



2<sup>nd</sup> October – INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NONVIOLENCE

## Cultivating a Life of Respect and Nonviolence within Creation, our Common Home

3 Points for reflection



### Introduction:

“Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years.” (LS 53) The ecological crisis questions us not only about what we do, but even more about who we are. We must act, but “how are we to act”? It is important to be, but “how to be”? It is urgent to begin a profound re-evaluation of our ways of seeing, feeling, thinking, believing, being and living in all areas of life. The earth is our common home that offers us her hospitality. Are we worthy and responsible guests?

Here we propose three points for reflection in order to cultivate within us the inner attitudes that are indispensable for a life of respect and nonviolence within creation, our Common Home.

### 1<sup>st</sup> POINT: “WHO AM I ON EARTH?”

How are you on earth? How do you see yourself?

*Tick the terms that apply to you!*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardener                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Master                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protector                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Monarch                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Colonizer                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daughter/Son of nature                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Usurper                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owner                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Custodian                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen member of the living community      | <input type="checkbox"/> Creature                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parasite                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explorer                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen of the universe        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultivator                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dust                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Predator                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guest                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pirate                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> User  | <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the universal family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stardust                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Manager                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the cosmic brotherhood/sisterhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Mediator                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caretaker                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen of the Earth           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destroyer                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Co-creator                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> “Liturge”                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protagonist of the Anthropocene             | <input type="checkbox"/> “Homo consumericus”            |

### For personal and community reflection:

In reviewing our lives, we may notice the tensions we are experiencing tensions between what we desire and want to be, on the one hand, and on the other hand, what we are and do concretely! Tensions between the ideal envisioned, the call and vocation to realize and the real life lived in daily life!

- ✓ **In the face of this ambivalence, what can we identify as the source of the deep tension? How can we better LIVE what we profess to believe in?**

The earth, our “sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.” (LS 2)

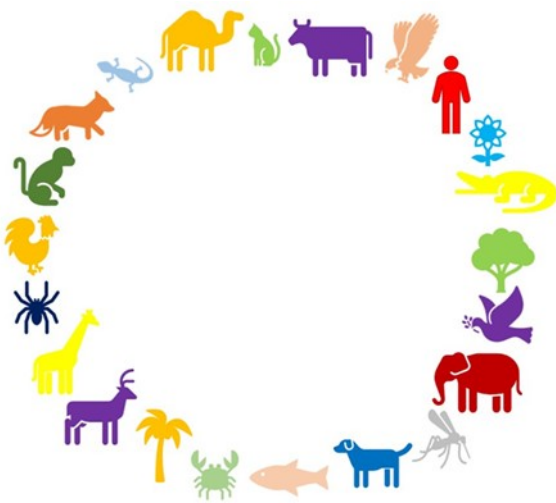
- ✓ **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how can we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, live out our vocation in a realistic, ecologically responsible, sustainable, integral, constructive, and coherent way?**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> POINT: "WE and NATURE - WE in NATURE - WE NATURE"

Look at the two drawings<sup>1</sup>!



Nature from the view of human beings!



Nature from the view of nature!

***What effect do these drawings have on you? Share your impressions and discoveries!***

**For personal and community reflection:**

- Humanity and humility have the same etymological root: "humus", the earth! "The Earth is not only our living environment, but our original matrix and our destiny."<sup>2</sup> To be humble, therefore fully human, is to recognize that we are children of the Earth and of the Cosmos. Thereby giving up the idea of imposing one's will on other creatures, to be the measure of all things and to occupy all space."<sup>3</sup>
- "Once we lose our humility and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment. It is not easy to promote this kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong." (LS 224)
- Each one of us is a guest on the planet in the same way as all other living beings. The Earth, host of all, does not belong to us, but we belong to it.<sup>4</sup>

- ✓ **What do we have in common with all of God's creation?**
- ✓ **How can we maintain right relationship between men, women and all creation in our common home?**

<sup>1</sup> Inspiration found in: KATAPULT – 102 grüne Karten zur Rettung der Welt, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Egger Michel Maxim, « Écospiritualité », Edition Jouvence, 2018, p.78

<sup>3</sup> Egger Michel Maxime, « Célébrer la liturgie cosmique au quotidien », in Coll. « Faire la Paix avec la Terre », Edition Jouvence, 2017, p.163

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. « Écospiritualité », p.75

### 3<sup>rd</sup> POINT: "GOD'S PRESENCE"

#### Connecting to the BREATH of LIFE

Put on your mask which you use to protect yourself from Coronavirus. Breathe, breathe in and out; feel your breath. Become aware of the breath that animates you, makes you alive; the first breath you received at birth; the last breath that awaits us all at death.

Reconnect to the Breath of the Breath, to the Spirit, "Ruah" in Hebrew, the Life of Life, that Vital Breath that is within you, that puts you in intimate contact with the world and that you share with other living beings.

- "Nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him." (Bishops of Brazil, quoted in: LS 88)

#### Connecting with the beauty and diversity of nature

Sit on a bench in the garden or park; become aware of your environment, what is around you, in the air, on the ground. Perceive, look, listen, feel these multitudes and diversity of life: plants, animals, insects, ... Marvel!

- "Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker." (Wis 13:5)
- "When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity." (John Paul II, quoted in: LS 238)
- "The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence." (LS 100)

#### Connecting to the wisdom of different God's believers

Many religions see God as having transcend or immanent dimension. However, in African traditional concept, for example, "God is both transcendent and immanent", God dwells inside human souls and is also beyond any human reach. Most people think that the sky is beyond human reach and God therefore dwells somewhere above.

God has immanent feature too for the need of people. That is why people address God through prayers, invocations, offerings and sacrifices by thinking God is near to them.

God is 'contemporaneous'. God exists in all objects of creation. The Ngombe people of the Democratic Republic of Congo designate God as the One Who fills everything!<sup>5</sup>

#### For meditation

- "My book is none other than the book of the universe; in it I read the works of God" Saint Anthony of Egypt (4<sup>th</sup> century)
- "God is in the universe, and the universe is in God." Gregory Palamas, Byzantine theologian (14<sup>th</sup> century) – Everything is in God, but God is not everything. God is in everything but is not to be confused with that everything.<sup>6</sup>
- "The spirit has made the cosmos its temple, the place of its action and manifestation. The world is the place of encounter with God." Leonardo Boff

#### For prayer

##### African Litany of our Planet, to you Lord God<sup>7</sup>

Grasses multiply and wild flowers proliferate  
Because you, God in Christ, set the earth free  
Vegetables colour the garden and herbs give aroma to the spiral  
Because you, Spirit, led us into the new creation  
The lion and the lamb are making friends, the worms love the lettuce  
Because you, Lord of Love, taught us to share  
Every part of the creation is significant, even the flies and mosquitoes  
Because you, Creator of all, reasoned everything into being'

##### Native American Prayer (author unknown)

O Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you.  
To your messengers the four Winds and to Mother Earth who provides for your children.  
Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect and to be kind to each other, so that they may grow with peace in mind.  
Let us learn to share all the good things you provide for us on this Earth.

#### For listening: "Where I Sit Is Holy" song by Russell Walden and Shaina Noll.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ-tNr6nW5E>

#### End with the Hindu Greeting: "Namaste"

<sup>5</sup> Md Didarul Islam "African Traditional Concept of God: A Critical Analysis"

<sup>6</sup> Egger Michel Maxim, « Écospiritualité », Edition Jouvence, 2018, p.58

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Warmback and Brian Wilinon, Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa.