

THE WOUNDED WORLD IS OUR COMMON HOUSE

Seeing

The motto "*WITNESSES OF THE REDEEMER: In Solidarity for Mission to a wounded world*" is inspiring the apostolic life of the Redemptorists during the present sexennium. For us today, it is evident that the reality of this planet, our Common House (Pope Francis), enters within our understanding of the "wounded world." Our planet, this complex living organism, is being seriously and directly affected by human activity.

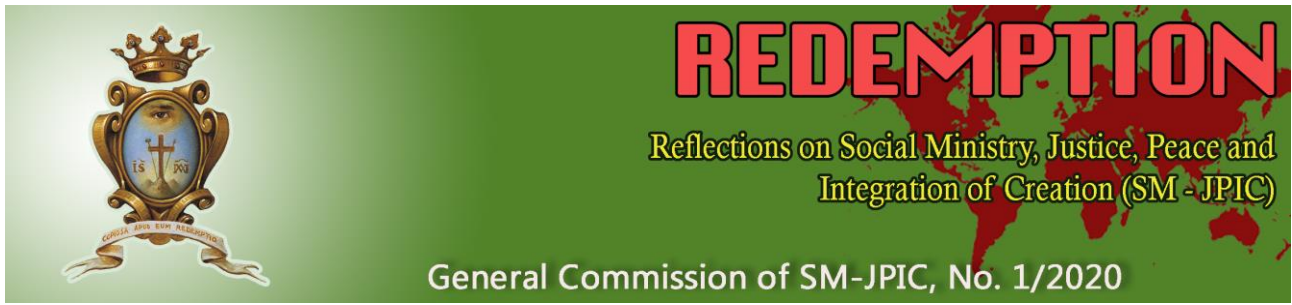
In the present time, Redemptorists are becoming increasingly aware of new and emerging pastoral challenges such as the environmental threat. For this reason, the last General Chapter assumed the challenge of living in solidarity with the most disadvantaged, and one of them is this world, hurt by the abusive and irresponsible behaviors of human beings.

The environmental crisis is a reality that is confirmed not only by the scientific reports and daily news but also from our own personal experience; each of us in way or another, directly or indirectly, to a greater or lesser extent, has experienced the rigors and consequences of climate change produced by global warming, which in turn is caused by the greenhouse effect. The road to global warming is a chain of events that has the human activity as the first link; it is a fact that since the industrial revolution and in its desire for production, self - destructive practices of consumption and use of natural resources have been consolidating.

A significant number of experts in this field agree to accept that climate change will continue to worsen unless the necessary measures are taken. In 2018, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ came to the conclusion that to minimize the serious threats of climate change, rising temperatures should be limited to 1.5° C and 2° C. Some scholars have even pointed out that we have until 2030 to correct greenhouse gas emissions before reaching a point of no return. Despite the scientific evidence, statistics and natural disasters, many governments, institutions and individuals from the general public seem to put little attention to these facts. Meanwhile, the raising of temperatures continue to produce disastrous consequences such as melting of the ice masses of the poles which, in turn, increase the level of water of the seas; in addition, due to the increase of violent natural phenomena such as hurricanes and typhoons, tornadoes, droughts, forest fires, floods, and the destruction of resources, especially in developing countries, the poorest and most unprotected populations are the ones that suffer the worst consequences of this situation.

Assessing

¹ Cfr. Reports of the IPCC. www.ipcc.ch



Saint Paul says “we are well aware that all of creation, until this time, has been groaning in labor pains” (Rm 8, 22). Today, these are groanings that come as a result of the greed and thirst for profit. The whole of creation groans for this healing because it is wounded. The selfishness of human beings has transformed that which from the beginning was good (Gn 1, 28) into a "pile of rubble, deserts and trash" (Pope Francis), writing their anti-genesis and hurting many forms of life, including that of the most vulnerable, the human species itself. We are facing a paradox: “How could it happen that, at the very moment of history when available economic and technological resources make it possible for us to care suitably for our common home and our human family, in obedience to God’s command, those same economic and technological resources are creating our most bitter divisions and our worst nightmares?”² The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are combined in a single voice that has its roots in the same arguments.

Destruction, suffering, and wounds inflicted on our planet Earth, and our inability to act to heal does not only affect us today but affects future generations. The human being behaves as if he were the owner of the other forms of life, so depriving himself of living the beauty of a shared life within the Common House. We must convince ourselves that we are not the center of the universe and that what we do to this world we do also to ourselves since we are all part of this unique living organism that we call Earth. For this reason, we are called to relate to nature as that gift that is given to us to care for it, and not to exploit or destroy it.

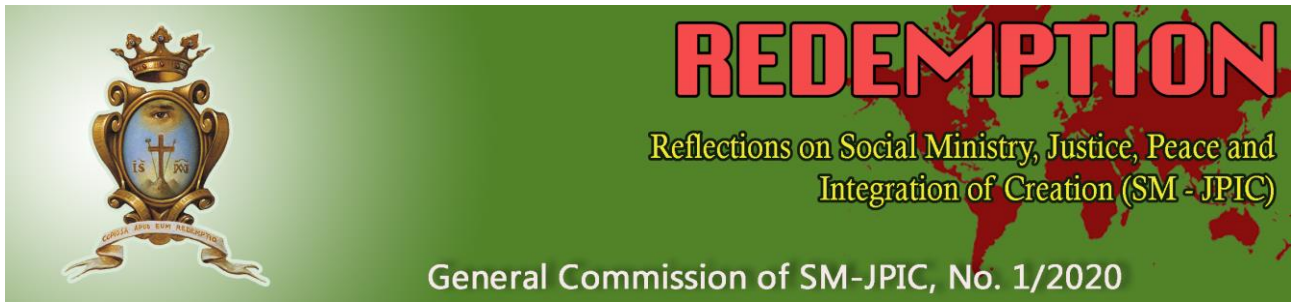
According to Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, the biblical accounts of creation indicate that "human existence is based on three fundamentally closely connected relationships: the relationship with God, with others and with the earth" (66). When these three relationships are broken because of sin, the wrong anthropocentrism is generated that loses sight of the sense of unity with all creation; creation then becomes easy prey for the ambition of a few, that is, those who are the most powerful, those who have access to economic and technological power.

But the truth is that all creatures, all forms of life are connected and are dependent on each other and therefore we need each other (Cf. LS 42). And if everything is connected, then the cry of the earth, like the cry of the poor, also finds its liberating path in the message of Christ the Redeemer. If everything is connected, the destiny of the poor being linked to the destiny of this planet, it is then here that it becomes necessary to articulate within our pastoral ministry as Redemptorists the environmental realities of today. The abundant Redemption of Jesus Christ is also offered to our Common House.

Acting

The call of Pope Francis was welcomed by the Pattaya’s General Chapter. It calls to take urgent measures against the ecological crisis and thus protect the poor and future generations. The sense of justice leads us to ask about individual and institutional responsibilities and to clearly question

² Letter of his holiness Pope Francis to the president of the pontifical Academy for Life for the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Academy, January 6, 2019.



the responsibility of industrialized countries. The General Chapter invited us to “develop a greater awareness of our environment ... to promote ecologically supportive themes in our various apostolic works and celebrations.” (Cf. Decision 12).

The Paris Agreement, signed by 195 countries, marked a milestone in the significant efforts made to address and correct the consequences of climate change. However, according to several studies published in the journal *Nature*, until 2017 none of the major industrialized nations had implemented the Agreement as it was first designed and since it was not legally binding. The COP24 Summit of 2018, that sought to lay the groundwork for activating the Paris Agreement, likewise does not seem to be functioning. The picture may be a bit gray, but this does not diminish the sense of urgency to act quickly before it is too late.

It is clear that from the point of the industrialized nations they give priority to the interests of economic growth and it seems that none are willing to go back to the right course of caring for the Common House. Fossil fuels currently generate 80 percent of the world's energy. To avoid passing the 1.5 ° C threshold, fossil fuel consumption should be reduced to zero within the next thirty or forty years. It is estimated that the only process of switching to renewable (clean) energy in order to avoid catastrophic damage from climate change would cost by 2035, 2.4 billion dollars per year (Cfr. IPCC). No country seems willing to take on this burden.

In our search for concrete actions, we may sense that, as a Church, Congregation or individuals, it is beyond our capacity to implement agreements such as that of Paris; this is a task that corresponds to governments. But since we are called to a global conversion we can start with personal change, perhaps assessing the way we consume and interact with the Earth. What we can do individually, in our local communities and our Christian communities, matters in the common efforts to alleviate the wounded world. It is all about accepting the appeal that the General Chapter made to the Redemptorists to live and build solidarity.

We need to re-imagine our narrative about Redemption and our missionary work so that it favors the formation of environmental conscience and consciousness that contributes to reversing phenomena such as global warming, severe environmental pollution and the destruction of its ecosystems. Our pastoral ministry and our theological-moral tradition constitute ideal scenarios and tools for these purposes. Our faith tells us that Christ the Redeemer is the Lord of Life who is at the center of all creation. The time has arrived to launch a new mystique that leads us today to establish mutually enriching relationships with other forms of life on this unique planet in which we all live, our common home.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



REDEMPTION

Reflections on Social Ministry, Justice, Peace and
Integration of Creation (SM - JPIC)

General Commission of SM-JPIC, No. 1/2020

- If we perceive that we have borrowed the Earth and the place where we live from future generations, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us...?” (LS, 160).
- How do my consumption habits and -personal and communitarian- lifestyle, contribute to worsening or solving the environmental problems of our Common House?
- What relevance do I give to environmental issues within my apostolic life and my continuing formation? How are these issues integrated into my Redemptorist spirituality?