

MINUTES
STATUTORY MEETING
JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENT INTERREGIONAL COMMISSION
April 1 – 3, 2011

OPENING:

The Statutory Meeting was hosted by the sisters of the U.S. Region and the meeting opened at St. George Manor on Friday, April 1, 2011, at 3:00 PM. Louise Auclair, CSC, Mission and Ministry Director, welcomed the group and the meeting opened with prayer facilitated by Annette Legault, CSC.

THE NAMES OF THE MISSION GROUP MEMBERS and TRANSLATORS APPEAR BELOW. The photo includes sisters from the US who attended the sessions.

Denise Turcotte	Pauline Maurier	Mariette Thibodeau	Marlene Bosch
Shirley Brien	Rachel Lavonville	Rachel L. Jette	Annette Legault
Ann Conroy	Louise Auclair	Jeanne Wilfort	Pauline Nadeau
Diane Y. Dupere	Maureen Fuelkell	Lise Lebrun	Elvia Atoche Gutierrez
Pauline Morneau	Marie Jalbert	Lucille Gravel	Raymonde Maisonneuve

SUMMARY of FRIDAY’S MEETING:

Denise Turcotte opened this segment of the meeting by connecting aspects of last year’s Statutory Meeting which was held in Pierrefonds, as well as to the Forum, and to the upcoming Chapter. She presented questions and offered thoughts for ongoing reflection:

- 1- Who are we gathered at this moment in time and space?
- 2- Reviewed our identity and focus, i.e., the Justice and Environment Mission Group consists of *“members interested and involved with environmental and justice issues, whether related to our relationship to the environment or to the underprivileged.”*
- 3- How do we foster communication within our mission group? With other mission groups?
- 4- How do we better support one another?



REPORTS:

Representative from each of the regions were invited to present their yearly report.

Elvia Atoche Gutierrez from Peru played a CD – a song to Mother Earth while showing a DVD encompassing the following issues:

- Rally of women for non-violence – a common position that Holy Cross has taken;
- Working with women in prison; Elvia is trained to give sessions in reconciliation and forgiveness;
- Helping youth to be more conscious and aware of the environment;
- Commitment to help new associates and mission group to be more aware of the needs of the environment and of the people;



- Test for measuring carbon footprint and show people how to calculate it;
- Shared *El Vis Crucis de los Bosques*, a Way of the Cross based on the destruction of the forest in the Amazon. It was written by the Columban Missionaries and is available on <http://columbanosperu.org>

Jeanne Wilfort, who replaced Madeleine Cloutier, gave the report for Canada West. Due to distance, age and illness, there are fewer possibilities to meet. Nonetheless, this group made use of e-mail and the internet:

- They did a great deal of work on Justice and Environment in an effort to raise consciousness around issues of violence in society, parishes, and our local communities in order to deepen the aspect of non-violence;
- Articles were forwarded via e-mail to stimulate prayer life;
- They promoted and made use of the speaker series *The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity*, organized by Michael Dowd.

Maureen Fuelkell presented the following justice / environment issues in Haiti:

- The 2010 earthquake which claimed over 300,000 lives, leaving one million people homeless, thousand handicapped, children orphaned, etc. is both an environment and justice issue due to a failure of government regulations and supervision on building standards.
- Deforestation & erosion are also major problems which touch both J&E Issues: the poverty due to unstable governments and poor management of Haiti's resources has had a devastating effect on the country. The deforestation by cutting down the trees has eroded all the top soil leaving very little fertile land especially in the mountains. It also provokes a serious economical issues because road are washed away, transportation costs increase etc.
- Lack of local food supplies means children in schools have to be fed in school canteens.
- The right to education is a justice issue not only touching on education but feeding the children in schools canteens enabling them to learn also touches on the environmental problems, the erosion of good land results in non productivity of local food supplies.
- Education of children in recycling waste products by using colored barrels for specific wastes is helping the children to become aware of the need to recycle.
- The Cholera Epidemic in Haiti was another grave justice issue. The United Nations troops dumping contaminated sewage into a major Haitian river caused the death of over 4000 local residents and has left the country no longer a cholera free nation which it was until now.

- Future projects :
 - Petites Mains : training of women to work on industrial sewing machines for local production and for employment in forthcoming sewing factories that will soon be established.
 - Reforestation: Projects both in Pilate & Thibeau – planting of trees
 - Local food production: Replanting gardens after the cyclones , banana plantation in Limbe.

The report from Quebec took the form of a skit in which the entire Quebec group was involved in some aspect of the dialogue. Members of the audience participated in the skit as they spontaneously added their comments. The serious political issue is that government is on the side of big business versus the people who need to rise up to oppose the mining of shale gas.

- Annette Legault represented big business and highlighted the many good reasons for the continuation of mining shale gas;
- Opposition from the audience insisted on being heard with regard to problems around money, health, security and the environment;
- A back and forth dialogue made the point of how difficult it is for citizens to make a dent in the armor of major corporations;
- The point was well made and all agreed that presenting this issue is merely a start in putting the brakes on this monumental environmental and justice issue.



The members of the United States Region admitted that much of its time this year was in the planning and preparation of this Statutory Meeting. Nonetheless, the following report was presented:

- Following a 2005 corporate stand on water, educating ourselves with regard to caring for the earth and the environment became a priority;
- Since the time of that corporate stand, Therese Poirier has been following local newspaper coverage on



issues surrounding Pennichuck Water Works in Nashua, NH. This issue resulted in a victory for the people of Nashua who reclaimed the rights of the water in their city. Pauline Morneau and Shirley Brien presented the report written by Sally Stearns and Therese Poirier on this topic and left the group with this question to ponder: ***“Who owns the water where you live?”***

- We have asked ourselves the question: ***“What on earth are we doing to cut down on our carbon footprint?”***
 - We have observed Earth Days in various ways;
 - We look for and act upon alternatives for bottled water and have expanded this effort since we discovered how much fuel / energy is used not only in creating plastic bottles but also to recycle them;
 - Articles from Earth Beats were cited stating that the US group educates itself around issues then shares this research with the sisters in the Region via this publication. The most recent issue of Earth Beats, a reflection on the group’s visit to a biodynamic farm, has been translated into Spanish and French and can be found on the Congregational web site.

This portion of the Statutory Meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

AWAKENING THE DREAMER, CHANGING THE DREAM SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, April 2, 2011

This Symposium is a profound inquiry into a bold vision:

*to bring forth an environmentally sustainable,
spiritually fulfilling, and socially just
human presence on Earth.*

Invitations to the Symposium were extended to schools, parishes, religious communities, and groups that are committed to sharing on the latest cosmological books as they are released. Ninety five participants attended and at least half were Sisters of Holy Cross. The day-long Symposium was held at St. Benedict Academy on Manchester's West Side and opened at 9:00 AM with words of welcome as well as an introduction of the two facilitators, i.e., Mary Pendergast, RSM, and Nancy Audette, RSM. A brief summary of the day follows.

The mission of Pachamama is to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world.

The Pachamama Alliance was born in response to a request from the Achuar, an indigenous people deep in the Amazon region of Ecuador. The Achuar made the courageous decision to seek a partnership with people from the industrialized world who would work with them in protecting their rainforest home and their traditional way of life. Out of this unique partnership, it has become evident that indigenous wisdom and insight offer enormous value in addressing the complex issues that we face in our modern world. (Pachamama Website)

Mary stated that both she and Nancy do this work not only for themselves but also for all species and for all humankind.

As a starter, key questions were presented:

1. Where are we? What is our current dream creating?
2. How did we get here – what are the root causes?
 - We need to look at the root causes of our world view and assumptions before we can fix them.
 - Unexamined assumptions lead us to actions and behaviors that are wasteful.
 - Unintended consequences emerge: others are deprived, resources run out, etc.
 - Our unexamined assumptions create our world view.
3. What is possible for the future?
4. Where do we go from here? How does this affect you and your life, the human community?
5. What would you expect to see in a socially just world?

An awake local citizenry is to be aware of the crisis facing earth at this time and to acknowledge that the opportunities of our time are great – we are living in a state of blessed unrest.

Challenging and meaningful thoughts:

When you say you are going to throw something away,
where is away?

“To be” means to “inter-be”.

We are not owners of Mother Earth, we are caretakers of Mother Earth.

We can make changes only when we recognize that we are mistaken not flawed.



We need to take the best of the technological genius of the world,
and the best of the scientific genius of the world,
and join these two with the genius of the heart.

To tell the story of anything,
you have to tell the story of everything.

We are the universe in the form of a human.

A vision without a plan is a dream.
A dream without a vision is drudgery.
A vision with a plan can change the world.

Decrease your carbon footprint.
Increase your contribution footprint.

In conclusion, to this day's presentation, some practical actions were suggested:

1. Personal practices;
2. Communicate the urgency of the situation to everybody you meet, everybody you know;
3. Collective ways: groups, communities, parishes, your city, town, etc.
4. Bo back to where you live and join an existing group;
5. Look around living spaces and pass on what is not needed rather than throwing it away;
6. A simpler lifestyle.



In a closing ritual, bracelets that were handmade by the Achuar people were distributed. To remind us that we can't do things alone, the bracelet had to be fastened by someone else.

After a few closing remarks, the Symposium ended at 3:15 PM. Many left for St. Pius X parish to attend the 4:00 PM Mass where Maureen Fuelkell addressed the parishioners who have adopted and raised money for the orphanage in Haiti. A spaghetti fundraiser was attended by members of the Interregional Commission along with many other Sisters of Holy Cross.



SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2011 -- Return to St. George Manor

This segment of the Statutory Meeting was held at St. George Manor and opened at 8:45 AM with prayer prepared by Pauline Maurier and Diane Dupere. Following the prayer, Elvia presented a symbol of Mother Earth / Pachamama made by the people of Peru. She presented one to each delegate or her representative and left one for the Manor which was accepted by Sr. Rena Gagnon.



Denise opened the meeting with the following questions:

- Considering our Chapter reflections and new insights gleaned or reinforced from Awakening the Dreamer Symposium, how is the Justice and Environment Mission Group called to make a difference as we “*put our hand to the work of resurrection*”?
- How can we collaborate with existing groups in our local areas?
- Who are the companies in Canada and the United States that are exploiting the natural resources in Peru and Haiti?
- How can we support the schools in Haiti especially in planting and assisting the people to return to their agricultural roots?
- “Continuer de s’informer, s’indigner, s’engager” and find ways that will move us toward action.

ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS



Denise then introduced Mary Turgi, CSC, a Sister of the Holy Cross, from South Bend, IN, and the Director of Holy Cross International Justice Office. Mary’s presentation was on Ecological Economics.

Ecological Economics is an alternative economic model that challenges the current growth-driven system, presenting instead a model that recognizes Earth’s biophysical limits and embodies both social and ecological values.

Among other things, ecological economics calls for:

- Right-sizing national economies in order to respect earth’s need to rest and rejuvenate, and less industrialized countries’ need to develop in sustainable ways.
- Measuring the success of economies not by mindless growth in production and consumption, but by increased human wellbeing and ecological integrity.
- Creating strong, thriving, interdependent local/regional, economies and human communities that are rich in social ties.
- Shifting to a sufficiency-based economy in which the gifts of Earth are shared equitably; everyone has enough and no one has excess. (HClJ Website)

CONVENTIONAL vs ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Ecological Economics is not taking the current economy and trying to color it green.
The whole economic system will change and will be green.

CONVENTIONAL ECONOMICS

1. Earth and other species are economic resources;
2. Unlimited economic growth is possible and necessary;
3. Rooted in globalization, international trade and production for export;
4. Economics of “more/bigger” is better;
5. Human development = growth in economic wealth (GDP);
6. Promotes accumulation of wealth and economic inequality;
7. Power invested in corporations and institutions;
8. Decisions are made by “experts” and elites;
9. Economics of competition, exclusion, and exploitation.

ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

1. Earth is home, other species are kin;
2. Unlimited economic growth on a finite planet is impossible and unnecessary – need a different distribution system;
3. Rooted in thriving on local communities and economics;
4. Enough is plenty;
5. Human development = growth in well being, security, and happiness;
6. Requires fair and equitable distribution of economic wealth & other resources;
7. Governance is participatory, transparent and accountable;
8. Decisions are made by individuals and communities – as locally as possible;
9. Economics of cooperation, inclusion, and reverence.

Four major shifts were highlighted as necessary steps “to get from here to there”:

1. Profound shift in mindset and values;
2. Governmental shifts in economic policies and measures;
3. Return of corporations to their proper place in society;
4. Revitalization of local communities and economies – re-localization ... The Economics of Happiness.

Following Mary’s presentation, the group was given time for a brief brainstorming session of “do-able” concrete actions to make localization a reality. The following expresses what could be done as well as concrete steps taken and choices actually made while planning for the Statutory Meeting:

- Attend Fair Trade groups / expos that get goods from different countries and are often hosted before the holidays;
- Concentrate on supporting local farmers – dairy as well as produce and inform others;
- The coffee used at the Symposium was Fair Trade and it was brought to the attention of the group that there is a place in Manchester, NH, that does their own roasting of Fair Trade coffee;

- The Justice and Environment Interregional Commission that hosted the weekend purchased sandwiches for its guests from a local, family-run restaurant in Manchester;
- When grocery shopping, purchase local produce as much as possible and, if not available, request it from the store manager;
- Support made in NH Expo and other local entities of the same nature;
- Seek out and support local bookstores to avoid their being “eaten up” by big business;
- Community gardening;
- Check information and material made available by the Chamber of Commerce;
- Read the newspaper to learn what local politicians vote for;
- Look at what we are consuming.

How can we be a voice for Ecological Economics in our daily lives?

- Look into available resources;
- Continue to be educators in our milieu;
- Undo what the media feeds us and never lose an opportunity to do so;
- Suggest from this Statutory Meeting that Mary’s presentation be a part of Chapter planning and preparation.



From all of the above, the group agreed to the following concrete actions:

- Examine our personal lives;
- Continue to educate ourselves and other;
- Obtain the names of the multi-national corporations mining the resources in Peru and Haiti followed by a plan as to what we can do in collaboration with existing organizations on our respective milieus;
- Make available to the Congregational membership a DVD of Mary’s presentation;
- Educate the Chapter Delegates and our sisters in leadership roles by inviting Mary to present this material to the Chapter membership.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Y. Dupere, CSC
Recording Secretary