

Pastor's Corner - November 20, 2011 - Ecological Justice

No matter where we turn these days we hear expressed over and over again concerns about the economic situation of our local communities, of our province, of our country and of our world. Forgotten it seems the concern about what our economic actions are doing to our planet in the long term. So it was refreshing to hear of a meeting which reminded all of us how the Creator God gifted us with this planet and made us stewards of this planet requiring us to maintain a balance between economic activity and environmental stewardship. In Ottawa on October 25 leaders of 21 faith communities and of 5 faith-based communities issued a call for leadership and action on climate change asking the political leaders to look at the world's religious traditions for the necessary moral and spiritual resources to meet the climate change crisis. For the many skeptics in our country and elsewhere they used some strong words: **"We recognize that at its root the unprecedented human contribution to climate change is symptomatic of a spiritual deficit: excessive self-interest, destructive competition, and greed have given rise to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. ...** Our faith traditions and sacred texts call upon us all, individuals, civil society, businesses, industry, and governments, to consider the spiritual dimensions of the crisis of ocean and climate change; to take stock of our collective behavior; to transform cultures of consumerism and waste into cultures of sustainability; and to respect the balance between economic activity and stewardship. ... **We see people as more than consumers with unlimited appetites. The foundations for a sustainable economy include the values of restraint, cooperation, and reciprocity. We believe we must work together in transforming cultures of self-interest and unprecedented consumption into cultures of justice for all.** All religious traditions uphold the nobility of the human spirit, calling on us to seek moderation and service to the common good. ... Our everyday choices about food, transportation, clothing and entertainment are all practical expressions of what we value. ... **We need to seek coherence between our beliefs and our actions**, so that our lives and consumption habits reflect our relationship with the rest of humanity and the Earth itself." Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict in Caritas in Veritate have expressed similar views based on the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Unfortunately, rich countries like Canada have often hesitated or refused to accept their responsibility and to adapt their policies in a serious way: "For high-income nations such as Canada, justice demands that our governments shoulder a greater share of the economic burden of adaptation mitigation, first and foremost, because of access to greater means, but also because of an historic role in contributing to its causes. **We have a moral imperative to act.**" In a call for leadership and action these spiritual leaders turn also to us: "In our neighbourhoods and communities, in businesses and organizations, we need to change wasteful patterns of production and consumption. This calls for a cultural transformation that brings the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness, and into more responsible practices. **We cannot wait for others to act but instead must lead by example.** Religious organizations, public institutions, and businesses all have important roles to play in promoting **ethical consumption and more sustainable lifestyles and practices in their everyday operations.**" Maybe we could take the dust off the environmental policy which your parish pastoral council of 2005 passed not only for parish use but also for the use in each home!

This year's fall campaign of Development and Peace, with its theme "*Together, we hold the future in our hands*", also reiterates basic elements of an ecological justice and makes the connections between ecological issues, agricultural production and the exploitation of natural resources. I would urge you to read and reflect on the very informative background material provided by Development and Peace as well as to participate in the card signing whereby we express our solidarity. Let us remember that today's ocean and climate challenges call us to a new solidarity with the people of the Global South and to a new ecological spirituality based on the Gospel and the Church's social teaching. Over many decades now numerous encyclicals have called for integral human development which concerns the well being of every person and of the whole person in every dimension, economic, political, social and spiritual: **"Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society (Caritas in Veritate, 51)."**

Shalom,

Ja Rolf, OP