, say and do is of no avail if I do not do it out of conviction, from the Gospel incarnate in my heart (Jn 7.37-38). I think if someone does not enter as a distinct piece, different by key to the same puzzle that is the community, they have made a mistake and should find the place where they can live according to their tastes and interests. Community life has its demands, why go looking for grapes in pine trees.

JUSTICE: according to the American Bible, in its popular edition, there are four main meanings:

- a) **Justice as an attribute of God** that can not remain indifferent to sin or virtue (Gn 18, 23-25, 2 Thessalonians 1.6 to 10).
- b) **Justice as moral virtue**, giving each his due, especially defending the cause of the impoverished, the oppressed, the innocent, the humble as do the prophets in the Old Testament (Am 5.7 - 12, Jr 22.13 to 15) and the NT (Lk 18: 2-8, Heb 11:33).
- c) **Justice as an integral virtue** that causes a person to act from kindness, fairness, honesty and faithfulness (Ps 1.3 - 6, Proverbs 10, 2-32; Mt 5, 6.10.20).
- d) **Justice as an action by which God saves us and sets us free** from any kind of evil. (Is 51, 5.8, 56.1, Rm 3.21 to 26, 10, 4-10, 2 Cor 3:9; Gal 2:21).

In our communities, when we speak of justice we need to know which parameters we use in managing and preparing our discourses. To do this we must measure the consistency of our life in an integral way, as Jesus did, and from there to work for growth and the "common good" where no one is left out. We must start with the simplest and smallest things within the house in order to have moral authority in the apostolate. Basic to this are: organization, fair and balanced teamwork, timely communication, experiential prayer, assertive reaction in facing the unexpected, discernment, periodic evaluations, rest, personal free time, co-responsibility, and celebrations. Now it is your turn and in your community you can look at what is needed to experience the sense of justice through the eyes of God.

PEACE: comes from the Hebrew word "Shalom" and it means to complete, to reconcile, to reward, to compensate. It implies a return to balance, to justice and full equality. "Shalom" is a blessing. The Bible refers to a variety of meanings:

- a) **Peace as one of the most precious gifts** given by God to human beings (Judges 6.24; Is 26.12; Ps 29.11, Ephesians 2.14 - 18). God promises an abundance of Peace like a river, like a fresh and overflowing torrent (Is 66.10 - 14).
- b) **Peace that passes first through conflict**, Jesus said, "Do not think I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace but the sword" (Mt 10, 34-11.1). The words of Jesus perturb, move, agitate, and no wonder. The sword is to eradicate vanity, to destroy selfishness, to combat prejudice, deceit, oppression, unhealthy guilt, and the accommodation of faith to one's interest or convenience, lies (Ps 34.13 - 15). Pride surrenders to its cutting edge, and its energy moves one

- c) **Peace and the integrity of human beings** in the physical, moral, spiritual aspect and in just relationships between people and between nations (Isaiah 54:13-14).
- d) **Peace from well-being and prosperity**, which is possible, when there is no threat of war, disease or famine (Jeremiah 33:6, 9).

Let us conclude this issue with the beatitude "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*" (Matt. 5:9, Luke 7:50, Luke 8, 21). What does this mean? To live as sons and daughters of God, by way of reconciliation, inclusion, respect and trust in people, freedom of opinion and expression, to have open rather than defensive dialogue, humility when faced with our ego of superiority or feeling of inferiority.

SACRED HEARTS COMMUNITY: Art 2 of the constitution says: "*Consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary is the foundation of our Institute.*" The root or our reason for being religious is the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary (Lk 2:35, Jn 15.13, 19.34;) the heart being a symbol of LOVE, and someone once said of this in discernment, two people who love to extremes, who, involving their whole being, know no limitations and barriers, who trust fully and respond to God with an act of self-abandonment to his will (Lk 1.38, Lk 23.45; Rm 5.8, Gal 2:19-20). Jesus in his Passion shows us that to be Jesus means to become weak, at least according to the criteria of this world, but no one likes to be weak, and even worse to appear so.

The Good Mother and the Good Father had the beautiful vision and intuition to repair or restore the world wounded by evil. Loving the love where it was unloved. We are not consecrated to the hands or feet or the head of Jesus and Mary, but to the **HEARTS**, which involves our **WHOLE BEING**. This should lead us to challenge and redefine our Being and doing as members of this religious family whose foundational charism continues to be relevant because it is centered in the heart of the gospel.

Now I will share the **challenges** that some sisters feel with regard to a new **community**:

- Where we are responsible for our life and actions, being co-responsible for what we have opted for within religious life.
- Where there is compassion, love and encouragement among all and for all members.
- Where there is love, tenderness and care for small details.
- Where the sisters and brothers who are present or absent in the Community are prayed for.
- Where they help each other without reproach.
- Where there is a grateful and generous attitude toward what is given and received.
- Where deeds, before they are judged, are examined and tested with the triple filter: truth, goodness and benefit both for the speaker as well as for the listener.
- Where the brothers and sisters are not compared to each other and they and exercise dialogue and show mutual interest.
- Where they still contemplate and admire the sky, the earth and all that they contain.
- Where there is confidence to ask and express their needs.
- A community that dialogues and listens and does not interpret things negatively.
- A community that lives the centrality of Christ.
- Where mistakes are recognized, forgiveness is asked for and they try to overcome errors.

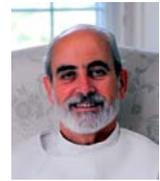
- Where there is more attention and affection for the sister or brother beside you or in front of you, than for the mobile phone, the TV or the Internet.
- Where we celebrate the Eucharist and participate in daily communion with the brothers and sisters in a conscious and responsible way, committing one's whole life.
- Where there is freedom to be oneself, with complete transparency.
- Where amongst everyone, one occasionally puts on music and cooks, cleans and with a sense of beauty puts each corner of the house in order.
- Where the work done by each member of the community is recognized, admired and appreciated.
- Where language, meaning and religious imagery is enjoyed.
- A community that vibrates welcomes and shares with joy when it receives visits.

We have the task of being brothers and sisters and communities that "build" and "care about" justice and Peace. Jesus sends his apostles, as messengers of the kingdom, carriers of peace (Lk 10, 1-12.17-20, Jn 20:17, Eph 4.1 - 3). Do we work for justice so that peace can be real?

Do we care for, value and encourage attitudes of peace? What do I need to change in my heart and in my life to bring more peace to my community and to our world?

Living From the Ethic of Enough

David P. Reid ss.cc.



As a child growing up in the days of rationing during and after World War II, I often heard the rhyme “*willful waste makes woeful want.*” Frugality (the ethic of enough) was the only way to stretch one’s meager money. Our parents knew of what they spoke for they had come of age in the time of the Great Depression which had both good and bad effects on how people handled their wealth. Distrust of the banking systems led some to waste their money by keeping it under their mattress. Others wasted any ambition for wealth in using excessive credit. Both these responses pale beside stories of waste when the post war generation came of age. Gadgets replaced gadgets in ever increasing rapidity. Garbage heaps could no longer be hidden or incinerated. On a larger political scale, the so called Cold War was used as justification for a great waste of resources on arms. Wars downsized the stockpiles of arms. Weapons were sold under the guise of foreign aid. At an earlier time, the so-called third world was praised for its recycling of rubbish. Today, however, we speak of the whole world as developing. Why? Problems with waste management plague us all, not only what to do with waste but how to avoid wasting so much.

The problem is addressed in Catholic social teaching. The embrace of environmental ecology is now assured. Indeed, the intuition behind the adoption of the language of human ecology by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI honors the flourishing of the human person as central to all development and all concerns about the use and abuse of the earth. Despite the fact that the church likes to say “as we always taught,” the shift to the environment in the church’s social teaching establishes a new paradigm. May it be sufficient to sum up the progress here by saying that the church now accepts in all its dimensions John’s “the word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14)?” Leanings towards an ecologically minded social teaching came in tandem with a rebirth of our appreciation of the Risen Lord the close proximity of his presence with us. The retrieval of an eschatology in favor of missionary “becoming flesh,” here and now is widely welcomed. The shift is one with a new turn in post modern thinking to the personal and subjective. Let not humans waste or perish. Let all flourish within their one and only home of creation!

In *Caritas in Veritate*, the dignity of the human person is the fulcrum for all ecological concern. A capitalistic economic system that claims maximum profit as its goal is made unwelcome or accepts the wasting of human beings –the necessity of an underclass- as the price of progress is excoriated. Thus Benedict XVI develops further the thinking of Paul V (“*the new name of peace is development*”). He magnifies the definition of common good given us by John XXIII. He summons us to a faith assessment of the innovation which inspires so much technical progress. We will serve the common good if we can freely apply the ethic of “*lo suficiente*” to the employment of technology. “We can” is not necessarily an ethical principle supporting a moral good. That “we can” do something, does not mean that we should. Many a discoverer was aware of this ambivalence as was the inventor of the atom bomb. Conversely,

how can we match “we can” with “we ought” for the good of all, not the advantage of the few at the peril of the many?

Some *ought* can be linked to a prophetic “yes,” an *ought* that makes a technological advantage available to all. For SSCC focused on seizing whatever helps to repair an estranged world, may such an *ought* be a prophetic *yes*: “we cannot not make this good service available to all.” There is an example -in response to the economic crisis- of a job creation program of the Indian government. The proposal is to put people to work in speeding up the goal of a flush toilet for all households in six to ten years. Workers will be introduced to advanced technologies. The proposal needs “watch dog” support from many sides because money in such projects can go astray. Are we focused enough on the essentials of the common good –a function of an ethic of *lo suficiente* - to give support in this matter of social justice?

A marriage of “we can” and “we ought” is likewise being sought for the elimination of slums, at least ten percent, in the UN Millennium Development goals for 2015. Two thirds of the world’s population will live in cities by 2050 and two thirds of those city dwellers will be in slums according to UN’s own definition of what is a slum. The definition of a rural slum may be somewhat alternated, but the goal of their elimination is also highly doable and ought to happen. The goal is not a municipal elimination of what is deemed a slum but to take the steps necessary to make slums acceptable places where inhabitants can flourish by providing sanitation, infrastructure, ownership etc.). Here what is sufficient is clearly defined for each situation by resident led associations. Utilizing the virtues of solidarity and subsidiarity, the *lo suficiente* ethic can overcome what the people see as waste.

Let us explore some biblical insights into this counter cultural spirituality of living an austere, frugal, mindful life style. The Matthean choice of words: “*sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*” invites reflection in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. The saying is commentary on the petitions of the Our Father. One commentator notes that (*New Bible Commentary* p. 913), the saying points to the provision of what is necessary, but not free from trouble. Living an ethic of what is sufficient is no romance. Paradoxically, however, there is immense self actualization in the dispossession involved in the daily handing over of oneself to the God who provides. “Daily” is a touchstone of biblical relevance, from daily bread to daily carrying the cross. The modern world offers two templates of provision of our daily needs. The poor who seldom have means to stock food must buy each day. The computerized world of commerce can now eliminate costly stockpiling of inventories with goods delivered to assembly lines “just in time.” Sufficient for the moment is its own challenge, for better, for worse. For people of faith, in the moment of need, there is deep trust that the road will rise to meet our every step! Think of Joseph in his care of Jesus and Mary. Recall Henriette Aymer Chevalerie in the founding of new communities and her search for a sufficiency to eat. Many of our brothers and sisters today, in both old and new places of the Congregation, are newly negotiating *lo suficiente* in both human and financial resources.

Such deep trust comes from the long habit of divestiture (*kenosis* Philippians 2:5-11), giving up and handing over, surrendering day by day our outposts of possession and power, privilege and position. Woe to our strategies of comfort and convenience! *Lo suficiente* has its own logic of connecting people, individual, and world events, the past, present and an inheritance (Luke 12). That connection comes from an asceticism which is truly prophetic. When Paul counsels, “have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,” (Phil 2:5) he is

speaking of the strategies of a heart to heart exchange with each other in Jesus Christ, Risen Lord (see 2:1). For instance, one such strategy is the practice of fasting (see Phil 4:10 ff.). This has its own inner logic of connecting with, in ever so gentle a way, the hungering for food of the many who do not have sufficient. Such emptiness leaves one open to receive, to be nurtured, and, indeed, to be raised up. In opting thus for our needs and not our wants, we have invited to the table of peacemaking the wolf and the lamb (Isaiah 11:6) stockholders and stakeholders, (*Caritas in Veritate* #40). We have humanized supply and demand and exorcized the demon of greed and excessive profit. We have withheld giving power to the Evil one (see Luke 4:6) and handed it over to the Lamb (see Revelation 5:12).

Our constant temptation is to hoard and make provision for the rainy day (Luke 12:16-21). That may sound reasonable but hoarding is dysfunctional. Only sharing –even what we need– helps us remain linked enough with people to function well among them. Given our own limited sustainability (“this night your life will be demanded of you”), there is, perhaps, more logic and good health in the adage of Alcoholic Anonymous “one day at a time.” In community life there is a good middle ground to allay individual fears of the cupboard being empty (see 1Kings 17:7ff.). Communal dialogue can often establish prudent boundaries and helps discern the motivation in trying to live more simply and frugally. It is always possible to be penny wise and pound foolish. Austerity can also be meanness. The communal discernment is taken from the mission protocol (Luke 10:1-12), in Jesus’ personally sending out the disciples. The vow of poverty makes it possible in our contact with people to place first and foremost the mission of God’s love made flesh in Jesus. We cannot expect people to respond to Jesus through us if they first experience our greed and coveting of their earthly goods. We have to remove the speck from our own eye first, before we can remove the blindness to reality in our brother’s and sister’s eye. This is a growing concern of the church in India; the very size and often the opulence of the residences for religious and priests are themselves disincentives to further inquiry. The poor turned away at the gate of a big house “because we have no money” rightly shake their heads in disbelief, and curse our hypocritical life style. A valuable sentiment, indeed a voice of conscience is found in the question: “how much of your resources are spent on yourselves?” In the same vein another troublesome question: Why, unless toting for another, would a brother or sister in vows, ever have to pay for overweight baggage?

Paul discusses *lo suficiente* in the context of his discussion of Christian sexual ethics. In 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31, he offers his hermeneutic, his “logic.” Verse 30 may be translated “*not over buying in the marketplace.*” We could write off Paul as being overly eschatological, too stuck to his so-called interim ethic until the Lord returns. But that would be impulsive. We share with him now a new awareness that “*time is running out*” (verse 29). The chastity to which he calls all Christian, married and virginal, is truly an exercise in *lo suficiente*. Chastity within a married relationship comes as a shock to some. Yet happily married couples speak to the deeply personal aspect of a chaste love as both safeguard against infidelity and an awareness of the varying personal needs of each other as they mature and age. The *lo suficiente* ethic demands a constant focus on the interpersonal relationship. Some, in support of a new human ecology, practice natural family planning and experience much joy. Parallels with virginal chastity are to be worked out in response to the Kingdom’s claims to sufficiency. The temptation to unchastity, as many married persons have acknowledged, is often stronger for the married than for the unmarried. Married and virgins strengthen each other’s calling, for as Paul would say “*each one has a particular gift from God, one of one kind, and one of another.*”

(7:7) In a word, Paul's complete discussion of gifts in First Corinthians is an exercise in the ethic of *lo suficiente*.

In the same context where Paul speaks of the sufficiency of a basket for his escape (2 Cor 11:33), he praises the sufficiency of God's grace when he is under fire (12:9). The *lo suficiente* standard is tested at the bar of the gifts of the Spirit among which generosity figures prominently (Galatians 5:22-23). If gratuitousness oils the interdependence of state and market and other interests in the vision of Benedict XVI, the same gratuitousness grows within us in the exercise of *lo suficiente*. We acknowledge that there is nothing we have not received (1 Cor 4:7). We will give as generously as we received (Matthew 10:8). A backward glance over our lives will tell us that the Risen Lord was present to us in every desert place (Mark 6:32)... and so we live as if we have already died. We have died (Romans 6:1 ff.... and come to believe his Risen Life (John 11:25-27/Colossians 3:1).

Living from the Ethic of what is Sufficient.

Ecology and Austerity of Life

María Ester Dávila ss.cc.



I cannot begin to deal with this subject if it is not from the perspective of liberation theology, a theology that has accompanied my own personal journey of conversion. From its "option for the poor" it has the ability to hear the cries of the oppressed and the cry of the earth. Another source of inspiration is Leonardo Boff, a current environmental activist and prophet of our time. He is a key figure in Latin America, and has been touring the world raising awareness about the urgency of this matter, stating that *"The Earth is the great poor one that must be freed along with its condemned sons and daughters."*¹

This article is based on one of the mottos of our congregation ***"To contemplate, to live and to proclaim God's love to a world torn by violence and division."*** The invitation, is firstly ***"to contemplate"*** what the world is experiencing in order to find out what were or are the causes of its current state. Then to be able to enter into a self-assessment of our contribution as consecrated SS.CC. and ask ourselves: What are we doing? How are we living? This is the ***"to live."*** And finally in the ***"proclaiming"*** to see that the challenge is to truly assume the prophetic dynamism so characteristic of religious life.

To Contemplate

In the name of progress, the worst atrocities in humanity have been justified, in the name of progress, men and women have been exploited without measure to leaving them in miserable conditions, in the name of progress the earth has been destroyed. In the modern era a reductionist concept of development existed based only on the economic growth of a person or a country. With time, the church began to be aware that this reductionism was dangerous because it was the cause of many social inequalities, and called for a reflection on development through an all encompassing dynamic, that is to say a development understood by each person and for all humankind (John XXIII and Paul VI), together with an expansion and evolution of the concept in the field of social responsibility.

But today we know that the promise offered by modernity has failed and we are left with the consequences. And, we have become aware that everything has its limits and that the proposal of an infinite development *"is impossible on a finite planet with limited resources."*²

There are specific cries: that *"of the Poor"* who have suffered directly the worst effects of a system based on the "abundance" of a few, since no abundance sustains itself if it does not

¹ Leonardo Boff, interview 31/08/2008; Author: Claudio Martyniuk, Clarín.

² Ibid.

have as its base the dynamic of injustice. Truly no one can have abundance if they are not taking from others what is their share. And, that of *the "Earth"* which has had to bear the consequences of a bad, if not abysmal, biblical interpretation that justified its subjugation, domination and literally its violation.

I believe that today the proposal is to understand development as that which respects each person, all people, and "**ALL CREATION.**" We must be aware that the main cause of all environmental disaster is the same one that causes the great inequalities and dehumanization of the oppressed and displaced. The production and wasteful consumption (without limit) of the richest countries inevitably generates poverty but also the destruction of the earth, clearly proposing itself as system of dehumanization that is valid and justified even by some more conservative church sectors.

Living: "From the ethic of what is sufficient" Ex 16, 16-19

"Now, this is what the LORD has commanded. So gather it that everyone has enough to eat, an omer for each person... he who had gathered a large amount did not have too much and he who had gathered a small amount did not have too little. They so gathered that everyone had enough to eat. Moses also told them, "Let no one keep any of it over until tomorrow morning." But they would not listen to him. When some kept a part of it over until the following morning, it became wormy and rotten... "

The text of Exodus shows us clearly that what is sufficient is what it takes to build an uncorrupted and selfless community life. The instruction is to collect what each group needs, if this is not adhered to the product becomes full of worms and smells really bad. This same dynamic is repeated inside us when we want more than we need.

The dynamic described above leads us to understand that what leads to the destruction of man, woman and the land is the idea of wasteful consumption that the large scales of production have generated. This same system generates more poverty and the destruction of nature.

Now what we are doing as consecrated SS.CC.? How are we living our consecration when faced with what we are seeing? The path of austerity is key; we have to commit ourselves to an austerity of life, learning to live from the ethic of what is sufficient. There is no other way. Leonardo Boff himself declared it in the following way: *"Consumption must be measured; it must reach a fair measure. We can live well with less. It is important to embody intangible values that give meaning to life and coexistence, such as mutual care and compassion with those who suffer, cooperation so that all have what they need."*³

A just and true conversion is needed to be able to live this, we must be converted internally in order to build something different, there is no salvation without conversion, without conversion we are going to die. *"We must move from a society of producing material products to another kind of society of sustenance for all life, and the production of human values that can be shared by all, because the earth belongs to everyone."*⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid

To Proclaim

After having made the foregoing journey, we have to be aware that we are called to make radical choices. We have to go out of our way and feel uncomfortable, be mixed up, uninstall ourselves, and lower our living standards. If we want to be a credible witness before the world and ourselves we can not expect to continue along the same lines we have traveled so far.

But how do we act? A fundamental key is to assume the prophetic dynamic that is characteristic of religious life. That is, we must be able to "denounce" all those dynamics that generate the death of so many brothers, sisters and obviously the earth. We cannot remain indifferent. To do this we must be constantly informed of the day-to-day happenings and these do not appear on the news. And finally, "to Proclaim" that other dynamics are possible and that the proposal of God's generates a real socio-political transformation in the world, a transformation that has as its only object the life of man and woman, and although it sounds paradoxical, a life in "Abundance."

In other words, we have the great challenge of getting adequate formation in order to begin taking on universal responsibilities and a generational solidarity. Without good formation we will only be moving out of "goodwill" but that is not enough, indeed, I dare to say that it won't do.

To proclaim that the same God continues to manifest himself in this world; that he continues to create day by day; and what he passionately loves is a challenge, but one we have to take up. Everyone and **everything** is destined to reach fullness at the end of time, but for now, we have to bet on dynamics that generate and sustain this life.

There is no other way, *"We must move from a society of producing material products to another kind of society, that of sustaining all life and the production of human values that can be shared by all, because the earth belongs to everyone."*⁵

⁵ Ibid.

Justice and Peace of Heart



Sergio Silva G. ss.cc.

The last two beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew speak of “*peacemakers*” whom Jesus promises will be called children of God and those “*who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness*” of whom Jesus says, “*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Mt. 5:9-10) It is not difficult to understand the close relationship that exists between these two beatitudes. To the one who is his child, God gives his reign. In other words, He reigns in his favor, for his benefit.

To be a child of God is a reality rooted in the heart of the person, in one's deepest center, because God wants to give himself to human beings in that innermost place and it is from that place of intimacy that He wants the human person to give of himself. Only from the depth of the heart can that filial relationship, that God wants to have with each one of us, be established.

In our Congregation that filial relationship with God is expressed in different ways. One of them, considered central by our Founders, is Eucharistic adoration. According to Romano Guardini, a great theologian of the twentieth century, to adore is to place ourselves before God in all our truth and to acknowledge God in all his truth. Said in another way, to adore is to *adjust ourselves* to what we really are and to what God really is. It is to place ourselves in a *just* relationship with him. It is inevitably an asymmetric relationship, in which God always takes the initiative and the more decisive role.

From this basic *justice* springs peace of heart. This inner peace is related to exterior peace and both condition one another. Exterior peace refers to the structures of social life, peace in relationships among us human beings and with nature.

Justice in our relationship with God has many aspects. I am going to look at three of them: God has created us, He has made us his children and He has reconciled us with himself. In these three aspects the Son has the role of mediator or intermediary.

1. The relationship of creation

For biblical faith, God is the Creator of all that exists. The first line of the Hebrew Bible says, “*In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth...*” (Gen. 1:1) “*The heavens and the earth*”, in other words the totality of all that exists, expressed in a Semitic way, by the two visible extremes of the universe: above, the sky, below, the earth. The book of Genesis goes on to speak of the way God created, by his word. “*God spoke and it was made.*”

The Gospel of John takes up these first words of Genesis and the idea of creation by the word, but now it is the word with a capital W. The Word is subject. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.*” (Jn. 1:1-3) The high point of this Christian newness is “*And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among*

us...” (Jn. 1:14). The Word incarnate is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God who has taken upon himself a concrete human nature.

If God realized his creative act through his Word, that means that creatures, by the very fact of existing, have a dialogical character. In some sense, they are a word of God addressed first to themselves and, through them, also to the rest of the creatures. The human being is the creature capable of the word. As such, the dialogical Word, which God sends forth in his creative act, is addressed to him as the creature most capable of receiving the Word.

We can conclude that as human beings we are part of the totality of what exists, which God has created through his Word-Son. Therefore we commit injustice when we do not recognize ourselves as creatures, when we act as if we were the autonomous creators of ourselves. However we also commit injustice when we do not recognize the dialogical character of the relationship of creation, when we act as if God is no longer speaking his Word of love to us by the mere fact that we find ourselves placed in existence. On the contrary, when we *adjust* ourselves to being creatures, given existence by the Word-Son of Love who is God, we are at peace.

2. The son/daughter relationship (filiation)

The Old Testament suggests that, more than just creating us, God wanted to make us his children. But one suspects that this applies only to the people as a whole (Hos. 11:1, Jer. 3:19) or to the case of a very special individual, the King, who, in his person, represents the people in its totality (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7).

By contrast, in the New Testament, there bursts in with Jesus the universal call, addressed to each individual person, to be sons and daughters of God by adoption. Once again, Jesus plays the role of mediator in this son/daughter relationship. He is the Son of God by nature. In him human beings can be so by adoption (Gal. 4:4-5). For that reason, Jesus appears in the New Testament as *“the firstborn among many brothers”* (Rom. 8:29). The work of the Spirit of the Risen One will be precisely to etch the features of Jesus the Son upon the heart of each believer (Rom. 8:14).

And so, we commit injustice when we do not recognize ourselves as children of God, brothers/sisters of the only Son by nature, the firstborn Jesus. We commit injustice when we act as if we were our own father or when we try to kill the Father or when, like the “prodigal son” in the parable, we try to return to God but as hired hands and not as sons. When, on the contrary, we *adjust* ourselves to being “sons in the Son,” we find peace.

3. The relationship of reconciliation

In all of Holy Scripture there is the awareness that the human being is a sinner, *“a sinner, even as my mother conceived me,”* laments the Psalmist (Ps. 51:7). Paul emphasizes that *“all sinned”* (Rom. 5:12). Sin is serious because it is not merely the infraction of a law, even if the law was given by God. The intolerable weight of sin is that it creates a separation between us and God. It is also clear in Scripture that overcoming sin and being reconciled with God cannot be the work of the human being but only God. It is true that in the Old Testament there are expiatory rites. However as the letter to the Hebrews will say, they are mere shadows, because *“it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins.”* (Heb. 10:4) By saying that, the author of the letter is doing nothing more than repeating what the prophets of Israel had

already discovered concerning the futility of expiatory sacrifices (Jer. 2:22, Ps. 51:18) and of the hope in a future action of God. God will purify the heart or, as Ezekiel forcefully says, he will remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:25-27). This purifying action of God is what the Psalmist asks for, “*Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure; wash me, make me whiter than snow.*” (Ps. 51:9)

According to the New Testament, this reconciling action has been accomplished by God himself, through the blood of the cross of his Son. As Paul says, “*we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.*” (Rom. 5:10) Because of that he issues his striking call, “*So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*” (2 Cor. 5:20)

For that reason, we commit injustice when we do not allow God to reconcile us to himself by the cross of his Son, when we seek to reconcile ourselves with God and make ourselves acceptable to him through our works and sacrifices. If, on the contrary, we *adjust ourselves* to the reconciliation already accomplished in Christ and freely offered to each person at each moment of history, we enter into peace.

4. The unfinished character of justice and peace

Paul intensely experienced the agonizing and conflictive character of Christian existence. The source of that is our interior struggle between the “old man” and the “new man”, who the Spirit of the Risen One wants to form in us, with our collaboration. The *imbalance* in our relationship with God is the work of our “old man”. While we live in this life, that “old man” will continue to be active in us. Peace, which is the fruit of justice or the *just* relationship with God, never comes to fullness. Peace is not the rest that God invites us to enjoy, but rather the peace that struggles for justice. However, in the small or large victories that the Spirit allows us to have, we enjoy an anticipation of the final rest, which encourages us to continue the struggle. And this struggle, in addition to being interior and being supported by the means of grace, must take flesh in structures – in our personal and communal lives and in our pastoral work. These will help us to keep our “old man” under control.

The Greatest Challenge of Humanity of the Twenty-First Century: Taking Care of Creation

Zenobia Gamarra Araujo ss.cc.



"Our Sister, Mother Earth, is our common home and the place of God's covenant with human beings and all creation" (DA. 125).¹

We live in a globalized world whose main characteristic is change. Not only are we part of a changing era *"whose deepest level is the cultural"* (DA 44) but we are part of an era of accelerating change affecting human life and creation. Encouraged by the idols of power, wealth and the ephemeral pleasure today's culture ends up being a culture without God against human beings and creation. One example is the subordination of nature conservation to economic development, with damage to biodiversity, the depletion of water and other natural resources, air pollution and climate change.

We are part of a culture that does not favor human ethics or environmental ethics. So it is not able to interpret and react on the basis of objective values that are beyond the market and are among the most important of human life: truth, justice, love, dignity and rights of all. Conscious or unconsciously this reality makes the tendency of the human being one of expecting others to take initiatives and make commitments for the care of creation. So thinking of expressions for the care of creation in terms of justice and under the definition of living space leads me to ask: To what extent are we aware that the creation is our home and we have life because of it? With what criteria do we relate to the environment? What is our ethical attitude toward creation? How we are promoting environmental justice?

The Bible begins with these words full of power: *"In the beginning God created heaven and earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Which, in biblical language, means: everything has its origin in God. It is God who initiates everything that exists. In its metaphorical language, the Bible tells us that all creation is referred to God and that there is a fundamental and healthy difference between God and the world, between God and his creatures. It invites us to realize that life - both ours and the life that is present in all creation, - is given to us as a gift and not as something that belongs to us. We called to live in solidarity with all creation. In the book of Genesis there are two creation stories that were written at different times. In both stories the metaphorical language is used to describe the mystery of creation. The first account (Genesis 1, 1-30), expresses in Genesis 1.2: *"The earth was chaos and darkness covered the abyss ..."* The biblical scholars tell us that the author of the text is not trying to describe the situation of the Earth; but rather trying to express what the situation was like before the creation. In the metaphorical language

¹ **DA** (Document of Aparecida): Document of the V Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops. May 31, 2007, Aparecida-Brazil.

of the Bible, chaos is associated with darkness and death. An atmosphere of chaos is an environment hostile to life. But life, in its various forms, requires order so that it can generate and support itself. At the root of the severe ecological crisis that we are experiencing is the fact that we, human beings, often do not respect the wisely built order of nature.

The Priestly narrative describes the creative action of God as overcoming chaos and transforming it into cosmos, into a harmonious world order where life is possible. God creates the Earth so that it is a place where life in its many forms can generate and spread. In the first story, the author repeats at the end of each day of creation: "*And God saw how **good** it was.*" It states that all creation is beautiful and good. So it has the ability to generate and sustain life.

In Genesis 1.26-27, the Priestly account stresses that man and woman are created in God's image. In human beings - male and female - God wants to demonstrate that he is the one who has created all through love and wisdom, and who wants to continue his creative action through people. This bestows a great dignity on us men and women and at the same time a great responsibility. We are not owners of creation, it is not up to our free will to do with it whatever we like and want. Rather, in a metaphorical language, the biblical account tells us that, as representatives of God the Creator on Earth, we are called to try to manage the creation with responsibility before God and other creatures.

The biblical story encourages us to learn to live with other creatures, sharing a common living space with everyone. Man and woman, we are called to relate with the creation and treat it in the same way as a gardener, who tries to do everything in his power to make life flourish in its different forms and takes precautions against any possible damages.

The scientific and technological advances have certainly been ways that have accentuated the exploitative relationship between human beings and nature. Seduced by greed and the desire for power and domination, the human being carries out many violent practices with respect to life, which are therefore anti-ecological, leading the life of our planet to collapse. In this framework, for several decades the United Nations has been working hard to achieve international agreements and policies that help preserve the environment and to halt its deterioration.

Among these activities, in 1972 we have the creation of the [United Nations Environment Program \(UNEP\)](#), whose mission is "to lead and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and giving nations and peoples the means to improve the quality of life without compromising those of future generations." In 1992 the United Nations held the "[Earth Summit](#)" where it adopted the "Agenda 21", an action plan that explains the steps to achieve sustainable development. More than 1,800 cities around the world have their own local Agenda 21, based on what was adopted at the Earth Summit. The main achievement of the conference was the agreement on the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), which later led to the [Kyoto Protocol](#) on climate change. [The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#) and the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) were also signed. In 2007 the [High Level Event on Climate Change](#) was held with the objective of stimulating political will with a view to the [Bali Conference](#), held in December of the same year, the first step taken by the international community to reach a comprehensive agreement on climate change by 2009. In 2008 the [Poznań Conference](#) was held in Poland and in December 2009 the

[Copenhagen Conference](#) took place. As a result the latter produced the [Copenhagen Agreement](#).

These international agreements and all the awareness programs on environmental care adopted in each country are insufficient to repair the damage caused because of the lack of a real commitment to the planet. One example of this is the mining that pollutes rivers and habitats of indigenous people and peasants; causing chronic diseases and, in the worst cases, the death of children and elders. Ironically, both the largest attack on creation and solutions to reverse this situation occur in the same countries, called first world. We often have messages for preventing the increase of global warming when it is they who are consuming the most energy. So we can make a long list of the inconsistencies in the international agreements. However, we must appreciate the effort, struggle, and dedication of small civil organizations, educational institutions, and religious institutions among others, to the care of creation through clean-up projects, recycling, tree planting, use of solar energy, water treatment, etc. that somehow contribute to the relationship of communion with the environment.

Under the slogan: "*Many Species. One Planet. One Future.* ", this year celebrates the extraordinary diversity of life on Earth as part of the International Year of Biodiversity. Thousands of institutional activities are planned around the world, and those held in millions of educational centers are countless. But the protection of Biodiversity and Cultural Diversity is unthinkable if measures are not taken immediately to prevent the rapid degradation of ecosystems.

Worldwide, there are obvious and numerous signs that the ecological crisis is worsening. One of the biggest global concerns is the greenhouse effect caused by increased carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere. This reduces the radiation of heat into space, and it becomes trapped as in a greenhouse, increasingly producing global warming. This phenomenon has started to generate strong climatic changes: droughts, storms, floods ... Another major concern is the increasing depletion of the ozone layer, caused by high levels of air pollution, particularly CFCs, which means less protection against ultraviolet rays. The multiple effects of this decreased protection are harmful and pose a serious risk to our health. The "*Earth Charter*, a United Nations document, says, regarding the current situation: "*The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources and a massive extinction of species.*" We have reached a critical moment in history, as the survival of our planet is at risk. This situation deeply challenges us as Christians in our ethical responsibility for creation.

We need to recover this attitude of respect and this relationship of communion with nature that is so different from a violent relationship, marked by utilitarianism and the unbridled exploitation of the resources of Earth. This requires us to change the way we perceive ourselves and our place in creation, which is overcoming our anthropocentrism. It forbids us to continue asserting our authority at expense of other creatures and requires us to respect the two fundamental ecological principles: *interdependence and ecological sustainability*.

It requires us to continually ask ourselves whether or not our use of the earth's resources and the way we treat the environment are ecologically sustainable. Practices such as uncontrolled deforestation, unlimited use of very limited and/or non-renewable natural resources such as water and oil, and uncontrolled air pollution are ecologically unsustainable.

Furthermore, in putting the survival of humanity and nature at risk they are ethically unacceptable. The delicate ecological balance in our land requires our serious and continual commitment to protect it and the renunciation of personal and collective practices that are harmful to the environment. Our faith compels us to take on the care of creation and the promotion of environmental justice as a personal and communal responsibility. This implies a willingness to continually review our way of life, to see if it is ecologically sustainable or not, and continue to educate our selves in ecological responsibility. Social justice and ecological justice must go together. In our countries it is often the poorest sectors of the population who suffer most from a polluted environment. At this critical moment in the history of the Earth, let us accept the universal call expressed in the *Earth Charter*. "*Let ours be a time remembered for **the awakening of a new reverence for life**, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability...*"

The care of creation is recommended because of its vital potential and its theological significance as Christ himself shows us (cf. DA 470). This is why Aparecida takes sides and recommends some proposals and guidelines (cf. DA 474). We are invited, therefore, to "... *promote a human ecology open to transcendence that, respecting person family, environments and cities, follows the Pauline indication to recapitulate all things in Christ and to praise the Father with Him (cf. 1 Cor 3, 21-23) so our common home continues to be as **a place of communion and communication ...** "* (DA 128).

What is our Commitment to Climate Change?

Stan Kolasa ss.cc.



“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal...Most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very [90%] likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations.” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. February, 2007)

“The scientists’ words are measured, but clear. We are changing the climate. The potential result is a poorer, less secure world for our children. How poor and how insecure depends on what we do in the next few decades.” (Understanding Climate Change, LTD, 2010)

...but so many do not even see their participation in the global picture or their responsibility within it.

Since Adam’s denial of responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit and Eve’s abdication of fault in favor of the serpent, people have tended to see many things as the fault of others and little or none of their own. This is true especially in relation to the environment which is so big and to the atmosphere so close yet so far beyond us. How can I have any effect on this greatness let alone have any power to make a difference?

As each of us is a part of a much greater whole, we, together make a great difference, and even as individuals, when we dare to do our part, change the whole... for better or for worse, we do change the world, literally.

The climate between individuals, groups of individual, nations and countries throughout the world makes it hotter by so much struggle and usage especially for consumption and power seeking and wars. The fossil fuels burned, consumed and thrust into the air pollute the whole of the earth and its embrace by the cosmos. Yet, so many want not to see that each has a responsibility to change the face, or better, the breath of the earth. When we change our interpersonal, inter-group, intercommunity climates, we can, and do affect the overall climate. Too small to matter? No. Not if we truly see ourselves as the human family working together to make a difference in a more positive way.

When, especially because of our Congregational attitude of contemplation, we see, learn, share and develop our sense of our very significant contribution to society through ALL the things we do, even the smallest, we make a difference.

When we live so consciously our interdependence not only with one another as Congregation, but with all the sisters and brother and the whole of creation we make a difference within ourselves and in our impact on our environment and it leads us to the proclamation of our belief that no one is too “anything” not to make a difference.

And, when we are so consciously living what we contemplate, it is a proclamation to the world of our genuine desire to change the face of the earth.

In one small part of the Globe, not simply in “our province”, we have a hundred and ten acres of beautiful, pristine land, both forest and water and wildlife in abundance. Endangered species and ancient remnants of Native Americans who lived and loved this part of the earth before we purchased it at almost the price of a song nearly seventy years ago still find a home in this environment. Here we also preach the Word of God as a Congregation, a word of unconditional love of a God who continually gives us a heart on Fire; we decided to do what we Can do, because we Can do it. We have placed almost a hundred of these acres under environmental restriction so that they will NEVER be built upon. We have made a place of sanctuary for souls seeking rest and light and life in the Spirit, into a place of sanctuary for the world as well. Neighbors have joined us BECAUSE WE DID OUR LITTLE share and now we have three hundred contiguous acres of land to be saved for the saving of the world. On the places where we now have buildings which need restoration and expansion, we have a plan to make them not only practical for our ministry as a retreat facility, but a ministry to the earth. With environmentally friendly structures and infrastructures, with a proposed roof garden to add to the atmosphere, with geo-thermal and solar energy, we are proclaiming our desire to make a change in our climate by the ways we live and minister. Even the ways we treat our trash, using only environmentally friendly products, we change the cycle of simply mindlessly using the earth, by recycling all the products we use, and by composting all that we can to return them to the earth for its growth and not simply for our use without reference from whence they came.

These things may seem so insignificant in the face of global warming, but we truly believe that they, even in small ways, may be the invitation for others to do the same and together we can change the face of the earth...and adding to the breath of life.

Peace and Care of Creation:

What is our Commitment to Climate Change?



Claudia Margarita Orozco, ss.cc.

Much has been said about global warming, the extinction of species, deforestation, the decline of forest reserves ... and we have clear information about how to take care of water, nature, and prevent erosion. But welcoming these proposals for the change and transformation of our habits and lifestyles so that they effectively contribute to the care of creation has also cost much.

If we go back to our origins, to the origin of life, we find an impressive harmony, with a unique balance that has been given to us by the Creator. It is already given, we can call it "the law of nature" that flows on its own and has its own rhythm. However, we wanted to "improve" the lives of our society and in this task we have been intervening in this cycle of nature itself. We have disrupted its rhythm to renew and improve our environment.

Yes, we have benefited greatly from nature by using technology in various aspects of our lives, but we wanted to go beyond the margins and life itself seeking perhaps to appropriate it for ourselves. In this arduous, selfish process, we continue destroying, breaking the chains that balance not only human existence, but also that of animals and plants. We broke the respectful and affectionate contact with our mother earth to explore and, incidentally, exploit it to the depths of its bowels, taking advantage of all its wealth. We have ravaged it mercilessly, thinking of "improving" the quality of life and even our own economic benefit. Monopolizing life has been our major challenge, but also our great frustration, no matter how much we seek formulas and do thousands of experiments, we only discover that life is the great mystery of God, he is its author, he is Life.

We cannot think of ourselves as outside this reality, every drop of water that we throw away is a great loss, a few of us have the good fortune to have plenty of clean water at hand, but that is not true in all corners of the earth, and we are all aware of it. It is worthwhile to ask ourselves now: Why have I not taken sufficient steps to promote plant, animal and human life itself? It is not others who must promote and generate large ecological movements, that thanks to their environmental awareness are already acting, but it is you and I who must protect it. Each day that we do not do our part for it, we are losing a great opportunity. We believe that we are alone, individuals and so we think that what we do does not affect others, but we are a community with all that exists around us. We are part of the Earth, it could it exist without us, and we think that we are its caregivers.

Some say that "*our DNA is the same DNA as that of the tree*", the tree breathes what we exhale and we need what the tree exhales: we have a common destiny with the tree. This, and many other examples, must awaken in us a deep desire and a genuine commitment to

preserve the resources that we still have, starting with our surroundings, personally caring for ourselves as a part of this huge ecological network that balances and to which we belong. Today we recognize that "*every species has its place, none are unnecessary, all balance each other.*" Yet speaking of balance often causes bitterness, we grow up in an environment where the law of the strongest prevails, the law of the most daring, and we are convinced that by crushing the weak we will be big winners. We throw away the small and fragile, without remembering that the beginning of our lives occurred in these conditions. Today society attracts us in a genteel way and surrounds us with needs that sometimes are not ours. But since most people adopt them, we also enter in and swell the ranks of consumers. Faced with these offers frequently, without a critical sense, we allow ourselves to be guided by the economy and not by common sense.

Questioning the values of this society is a task that can not be set aside or delegated to others, each one of us is responsible for caring for and preserving life. We are invited be responsible consumers, to create times for meeting with the other, with the environment and with God. Moments that allow us to recreate the way we understand life, the fact that we are creatures, and of the task of being stewards of the earth and not its owners.

Each day's proposal must be awakening a critical sense and the ability to act in consonance with justice, the harmony of nature and inner peace. We are each entrusted with making life revive with hope, making the relationship with our mother earth regain strong affective ties that respect her processes and cycles. We are delegated to discover and care for the small and fragile as a substratum of the common sense that arises from a deep contemplation of life.

What has been created by God and by man is the stage on which we live, move and have our being.

Will we be able to transform our lives into a place of justice, harmony and balance with the rest of nature?

Justice and Peace from the Andean Worldview

Putina Punco – Peru

Rocío Vinueza Goyes ss.cc.

JUSTICE AND PEACE are universal values recognized and accepted by everyone, but both are understood, lived and practiced from very different backgrounds and experiences.

Below, I will try to convey the experience that we have in the District of Putina Punco in Peru, with the theme of "**Peasant Patrols**" as a way to implement the Andean vision of justice and peace.

For this, I will address the following aspects:

1. The practice of Western justice: Justice or Injustice?
2. Peasant patrols, an alternative community justice
 - a) What are they and how did they originate?
 - b) The legal basis of the rural patrols.
 - c) The ethics of "good living" based in the practice of the rural patrols.
 - d) The Peasant Patrols in Putina Punco, their origins, achievements and challenges.

1. The practice of Western justice: Justice or Injustice?

In the Western model justice passes through public prosecutors, lawyers, courts, judges and other entities that collaborate in its administration. In almost a majority of the cases within this important system of justice, those who administer it do not know those they process and they base themselves proofs, evidence, and witnesses, all of whom are well certified and often, also well paid.

Access to this complex model of justice is unattainable for simple people who do not know its bureaucratic procedures and who do not have money to pay for speeding them up. With such justice it is impossible to live in peace, given that peace is built on the basis of justice.

Quechua and Aymara, brothers and sisters coming from the highlands of Puno, live in this beautiful place that is not easily accessible. Here, the farmer takes care of the land, reaps its products and tries to live in harmony with all. But it is not always this way, when there is a lack of respect and an injustice occurs, one turns to the local justice of the peace, a citizen of good will elected by the people to help them to conciliate. If he cannot do it, he refers the case to the public prosecutor's office in Sandia, the province in the department of Puno to which our district belongs.

To better describe the reality I will tell one of many stories. Mrs. Mirian, a widow, has two young daughters and another who is studying at a university in Juliaca. Her small farm has been invaded, and the small coffee trees, which she uses to support her family, were cut down.

As she begins her journey; she has to leave her farm in Pampas de Moho in the care of her daughters, walk two hours to reach the road to the village of Chocalán, and there await the small minibus that will take her to Putina Punco, the capital. She arrives at the office of Justice of the Peace to file her complaint, if she is lucky and the judge has not gone out for some proceedings. He will hear her after a long wait, as the judge serves the entire population of the 58 sectors in the district. She pays for her complaint and the judge sends a notification to the defendant, through the lieutenant governor. The same lady must take the notification back with her, if not it will arrive much latter. If the defendant does not appear after three summons, with a document, the judge will request that the police go for him or her, but the interested party must pay the police for their fuel for this and go and bring them from the neighboring district of San Juan del Oro.

The case of Mrs. Mirian went to the public prosecutor's office over five years ago, and still there is no ruling. She cries desperately because she has gone through all the authorities and has spent nearly all her money. She feels that no one can help her and that she must always be protecting her coffee trees and helplessly watching her small farm shrink.

In this case, the place is not too far away, there are other places that are up to 10 or more hours of hiking on a trail (the road is too narrow for cars) without counting the time in the public van.

When the cases go to the public prosecutor's office in Sandia, the procedures last longer and the cost is higher. One has to pay fares, accommodation, food, papers, lawyers and the bribes without which the processes do not go on.

Access to justice is then an odyssey that takes away your money, makes you loose important working hours and all without the assurance that you will receive justice. You must also add the language issue, as often people do not speak Spanish well and have trouble understanding the legal explanations that the offices give them, to say nothing of the discriminatory treatment they receive.

It is this reality of "injustice" visiting our parish over and over again in the faces of people passing through here that motivated us to weave networks with others. This is why we coordinate with lawyers of the Southern Andean Institute of Human Rights "ISADH" to give professional formation to the local authorities and lieutenant governors, a work that will produce the peasant patrols as an alternative response to this problem.

2. Peasant patrols, an alternative community justice

What are they and how did they originate?

They are organizations of peasants who voluntarily perform community security work for their people, peacefully resolve conflicts in their communities and participate actively in the development of their localities.

They were born in Cajamarca, in the 80s or even earlier. They arose against the corruption of judicial and police authorities bribed by cattle rustlers (abigeos).



Peasant Patrols in the Parish of Putina Punco

This experience was so successful that from the north it spread throughout Peru even reaching Puno. They soon became the organization of the peasants who support “good living” in communities at all levels.

Legal Support of the Peasant Patrols

The work of the Peasant Patrols is supported on two legal bases: one is international; the law adopted by the international convention of the ILO "International Labor Organization" signed in Geneva in 1989 and approved by Peru (1993 -1995).

Article 169: *“The State of Peru recognizes the existence and the rights of the Native Peoples made up of Rural and Indigenous Communities and other forms of their own organization as democratic institutions, autonomous in their governance and organization, with use of lands and territory...”*

The other is found in the Peruvian Constitution, **Art 2 No 19.** *“Everyone is entitled to their ethnic and cultural identity. The State recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Nation. Every Peruvian has the right to use his or her own language before any authority through an interpreter. Foreigners have the same right when summoned by authorities”.*

In **Article 149** *“The authorities in the Rural and Native Communities, with the support of Peasant Patrols may exercise jurisdictional functions within their territory in accordance with customary law, provided they do not violate the fundamental rights of the people. The law establishes the forms of coordination of this special jurisdiction with the Offices of the Justice of the Peace and other instances of judicial power”.*

The ethics of "good living" the basis for the practice of the peasant patrols

Peasant Patrols are based on the principles and ethical and spiritual values of the ancestral Andean culture that points to "**GOOD LIVING**" *Allin k'ausay*, in Quechua and *Suma Jakaña* in Aymara. This is built on three principles, the "Allin Munay" or “love well”, “feel well”, the “Allin Yachay” or “think well”, “know well”, and finally “Allin Ruay” or do well”. These principles help in seeking and finding the "balance" (h'ampi), the harmony in relationships with family, community, nature and the cosmos. To achieve this it is necessary to organize oneself, live with self-respect, listen to oneself, dialogue, be tolerant, etc.

For our Christian vision that means "living abundantly" as a promise of the Kingdom; *"I came so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (Jn 10:10).

Punco Putina peasant patrols in their origins, achievements and challenges

Why were Rural Patrols created in Putina Punco?



Peasant patrols of the sector of Colorado

As mentioned before, I, in coordination with the sisters of the community, invited human rights lawyers (ISADH) to form the local authorities. After nearly a year of training, a concern arose among the local authorities that they would not be able to apply justice by themselves in their areas where distances and difficulties of access complicate things. It was then that the lawyers proposed peasant patrols as an alternative to the problem. Where it is no longer only the lieutenant, or the justice

of peace or the governor who apply justice but it is done from justice that is more communal, organized and coordinated.

The proposal was welcomed and implemented by the then Governor, Professor Rolando Tipula Cari, his 58 lieutenant governors, assistants, agents who were appointed as the local board and patrols in areas where the community asked for them. Gradually it spread until it was even in the district capital.

How do Peasant Patrols function?

- The patrollers are elected democratically by the community. They are a group of three or four people who know their reality and their people.
- They act within the boundaries that belong to their community.
- They have a book of records where the complaints and the solutions given to them are registered
- The patrollers of all the communities meet in the District Assembly to share how things are going, consult about their doubts, continue their training, organize themselves, and continue to develop their statutes.
- They search for ways to work in coordination with local authorities, lieutenant governors, justices of the peace, Governor, police, and municipality. This is not always possible.

A fundamental pillar in these processes is the training and consultancy offered by ISADH with human rights lawyers. In addition, they have also made it easier for the patrollers to participate in macro-regional meetings of patrollers at departmental level in Puno, as well as in events related to issues of interest to patrollers of Del Valle, such as the right to consult the communities with regard to decisions made by the government about their territories.

Achievements that have been made by the Rural Patrols in Pu8tina Punco

1. The organization has facilitated the formation and training of authorities and patrollers.
2. It has sped up the solution of problems that took an eternity before, now they are resolved within hours and at no cost.
3. Domestic violence problems are solved after a clear dialogue and the agreements reached are respected because the patrollers are neighbors who are known and can be reached quickly.
4. There has been greater dialogue between patrollers and local authorities about problems that were treated before but not solved, such as preventing drivers of minibuses from carrying passengers on the grill of the car, something that has already caused several deaths.
5. Support to victims of road accidents has been negotiated. Before they received nothing, as our roads are not covered by national insurance.
6. Violence in the popular festivals has diminished.
7. Land problems have been solved.
8. The participation of patrolwomen is being assured.
9. Coordination with the public prosecutor's office.
10. Conciliation is being done in their native language or with translation.

As everywhere, we have problems of misunderstanding with some authorities who consider the Rural Patrols as enemies, as they have the power to oversee their work.

We are aware that we are starting and that training is also a key in preventing abuses by the patrollers.

What is the contribution that has been given by the parish and specifically by the sisters on this issue?

1. Accompanying the process of not only the patrollers, but also of authorities and organizations seeking support. We create networks of support among the people, their needs and organizations that can collaborate with us.
2. We serve as a bridge until the process of knowledge and rapprochement is done, it must be recognized that Quechua and Aymara people will not open to others with ease, it takes time.
3. We provide the parish rooms.
4. Participating in their meetings, providing opinions and contributing from a more neutral point.
5. Sharing the work and faith, which in the Andean culture are not separated, so every activity starts with the Kintu prayer (Andean prayer where coca leaves are very important) followed by a Christian-biblical prayer.

Otherwise we are only witnesses of how a people who recovers its own culture, stands up, organizes itself and celebrates. It fills our hearts with joy to see how the Kingdom is built from simple people, in their own style. We recognize that it is possible to build a more just world where peace is lived from a practice of Andean values and spirituality, closely related to Christianity. **This is "Our SS.CC. commitment with justice and peace".**



Ritual payment to the earth

Doing Justice Reflects our Identity

Mardiani Servasa ss.cc.



Love is the key to open the door of justice. Our authentic proclamation of the love of Jesus is seen in the community. Community is the place where we live our vocation in the spirit of fraternity. It is a place where we find our identity, which is rooted and grounded in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In our participation in building up the Kingdom of God, we prioritize the transformation of the human heart and endeavor to be agents of communion in the world. Therefore, doing justice, as the central element of the Kingdom of God, is essential to our community life. Our way of living relationships with one another and setting our priority depicts how we live and promote justice in the ordinariness of our community life.

Our way of living identifies our true self. All are equal before the Lord no matter how much or how little one may contribute to the building up of the community. Justice as a Gospel value will always include an examination of the cross encountered in our own experiences of living justice in the light of the teaching of Jesus. As we spend time together in community, at meals, prayer, meetings, and leisure time, we experience our community member(s) in their contemporary reality. We learn how to include and empower, or to affirm each member as equals. With respect and love we make our community life meaningful both for self and for each member of the community. Through our process of learning, we are molded to be just and authentic in the community which reflects our way of following Jesus.

As international communities, we are enriched and challenged by our differences in many aspects arising from our strengths and shortcomings. Doing justice can be understood differently by each person according to one's standpoint and interest. Entering into a deeper relationship with our community members enables us to understand and accept each person, with their weaknesses and strengths, as a gift to the community. An atmosphere of love, respect, acceptance and forgiveness in community will help each member to learn appropriate ways of doing justice. There will be times when we face conflict, or dislike the other's way of doing/thinking that block our eyes from seeing the goodness of our sister/brother, or accepting the truth in others. This is normal, but as we move on with our good intention and search in dialogue for clarity, we create better relationships and strengthen our communion. In contrast, when pride, pain or disappointment contaminate our relationships, we will relate artificially or even experience self withdrawal. Our commitment for justice calls us to reconciliation because it is also our duty to work for the transformation of the heart. Transformation begins with self, and conversion of heart and mind enables us to see life differently. The quality of our relationship with each member in community is conditioned by our relationship with self and God.

Justice takes first priority on our agenda. Our effort to get in touch with what is going on with the people and the world around us makes us aware of the dark side that takes away peace. In our reparative adoration, we bring our broken reality before God to ask for his mercy and love

for a better world. Moreover, in solidarity with the poor, we live a simple life style in the way we eat, dress, take good care of our belongings, and also avoid consumerism. The good of each member should be the main concern.

There is no justice in the community without love. We show love in our way of living relationships with one another and setting our priority. Then we will be able to say that we are doing justice in community. Only through acts of justice can we bring peace to our community.

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