

Missionnaires of Africa

Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC)



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CONSERVATION OF CREATION

"Our planet offers all that man needs, but not all that man covets" (Gandhi)

When we speak of integrity of Creation in "Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)", what do we mean exactly? What is the relation between Social Injustice and ambient Injustice? We want to be super humans and for that we are going to destroy humanity. The creation of God has been entrusted to us (Gen 1, 28-30) to be protected and cultivated in a responsible manner keeping always in mind as guiding (orientating) criterion the Common Good.

As human beings, we have this fundamental criterion of value: to live in harmony with the rest of the creation of God. Our life depends on the air which we breathe, of the water which we drink, of the food which we eat and of the plants which we use for our needs. The world is an interconnection. We have to take care of the creation which is around us, and of which we are part. Our environment is currently in a state of emergency. We have to change our lifestyle so that the poorest and those yet to be born can live in dignity. To respect creation doesn't mean that the material or animal world is more important than the human person.

- **WATER** is often a source of conflicts; for water is becoming scarcer for its users. First of all because with the big investments which most of the time are foreign (from Asia, Europe, Brazil, and even from the Emirates), a huge amount of the water is being used for irrigation, and not enough left for the daily use of the populations (rural and urban).

Here in Mozambique the people can no longer supply themselves from the Zambeze because its water is being used by mega farms. On the other hand cisterns of water are supplied to the people but often in insufficient quantity! The waters are being engulfed by the production of agro or bio-gas (bio-diesel).

One other problem is that often the waters of the rivers are contaminated, polluted by pesticides or other chemical products used in these big farms. To this we add the industrial

toxic residues which are being pour out or discharged into the nature. These pesticides and toxic residues are flown by rain waters into the rivers, turning the water unhealthy and therefore unusable. The percentage of available drinkable water is getting lesser and lesser every time.

- **THE MINERAL RESSOURCES:** it is a wealth for the country, but very often misused. And not only that, because also there are many families displaced, sent away from their homes, from their land, in order to give way to a new occupier, often a foreigner, who exploits it to his own benefit. Such displaced people, forced to vacate their fertile land, are often resettled on barren lands, or on lesser fertile lands. And again if their lands were occupied for gold mines, it is the waters of the rivers which will be polluted, for being used to wash out the residues which contains the treasure.

- **THE BUSHFIRES:** For cleaning the fields or hunting little animals, people burn the bush, without always being able to control the fire, and at times it ends up burning houses in the villages and causing death to some people.



This is another sign of the degradation of the environment.

Bushfires destroy the ecosystems and contribute to the extinction of the species.

Such fires impoverish the land (a tree which is burned every year cannot develop itself normally), and contribute to its degradation, because they destroy the organic elements (The chemical products and the fertilizers cannot restore the nature). They also facilitate inundations and the erosion because they destroy the trees and plants which were supposed to retain the ground. Their smoke is also loaded with particles which are harmful to health.

- **THE DEFORESTATION:**

This phenomenon, common in many African countries, is a disaster: it leaves big spaces uncovered. It is said that wood is enormous asset for development. such asset is to whose benefit? Is to the benefit of the country (local people) or of the foreigners?



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For that, they cut everything and devastate completely the forest. It

the exploitation without reserve. The one who comes with a lot of money is sure to get a concession. The local communities of these places don't benefit from it. And afterwards how

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can one be surprised of the climate change; surprised that inundations are more frequent or happen in places it never happened before, that cyclones are now common etc. That is the legacy that we leave behind to our children and to the generations after them.

- **THE SEA:** It is a victim of savage exploitation, everybody for his own interest, helping himself in a cruel manner without being worried about those who will come after him. After me, the deluge! It looks like the maritime resources are inexhaustible. This over-exploitation of the sea with no preoccupation of its re-population is causing the disappearance of some aquatic species (often done by foreigners who come with modern means).

- **THE EROSION:** the rising of the sea level will provoke big floods, erosion and the destruction of the littoral; some towns (such as Beira) could be wiped away from the map. With the deforestation, the land is left bare, its fertile layer exposed to and defenseless before the winds which will gradually transform it into sand.

- **THE POLLUTION OF THE AIR:** here again, there is a rising awareness of the pollution of the air caused by the emission of gases by the cars (just following for few minutes one of these public transport buses or mini-buses one will get a picture of the scale of pollution!). The industrial factories are few, but a certain consciousness is being awakened due to the fact that many workers are having health problems caused by the fuel used and gases produced by these factories.

- **WHY DO THEY COME FROM SO FAR FOR THIS LAND?** The real issue is that some are not allowed to produce this agro (or bio)-diesel in their home countries because they are polluting, and could damage their own environment. The only way is to come here, where nobody seems to bother about these problems. What they can't do at home, they do it here.

Another advantage for them coming here is that the land is very cheap, and you can nearly do everything you like and the way you like it: the land is worth nothing! (Exemple of Brazil). In many cases, the land is let for 50 years, at an uncompetitive price. In this context one understands why for such investors, to the issue of "conservation of creation" they will simply say: it is not our problem. Therefore, when the investor comes to term of his period of exploitation of the land, what kind of land is he going to leave behind? He will have extracted or exploited the maximum out of it, mercilessly exhausting it. What will he leaves for those who will come? Will they conserve really what they've received???

It is high time to work towards a more sober development, more frugal and moderate: it is the only way out. It is actually the present models of production for consumption which are the main causes of this deterioration of the environment. The earth is our mother: she protects us, she fulfills us, and she cares for our needs (economic, social, and religious). As humans we are related to the earth: we are part of it. Our vocation is to take good care of it, but we behave as devastators of the nature: we exploit it. Because we make abusive use of it, we do not allow others to have access to this gift of God, especially the future generations. "Responsibility for nature and creation is part of our faith" (John Paul II)

Consciousness is being raised more and more. If we want to avoid catastrophes, we have to work to safeguard the ecology. Some have already started: planting trees for instance. Here in Mozambique, the authorities encourage the plantation of trees in primary and secondary schools; there is also a policy for its local community to create its forest.

Finally, it is an obligation and a duty of justice. Besides, we refer to this ministry as JPIC whereby the “IC” stands for “Integrity of Creation”. This dimension is fully part of it and is essential. There is a link between ecology and peace, health, economy, politics. And all this is also linked to religion. There is a strong bond between the Creator and his creation.

“Our planet offers us all that man needs, but not all that man envies” (Gandhi)



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