

Request for Province-wide input to the Mission and Ecology Commission

Submitted by Gilles Michaud

09/03/14

Questions:

1. What concrete actions is your community/apostolate currently taking to integrate care for creation into its life and work? What have been your successes and failures so far?
2. What are your desires and ideas for further engagement in stewardship of creation, both at the level of your community/apostolate and at the province-wide level?

Answers:

1. In PEI the CLC members are very involved in two mission projects that could have serious ecological impact: They are:
 - a) Fracking (Hydraulic Fracking for gas)
 - b) Deep well extraction of water for irrigation of potato fields.

Living on an island most of us are very much aware of the fragility of our ecology especially when it comes to water. Our ground water is not an infinite resource and we know that we will suffer from long-term ground water depletion if both “fracking” and “deep wells” are allowed. Eventually our water table will respond by causing serious environmental damage and affecting individual and municipal water supplies.

Both projects are industry driven and are being promoted and are justified by saying that they will create employment and provide economic growth. In order to work more effectively in addressing this mindset CLC members in PEI have formed a coalition with other NGO's.

A recent success was in organizing a Provincial Conference on Water. The Council of Canadians chairperson Maude Barlow was invited to speak on water. Along with Maude, a panel made of biologist Darryl Darryl Guignon, National Farmers Union representative Reg Phelan, and Mi'kmaq Keptin John Joe Sark spoke on the serious damage that deep water wells will have on our environment. The conference, attended by well over 100 islanders, created a ground swell of individuals and groups that have and continue to voice their concerns to the government on this issue.

I believe that our CLC members in PEI have come to a greater awareness of how our Ignatian spirituality asks of us to integrate both social justice and ecology. We have been working along with other NGO's for the past 5 years on the need for the provincial government to establish a sustainable action plan that would eradicate poverty in PEI. The high level of the working poor in PEI has been a growing concern for many of us. Through a coalition of the NGO's research has proven that we have the highest level and poverty in Canada. It is through the spiritual vision of our CLC way of life (General Principle # 8) that we continue, albeit with small steps, but always with hope and the energy struggling to overcome this injustice. What has been edifying for us is an article in the OPEN SPACE called, “Cry of the poor, cry of the earth”.

Regarding the second question, I have come to believe that collectively we can engage the signs of the times by addressing the many challenges regarding our environment. There can be great energy and willingness to act when we collectively engage the extremes of climate, pollution caused by industrial agriculture etc.. In 2005, Three National CLC's gathered in Chicago for a North American Conference. One of the important issues was to discuss the issue of water. This resulted in being awakened to how critical our earth has been abused. A desire was created to bring this insight to the CLC members in the three national communities and thereby attempt to address this issue in concrete ways. One of the gifts of this conference was the creation of a Spiritual Exercise on water based on the Sp. Ex. Ann. 18 (attached). Unfortunately there was no follow-up to this conference and consequently our collective consciousness on the ecology seems to have dissipated.

I would suggest that we, CLC and Society of Jesus, continue to collaborate on issues of social justice and ecology. One way would be to organize a forum to share our experiences on poverty and ecology and to discuss and discern how to take action in our own lives.