

## LET'S SAVE OURSELVES ALONG WITH OUR PLANET

Twenty years ago, only a few people dealt with ecology. They were labeled as rustic or defeatist. It was not a serious topic for politics, education, or religion. St. Francis might have been venerated as a saint among the flowers and birds, but there was no major commitment.

Even though it may be very late, nowadays the whole world is becoming aware, deafened by the news and images of contemporary cataclysms and of the pessimistic forecasts that fill our newscasts. There are lots of conferences and programs that broadcast ecology as a vital topic, revealing the issues and demanding concrete proposals for the environment. Even the children know about ecology now.

The topic is a new one and desperately urgent. We have finally discovered that the Earth, our Planet, is our shared home, the only one we have. We are discovering that we are an indissoluble unity of relationships upon which our very future depends.

Faced with astronomic expenses in outer space, a death-dealing arms industry, and the consumerism and luxury enjoyed by a small, privileged sector of humanity, we are now beginning to understand that the challenge is to take care of our Planet. This last great crisis is the child of neoliberal capitalism, dulled by usury and waste. Cynically, it has ignored both the suffering of the poor and the real limitations of the Earth. The crisis is now helping us open our eyes and hopefully also our hearts. Leonardo Boff defines "the cry of the Earth" as "the cry of the poor" and James Lovelock warns us of "the vengeance of the Earth: the Gaia theory and the future of Humanity." Lovelock says, "For thousands of years, humanity exploited the Earth without taking into account the consequences. Now that global warming and climate change are evident for any impartial observer, the Earth is beginning to take its revenge." We are treating the Earth as if it was merely an economic object and we are demanding that the Earth perform many duties without paying attention to its rights.

Some experts and international institutions have been lying to us. The invisible hand of the market has not resolved the global disaster. As the market became progressively freer, hunger became more and more real. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, there were 860 million people in 2007 suffering from hunger; in January, 2009, there were 109 million more. Half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, to cite the example of this crucified Africa, suffers extreme poverty. The litany of violence and misfortune flowing from this is interminable. In the Congo, there are 30,000 child soldiers ready to kill and die in exchange for food; 17 % of the Amazonian forests were destroyed in the five years between 2000 and 2005. Between 2003 and 2008, the expenditures in Latin America and the Caribbean for defense grew 91 per cent. A dozen multinational companies control the seed market of the entire world. The Millennium Development Goals have evaporated into rhetoric. In their elitist meetings, the richest countries have been cowardly enough to say that they can't do more to implement them.

It is a tradition each year in our Agenda to take on a major topic of burning relevance. We could hardly set aside this volcanic theme.

The issue is large and complex. Are we in mortal crisis? Or is the Planet in mortal crisis? We considered three titles for the 2010 Agenda in order to target a possible approach: "Save the Planet," "Let's Save the Planet," or "Let's Save Ourselves Along with Our Planet." We chose the last option because the experts and the prophets keep reminding us that we are also the Planet; we are Gaia and we are waking up to a more

holistic and integral vision. We are finally discovering that the Planet Earth is also the Planet Water. A recent children's book is entitled precisely, *I Help My Planet*. The salvation of the Planet is our salvation. There is no lack of experts warning that, although the Planet will be saved as it is swept along in the current of the Universe, human life and all lives on the Planet will end up as just a dark, gloomy past.

The Agenda has no desire to be pessimistic; it cannot be. It wants to be realistic and to engage reality, enthusiastically taking up the causes that promote a hope-filled and hope-engendering ecology.

This deep, integral ecology needs to include all aspects of our personal, family, social, political, cultural, and religious life. Each and every political and social institution needs to adopt "the salvation of our Planet" as its basic program. A positively oriented globalization is required, one that must work for the globalization of ecology. By rejecting and going beyond the current low intensity democracy, we need to put in place a democracy of maximum intensity and, more explicitly, a "cosmic biocracy." We need to create, stimulate, and strengthen in all religions and in all humanisms a "profound and total" spirituality focused on what is positive, with a prophetic attitude in the liberation from all forms of slavery. We need to live out and struggle for a new valorization of all life, of matter, of the body, of eros. Ecofeminism taken up a fundamental challenge: Gaia is feminine. This imposes a new relationship with nature by naturalizing us into the nature that we are and humanizing the nature in which we live and on which we depend. As the philosopher would say, I am who I am as well as the nature that surrounds me.

The best that the Earth has is Humanity, in spite of all the craziness that we have committed and continue committing. These are real genocides and real collective suicides.

By encouraging this proposal for radical change and by proclaiming that another ecology is possible in another human society, we commit ourselves to the two points of the Manifesto for a Deep Ecology: "Ideological change consists primarily in valuing the quality of life—of living in situations of intrinsic values—more than in continually trying to achieve a better standard of living. We will need a profound change of awareness about the difference between material growth and personal growth independently of the accumulation of tangible goods." It then adds that "Those who subscribe to the points laid out in the Manifesto have the direct or indirect duty to act so that these changes happen, since they are necessary for the survival of all species on the Planet," including "the saint and sinner" human species.

Activists and intellectuals committed to these broader issues are preparing a Universal Declaration of Planetary Common Good that will be expressed in four treaties: 1) The Ecological and Natural Treaty, responsible for protecting the Earth; 2) The Ecological Social Treaty, responsible for gathering up all our hopes and commitments; 3) The Ecological Cultural Treaty, which needs to be based on the promotion of pluralism, tolerance, and the encounter of humanity with the ecosystems, the biomes, and the life of the Planet; and 4) The Ecological Ethical Spiritual Treaty, founded on the dimensions of caring, compassion, and co-responsibility of all with all.

We have to listen to what the new sciences and the new theologies are saying to us simultaneously. We want to live this ecological kairós moment of activism and mysticism with the God of all names and of all utopias.

Together with Jesus of Nazareth, many freedom fighters, prophets, and martyrs in Our America, go before us and accompany us in this march through the desert towards the "Land without Afflictions."

Is this an absurd utopia? Only utopias will lead us to salvation. The arrogance of the powerful, unrestrained luxury, arrogance, and phony leaders discourage us. But we refuse to accept discouragement, corruption, and resignation. Pacha Mama and Gaia are alive, are life-givers. No structure of death will overcome Life.