

Towards Josephite Earth Sustainability

Preamble

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's History.¹ As Josephite women and men we acknowledge our role in caring for Earth, 'Our Common Home', and our responsibilities for present and future generations in the Web of Life.

Science, theology and indeed, the ancient knowledges of aboriginal peoples throughout the world, stress the interconnected nature of everything, of all.

This pivotal moment prompts us to respond, "to the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life." Earth Charter 2002.

Policy

The policies of the Josephite Congregation and the culture and actions of its members, associates and employees have consequences for the environment and the quality of human life.

Recognising the complexities facing us, the following principles from Laudato Si provide a hope-filled ethical framework towards Earth Sustainability. Catholic Social Teaching underpins this vision.

Ecological Sustainability

*"Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live."*²

"Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au." I am the river. The river is me. (Maori Proverb)

"I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking." (John Seed)

As ethically responsible citizens we are challenged to consider our environmental, political, social, cultural and religious impacts upon Earth. Let us creatively consider how NOT to pollute air, water, oceans and soil.

Our lifestyles must not be at the expense of struggling humanity. It is time to make mindful choices regarding water, energy, food and products that we are using or considering purchasing.

¹ Earth Charter Preamble

² Laudato Si #139

For example:

- Where has the product come from?
- What will happen to this when I/we have finished using it? Can it be recycled? How long will it take to break down?
- Who really pays for this product? How might this product be helping to maintain cycles of poverty and/or contributing to the degradation of the environment?
- What do we need to be doing to replace fossil fuels?

“We know that technologies based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels- especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay”.³

What alternatives am I/we prepared to consider or adopt?

- Alternative forms of transport – public transport, hybrid or electric vehicles, sharing of vehicles etc.
- Reduced reliance on travel by air – online conferencing, video or telephone conferencing, carbon offsets.
- Renewable energies, eg solar power, fuelling our institutions and residences.

Economic Sustainability (including investment and procurement)

Pope Francis appeals for urgent changes to notions of economy. Expectations of continual economic growth are unrealistic. He calls for an *“economic ecology...[and] a humanism capable of bringing together different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision”*.⁴

In rendering service to Earth and humanity Josephite women and men will:

- Invest in ethical enterprises and divest from companies which support fossil fuels, the nuclear industry, production of arms and military goods, and other harmful goods and services.
- Choose to purchase goods and services from companies with proven sustainability practices, just employment practices/reputation, and commitment to building a better world.
- Discern needs from wants.
- Support projects and charities which benefit Earth community.
- Ensure we pay a living wage.

Social Sustainability

“If everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions has consequences...”⁵

We are challenged to build healthy communities and to consider possible impacts on Earth and civil society, of our Congregational, ministerial and individual actions.

Therefore:

- We look at how I/we might contribute to cycles of injustice, violence, loss of culture and or freedom.
- We choose to purchase locally grown foods and produce.
- We consider how institutional/individual purchasing and procurement policies/habits affect the local community.

³ Laudato Si #165

⁴ Laudato Si #141

⁵ Laudato Si#142

Cultural Sustainability

*“Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony. This patrimony is a part of the shared identity of each place...there is a need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place”.*⁶

We contribute to healthy and vibrant cultures by:

- Sensitively enquiring into the relationship between human beings and the environment.⁷
- Acknowledging that First Nations peoples *“are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them land is not a commodity but a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there.”*⁸
- Supporting and building the architecture and infrastructure which is as environmentally sustainable as possible.
- Selecting carefully symbols and art.

Sustainability in Daily Life

*“Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. These settings influence the way we think, feel and act”.*⁹

Our daily lives contribute to the sustainability of life on Earth.

We are mindful:

- Of the *“moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us”.*¹⁰
- That tailgate emissions from most forms of transport compromise Earth’s atmosphere
- That the purchase and procurement choices of individuals and Josephite ministries have environmental and social implications
- That the plight of the global poor is impacted by our lifestyle and daily choices
- That many of our Josephite daily actions contribute to caring for Earth
- Of the imperative, as a Congregation and as individuals, to raise our voice in support of Earth.

Responsibilities to Future Generations (our legacy)

“We are the ancestors of tomorrow” (Luisa Teish)

Josephite women and men continue to respond to Julian Tenison Woods’ and Mary MacKillop’s instruction

“That the Sisters must do all the good they can, and never see an evil without trying how they may remedy it.”¹¹ The crises facing us urgent. “Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.”¹²

⁶ Laudato Si #143

⁷ Laudato Si #143

⁸ Laudato Si #146

⁹ Laudato Si #147

¹⁰ Laudato Si #208

¹¹ MMK August 1873

¹² The Earth Charter, The Way Forward