

NETWORK 
Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • MARCH/APRIL 2009

Ecological Justice

dear members

Like many of you, we here at NETWORK are seriously challenged by the economic crisis in our country and world. But I have discovered the benefit of money worries is that we come together in some new ways as a community to enhance our commitment to justice. I can't tell you how touched I am by the way our Board and staff have pulled together to do even more with the little we have!

Staff volunteered to forego the salary raise that we needed in this very expensive city. We are doubling up in offices, cutting corners wherever we can. And we are working to expand our revenue in new ways. Everyone is pitching in and making a big difference.

This has led us to develop the **NETWORK Capitol Campaign 2009**. Now for those of you who are your own spell-checkers, you might notice that usually a capital campaign is spelled with an "a" and is for a building project. But our campaign is different!

Our "Capitol Campaign" is a concerted effort to raise money to realize our mission working in the Capitol itself and on Capitol Hill. Therefore, the building we refer to is the domed structure here in Washington, where we build our efforts to maintain and increase our capacity to influence federal policy. We are inviting everyone to make significant financial commitments for the two years of the 111th Congress so that we can continue our important work.

Won't you partner with us to keep our work going in the U.S. Capitol? That's a campaign worth supporting, don't you think?

Simone Campbell, SSS

Ecological concern has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible. . . The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic.

—*Renewing the Earth*,
U.S. Catholic Bishops (1992)

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DAVID JOYNER

NETWORK

A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

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To Bring Us Together in New Ways

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

I suppose *terror* might be too strong a word to express the heartbreaking reality of this economic crisis. I see unemployment numbers in the news and feel the vibration of stories of individuals who have lost jobs, cannot find jobs, or fear not being able to make ends meet with cutbacks in hours and salaries. I experience every day at NETWORK the generosity of staff willing to pull together when times are tough and money scarce. And I wonder in the dark how we are going to get out of this mess that we have made.

I have often thought about the comment that Michael Strautmanis, co-chair of the Obama transition team, made to our Catholic faith group when we met with him in December. He said that the new administration does not want to waste significant opportunities for change that are hidden in the crises we face. I think this is smart and right, but as I peer into the dark of this crisis it is difficult sometimes to make out the shape of the new opportunity.

What I do see is that we are learning again as a nation that what happens to one sector of our economy affects us all. The “housing bubble” caused by the sub-prime mortgage debacle was really caused not by the borrowers trying to buy homes, but by the greed of lenders seeking more and more commissions for making loans. This greed created a domino effect. It has caused me to quit buying much of anything. I am more

mindful of the cost of everything and have even quit buying “designer lettuce” in the grocery store—which I must say is hard for a Californian.

At NETWORK, it is evident that many of you, our members, are having similar struggles. Retirement funds and investment portfolios have shrunk dramatically. Much of the wealth that we thought we had is gone, and here at NETWORK donations are dramatically down.

It seems that we are poised in puzzlement for what comes next. Where is the new equilibrium? Where is the new growth? Candidly, I’m not sure. But in the obscure future, I have begun to think that the essential element for each of us is doing whatever our core mission is. As an organization we are focusing on our core mission to impact federal legislation for the benefit of vulnerable people and Creation. But this very effort to focus has made it clear that we cannot do this work alone. We educate, organize and lobby around federal policy; but we need to be in relationship with others in order to meet the broader needs of society. We are convening a meeting of several national Catholic social justice groups

to see how we can be more collaborative and supportive of each others’ core missions in these challenging times.

This leads me to think that the opportunity that is wrapped in this crisis might be a new development of interdependent relationships. Necessity might be calling us to put down some of our misguided thought that we have THE way for social change (or God likes NETWORK best!). Maybe we are learning that each of us has a place in the scheme of things and we need to be smarter in our coordination of core missions. It could create a new chapter in collaborative work.

I think this might be true personally as well. If I am secure in what I have to offer and what I need, then I can let in the gifts and needs of those around me. It is these gifts and needs that will break our hearts and create something new. This is the basis for real community.

So I have a hunch that the opportunity lurking in the dark of the economic crisis is to bring us together in new ways, knowing that we can neither live nor do this work alone. It is as Mary Oliver says in her poem *Lead*:

I tell you this
to break your heart,
by which I mean only
that it break open and never
close again
to the rest of the world.

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK Executive Director.



Faith, Ecology and Economy

BY MARIE DENNIS

“Clearly the time is at hand—indeed, it is overdue—for a grand reconciliation between humans, human systems, and the environment.”

—Thomas Lovejoy, foreword to *Right Relationships: Building a Whole Earth Economy* by Peter Brown and Geoffrey Garver

Despite their enthusiasm, depth and authenticity, worldwide celebrations at the election and inauguration of Barack Obama as 44th president of the United States could not dispel the ominous indicators of economic, social and ecological failure that served as a backdrop to the euphoria.

A meltdown that began in major financial institutions and on Wall Street has exposed the level of our national gullibility to purveyors of phantom wealth. And globally, we are just beginning to understand the extent of universal vulnerability to the unmitigated greed of some and to the ideology of an unregulated, unaccountable right to accumulate wealth. The economic failure we are facing is exacerbated by a social failure of monumental proportions, whereby macroeconomic policies and statistics have masked the depth of endemic poverty in almost every country and the enormous and growing gap between those who are very rich and the majority who are poor.

Today's Ecological and Socio-economic Crises

And as we try to absorb the scale of the global social and economic crisis, a massive ecological crisis is also coming into focus.

In Kisii, Kenya, people living at high altitudes are dying from malaria. Mosquitoes are surviving at higher elevations than ever before and infecting communities with little or no resistance to the disease.

In the Peten of Guatemala, the Mayan people, like so many others around the world, are no longer able to depend on the rains coming when they should for the planting of crops. And when the rains do arrive, they often don't stop on time, and the crops are ruined.

In Nepal, Peru and Bolivia, excessive melting of glaciers on some of the world's tallest mountains is resulting in flooding, erosion and the loss of a reliable water supply for millions of people.

Around the world, life's most basic resources are every day rendered more

scarce. Food insecurity, rising sea levels, warming temperatures, the frequency of terrifying storms, and the accelerated extinction of species are harbingers of natural systems and patterns spinning out of control, with potentially dire consequences for humans and for all species in the earth community.

Intrinsic connections between the socio-economic crisis and the ecological crisis, including global warming, are increasingly evident. A now-global economic system that has marginalized billions of people and brought empty prosperity to a few has driven the wanton exploitation and destruction of natural systems, species and the earth's limited resources.

The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) says, “The planet's ecological, social and economic systems are on the verge of catastrophic change for which few societies are adequately prepared.” They describe this change as emerging from the convergence of several advancing conditions, including accel-



FLOREA MARIUS CATALIN

ating climate change, the imminent end of cheap energy supplies (“peak oil”), the depletion of most resources basic to the industrial system, the spread of societies dependent on over-consumption of commodities made from the above resources, and the destruction of societies that offer traditional alternative models.

Addressing the Ethical Implications

At the same time, breathtaking scientific discoveries are unveiling the 13.7 billion-year-old and yet-unfolding universe story. Nourished by the likes of Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, Thomas Berry, CP, and Miriam Therese MacGillis, OP, religious and ethical reflection on this new cosmology has led many people of faith to embrace a wholly new sense of our own location as part of a larger earth community and a cosmic reality with which our own future is inextricably linked.

The ethical implications of this insight are extremely important in an era of economic, social and ecological crisis, highlighting the need to design a way forward that ends the false dichotomy between human wellbeing and ecological integrity. The pursuit of quantitative economic growth that depends on the expanded exploitation of natural resources and results in the continued destruction of eco-systems will have to end. The economic system that has been dominant globally will have to be replaced by economies that produce measurable improvements in the real quality of life for all, but especially for marginalized and impoverished people.

Rooted in this conviction, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has initiated a program on “Faith, Economy and Ecology” to help bring the wisdom and insights of faith communities enlivened by the new cosmology to already well-underway efforts to transform our growth-focused economic system and fossil fuel-based way of life. With a growing Faith, Economy and Ecology



DOON STOHN

(FEE) Working Group, we are “sitting at the feet of” ecological economists and attempting to bring the current debates about economic recovery and ecological survival more closely together. We are working with many others who are leading the world, especially the global North, away from excessive fossil-fuel dependence and unwarranted consumption, as well as with organizations working for economic justice through, for example, fair trade, debt cancellation and corporate accountability. We believe they are natural allies.

For over 35 years, theologians, scientists, economists and others have pointed to this inevitable collision between an economy focused on the unbounded creation and accumulation of wealth and the limited resources and carrying capacity of our planet. The controversial 1972 Club of Rome report, *Limits to Growth*, made headlines as oil prices soared. But a deep belief that new discoveries and inventions would keep opening up new possibilities for growth enabled politicians to postpone unpopular decisions.

Soon, the sweeping emphasis on unfettered, open free-market economies was ushered in by Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and others; promoted around

the world by the international financial institutions; reinvigorated by the end of the Cold War; and institutionalized by free trade agreements. A neoliberal model of globalization saw the rapid spread of what Herman Daly calls “uneconomic growth.” The pursuit of markets encouraged wasteful consumption, and financial innovation took the place of a real economy. Growth, used universally as the measure of a “healthy” economy, had little to do with real “development” or an improving quality of life. Meanwhile, a commitment to the common good and social justice was lost in the quest for maximum personal wealth.

Now, however, the neoliberal consensus is falling apart, and with it, the idea that global economic integration will lead to steadily rising prosperity everywhere. Furthermore, even as contemporary scientific exploration reveals the urgency of consciously structuring human endeavors within the larger community of life, too many proposed solutions to the current economic quagmire are rooted in an understanding of the nature of the universe that is unaware of resource limits or natural processes for the regeneration of life on Earth. While positive steps in response to the climate crisis seem inevitable, unless the economic system itself is drastically changed the human community will still overwhelm the Earth’s carrying capacity.

The April 2008 Conference on Economic Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity called for “a paradigm shift from the general and

Religious and ethical reflection on this new cosmology has led many people of faith to embrace a wholly new sense of our own location as part of a larger earth community and a cosmic reality with which our own future is inextricably linked.

unlimited pursuit of economic growth to a concept of 'right-sizing' the global and national economies by reducing the global ecological footprint (including the carbon footprint) to a sustainable level. In countries where the per capita footprint is greater than the sustainable global level, right-sizing implies a reduction to this level within a reasonable timeframe. In countries where severe poverty remains, right-sizing implies increasing consumption by those in poverty as quickly as possible, in a sustainable way, to a level adequate for a decent life..."

Looking to the Future

This urgent agenda should engage the Obama administration, Congress and every U.S.

American in the coming years. Ongoing food and water crises, the impact of extractive industries, climate change, and the end of cheap oil demand a radical transformation of existing systems and patterns of life related to transportation, food production and marketing, water use, manufacturing, consumption and energy use. The impact of volatile oil prices is already being felt in the U.S. and around the world, most painfully by poor people and low-income communities. In many cases, food and water crises threaten their very survival.

But the future is not without hope. We are at a moment when some important shifts in economic structures and "business as usual" could radically improve the outcome for the earth community and for the entire planet. We believe we can muster the creative imagination and political will to transform our way of life and the economic system that supports it to one that honors the dignity of all life; respects the carrying capacity of earth, resource limits and natural processes; ensures right relationships among human beings and with the rest of Creation; and is in harmony with the rhythms of the universe.

Slowly, humanity is recognizing the need to reorganize its economic and socio-political endeavors within the



ISTOCKPHOTO

framework of a new cosmology based on contemporary scientific exploration and study of the universe. Such a reframing, interpreted and given meaning through faith, would provide the context for a value system and worldview capable of inspiring human communities that are consciously rooted in right relationships with each other and within the larger community of life.

Renewed, more just relationships between human beings and the rest of Creation are essential, as are new personal, family and community lifestyles that are encouraged and supported by state, national and global policies, structures and systems. Our moral obligation to the near and the distant future is clear. Neither the U.S. economy nor the global economy can be based on the unsustainable use of resources or the assumption that constant growth is an ultimate good. Rather, we should move toward a steady-state economy that limits the use of all natural resources to the planet's capacity to regenerate and encourage local and regional economies based on sustainable energy and equity for all.

Working on a Way Forward

The Faith, Economy and Ecology Working Group meets monthly for a series of discussions based on the work of key

analysts, academics, thinkers and theologians in this area. We have been in conversation with groups like the Center for the Advancement of a Steady State Economy (CASSE), the National Center for Economic & Security Alternatives (NCEASA), those participating in the Strategic Corporate Initiative (SCI), and many others.

We are articulating key ethical questions about the growth and consumption-driven global economy and its relationship to environmental failure. We are also attempting to bring these questions and some of the policy proposals developed in response to the Obama administration and Congress, as well as to United

Nations debates on climate change, sustainable development and the future of the global economy.

To do this, we are studying carefully and attempting to generate debate about some important policy recommendations from ecological economists, including cap-and-trade systems for basic resources; ecological tax reform; limiting the range of inequality in income distribution by setting minimum and maximum incomes; freeing up the length of the work day, week and year to allow greater options for leisure or personal work; and re-regulation of international commerce, moving away from free trade, free capital mobility and globalization. For additional public policy suggestions from Herman Daly, Gus Speth, CASSE, NCEAS, SCI and others, see www.maryknollogc.org.

Many faith communities actively help their members live more simply, share their abundance, and develop a sense of respect for the Earth and responsibility for the use of natural resources. Some religious communities and traditional societies have a long history of sharing property and wealth and of mutual accountability. They are developing contemporary models for living in right relationship with each other and the whole Earth community.



Neither the U.S. economy nor the global economy can be based on the unsustainable use of resources or the assumption that constant growth is an ultimate good.

Many contemporary secular communities have also built examples of more just, sustainable and viable models of business and community organization, including producer and worker cooperatives, land trusts, community-owned utilities, worker-owned firms, community development financial institutions, community-supported agriculture, local currency, and barter systems. Some of these are beginning to assume a scale that could have a significant positive impact on our common future.

These and other yet-to-be-discovered forms of sustainable economic organization can make an important contribution to a future that is freed from dependence on fossil fuels, encourages socially and environmentally responsible lifestyles, and nurtures human security for all. Concrete examples like these can provide a solid base of experience from which to develop effective national and international policies.

Maryknoll and other FEE Working Group members bring to the table deep experiences with impoverished people worldwide. We live in communities where too many people already are hungry or lack access to potable water; where their lives are disrupted or destroyed by the global growth of extractive industries; where the impact of global warming is painfully felt.

We see people on the move around the world, driven by economic or ecological disasters, trying to survive or to find a decent quality of life. We also have had extensive interaction with more localized, indigenous economies

and believe deeply in their vision of a future that is ecologically sustainable and a practiced alternative to the present model. We clearly heard voices from the 2009 World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil:

“Real solutions to the climate crisis are being built by those who have always protected the Earth and by those who fight every day to defend their environment and living conditions. We need to globalize these solutions.

“For us, the struggles for climate justice and social justice are one and the same. It is the struggle for territories, land, forests and water, for agrarian and urban reform, food and energy sovereignty, for women’s and worker’s rights. It is the fight

for equality and justice for indigenous peoples, for peoples of the global South, for the redistribution of wealth and for the recognition of the historical ecological debt owed by the North.”

For deep transformation to become possible, however, the excessive influence of individual or corporate wealth and concentrated power in major political arenas must be brought to account. SCI recommendations, available at <http://corpethics.org>, give interesting food for thought in terms of policy directions to accomplish this. The impetus to enact serious accountability and transparency measures is strong in the wake of the scandals and bailouts now in the headlines, but accomplishing the kind of change needed in this area will not be easy.

We recognize how challenging it is to raise awareness about the need for a global economy that is at the same time environmentally sustainable and socially just. A long-term commitment to popular education, formation and community building will be needed to generate popular will in support of almost unthinkable ideas like limits to growth and maximum income or wealth. Communities of faith, working in alliance with others who have deep commitment and expertise in these areas, can play a major role in educating, motivating and advocating for systems and structures that respond to this challenge.



KRISTIAN SEPTIMIUS KROGH



Marie Dennis serves as Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

and as Co-president of Pax Christi International. For more information about the Faith, Economy and Ecology (FEE) Working Group, contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns at ogc@maryknoll.org.

The 111th Congress Convenes Under an Economic Cloud

BY MARGE CLARK, BVM, CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS, KELLY TROUT AND KATRINE HERRICK

The inauguration of President Obama on January 20 filled many of us with renewed hope for progress on many social and economic justice priorities. However, the economic distress in our nation tempers that anticipation. The money committed by the federal government to stem the downward economic spiral will cast a long shadow over this session of Congress.

We hope that the current economic crisis will inspire serious efforts on Capitol Hill to address structural problems in our economy. We also recognize that many such efforts, including healthcare reform, will require additional large investments of money. The focus on economic recovery may also require us to push harder to ensure that priorities like comprehensive immigration reform are not overshadowed. While maintaining our vision for changes in our social and economic systems, NETWORK recognizes the need to think strategically and creatively about how we can achieve them.

Economic Recovery

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on February 17. The House and Senate had

adopted the conference report on the \$787 billion economic stimulus package on February 13. Overall, about \$575 billion will go into spending and \$212 billion into tax cuts.

NETWORK advocated strongly for provisions that would most effectively respond to the needs of people who are unemployed or struggling with economic hardship. We are pleased that many of those provisions made it into the final bill (although not necessarily at the funding levels we had hoped). This includes additional funding for Medicaid, unemployment benefits, COBRA premiums for unemployed workers, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), the Child Tax Credit, housing and neighborhood assistance programs, education programs for poor and special needs children, and energy efficiency in public housing.

While we are pleased that our members' advocacy helped move Congress to support these important programs, we are also concerned about the partisan process used to craft and pass the legislation. The House vote was 246 to 183, with no Republicans in favor and seven Democratic votes against it. The Senate vote, 60 to 38, was similarly partisan. Only three Republican senators joined 55 Democrats and two independents in favor.

Our government will face many difficult decisions in the months ahead as we address the current economic crisis. We hope that future deliberations and decisions will be rooted less in partisan interests and more in a concern for the common good.

Budget

Before tackling the budget for fiscal year 2010, Congress must complete appropriations for fiscal year 2009. Congress needs to pass an Omnibus bill for FY 2009 by March 6, when funding through the Continuing Resolution approved in September will end.

Because of the transfer to a new administration and focus on economic recovery legislation, the budget process for FY 2010 will begin somewhat later this year. While we have a broad vision of the president's budget priorities, we do not expect his detailed requests for the

Need up-to-date information about legislation in Congress? Check out NETWORK's Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/>



To learn what happened to legislation you followed in the past, go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/votes/> and enter your zip code in the "Key Votes" field.



FY 2010 budget until late March or early April. As a result, look for NETWORK to mobilize constituent action regarding the budget a bit later than usual.

NETWORK anticipates that the budget process for FY 2010 will present the president, members of Congress, and our advocacy community with difficult choices. We will have to reconcile the pent-up demand to increase spending for domestic programs neglected in recent years with the need for long-term fiscal responsibility in the face of mounting national debt.

Children's Healthcare

NETWORK celebrated the long overdue passage and signing by President Obama of H.R. 2, legislation to reauthorize and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program. SCHIP provides healthcare to low-income children whose parents cannot afford private insurance but who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. NETWORK strongly advocated for this important legislation.

Because of this victory, healthcare coverage will be extended to about 4 million previously uninsured children over the next 4½ years—which means that 11 million children will be covered overall. Among other important provisions, H.R. 2 allows pregnant immigrants and the children of immigrants who are in the U.S. legally to obtain health benefits through the SCHIP program. Before the bill was signed, they had to wait five years before they were eligible.

NETWORK regards the enactment of SCHIP legislation as a critical step toward providing healthcare for the most vulnerable members of our society. It puts us one step closer to the goal of universal access to healthcare, a fundamental right.

Iraq

At NETWORK, we are still absorbing the fact that we now have new strategies

to use to address the needs of ordinary Iraqis. The Obama administration has indicated that it is very interested in responding to the needs of refugees and internally displaced Iraqis.

The administration has also indicated that its military advisers are recommending the separation of development from the military. NETWORK has advocated for this separation over the last few years.

We are now trying to see how much policy we can create through our relationships with the Obama administration and where new legislation is required. This will take a little time to discern. We expect Congress will take up a supplemental funding request for the military in late March or early April. Then we will know if our efforts to make development part of the regular budget process have been successful. Stay tuned!

Immigration

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition and other groups have been working to raise the profile of comprehensive immigration reform. It needs to happen and we are working to make it a reality. The economic crisis makes it more difficult to convince some people that the U.S. needs the labor of undocumented immigrants—even though some work in areas where there is still a labor shortage. We hope that there will be an opportunity to move the issue legislatively later this year or in early 2010. Until then, we need to keep the issue of fair and humane immigration laws alive in our communities.

Revisiting U.S. Trade Agreements

With the focus on economic recovery legislation, the campaign promise of President Obama to take action to revisit U.S. trade policies has been delayed.

Addressing workers in Michigan in June 2008, candidate Obama critiqued U.S. trade policy, noting “that our economic policies must be supported by strong and smart trade policies and that trade agreements without labor or environmental agreements are not in our long term interests. If we continue to let our trade policy be dictated by special interests, then American workers will continue to be undermined and public support for robust trade will continue to erode.”

In that same month, Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME) introduced the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act, a bill to require a review of existing trade agreements, set new terms for future agreements, and strengthen the role of Congress in trade policymaking. The sponsors noted that some of the greatest challenges ahead are to create rules for globalization that ensure economic security and the creation of quality jobs here while offering opportunities for sustainable development in poor countries. Meeting this challenge is necessary in order to counter rising income inequality and threats to our national security, global environment and public health.

NETWORK, in conjunction with the Interfaith Working Group on International Trade and Investment, met with the staff of Senator Brown and Representative Michaud over the past few months to offer support and critique of the TRADE Act. We voiced our strong conviction that trade policies should be instruments of development for all parties to the agreement.

Marge Clark, BVM, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, are NETWORK Lobbyists. Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK Executive Director. Kelly Trout and Katrine Herrick are NETWORK Associates.



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Eco-spirituality in the Philippines

From Earthquake to Mind Quake

By TERESA DAGDAG, MM

Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary, where I work, is in the Cordillera Region, the home of indigenous peoples belonging to several ethno-linguistic groups in Northern Luzon, Philippines. This is a mountainous bioregion with natural resources of gold, silver and copper as well as rivers and forests.

For centuries, local people provided communal sanctions to care for these natural resources through indigenous practices such as the *muyong* in Ifugao, where families tended the watersheds for the rice terraces. Today, since most of the Philippine forest is considered to be on public land, it is the government that mainly decides on its use.

A more aggressive government development strategy opened up mines and carved dams for hydroelectric power. Local residents cut forests to make way for *kaingin* (swidden farms) and to avail of timber products. Tree cutting has caused deadly landslides, claiming lives and property.

A tropical typhoon in 2006 caused more than 60 landslides in Baguio City and claimed the lives of two children.

In urban areas, fast increases in population prompt developers to gouge more hillsides and build upscale residential villages. Cutting trees and scraping slopes create soil instability. More residents also add to the litter in the city and contribute to heavier ecological footprints.

Maryknoll Presence in the Region

In 1928, Maryknoll Sisters arrived in Baguio City and set up a residence for missionaries who needed respite from the heat in the lowlands. Upon request, they also taught children in their convent until a new school building was constructed in 1961.

In 1990, a killer earthquake claimed hundreds of lives and countless homes and businesses. The convent was irretrievably damaged by a landslide. At the

time, I was part of the local Maryknoll Sisters community of four. Two of us were attending a meeting in Mindanao and were shocked upon our return to see a ghost town that exuded the stench of dead bodies in Burnham Park awaiting more coffins.

With the earthquake came the mind quake. The Sisters in the Philippine Region realized the urgency of responding to the ecological devastation caused by the earthquake and decided to shift our ministry focus from elementary education to Earth education. Phasing out the school, we established the Maryknoll Sisters' Center for Justice, Peace,



Vegetable plots carved out of mountains, an example of swidden farms or *kaingin*.

and Integrity of Creation (MSCJPIC)—or Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary, its popular name.

Replacing the demolished convent, the Sisters built a bio-shelter as home for the humans on the eco-trek called “Cosmic Journey,” a creative 14-station walk that shows the gradual unfolding of the universe. In this way, the Sisters showed a significant shift in consciousness from anthropocentric to cosmic, from human-centered to earth- or universe-centered perspectives.

Ecological Dangers

The Philippines is losing its forest cover at an extremely fast rate. In the 1900s, many areas were already damaged in the Central Cordilleras when the forest cover in the country was still 70% of the total land area (21 million hect-

ares). The arrival of the Americans introduced logging for export since demand for tropical woods made it profitable. Due to persistent logging, mining licenses and claims, Environmental Science for Social Change predicted in 1999 that our remaining forests will dwindle down to 320,000 hectares by 2010.

Government policy incentives contribute to forest loss and degradation. Market forces fuel the government's aggressive development strategy, making large-scale extraction of precious metals from inside our Earth's surface a priority even though chemicals used in mining pose grave danger to our rivers and humans. Development aggression is the term used by those who disagree with this strategy, which only benefits the country's elite. Unfortunately, the government has now opened forests to mining operations through the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. About 23 priority mining projects have already been identified, and these include areas in the Cordillera Region in Luzon and Surigao, Davao and Zamboanga in Mindanao, Leyte and Palawan. Some of these are in protected areas and ancestral domains. (Haribon Papers, 2005)

Agricultural crops carry toxic chemicals from inorganic fertilizers that invade the human body, poisoning body parts and causing life-threatening illnesses. Women who engage in vegetable farming in Buguias, Benguet are very vulnerable to such illnesses. The effects of damaging ecological systems demonstrate themselves in the illnesses caused by toxic chemicals not only in humans but also in plants, other animals and the soil itself. The latter, when saturated with toxic materials, becomes useless for agriculture, a leading livelihood in the Cordillera.

Eco-feminists show close relationships between women and ecology. Women are most affected by the worsening condition of the ecosystem because they must ensure that there is potable



Earth Day 2008 parade with staff of Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary showing their placards.

water to drink and clean water with which to cook and wash. Women walk to sources of safe water that are kilometers away from their homes in the mountainous areas. Of course, children are also obliged to haul water.

In this bioregion, although decisions are made communally, decision makers, often the community elders, are mostly male. Sustainable development requires free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) on the part of the community. This implies the full cooperation of its members. So-called development projects that potentially benefit communities should be subject to the scrutiny of those who will benefit as well as those who may suffer.

Taking Action

In April 2007, Maryknoll Sisters led the formation of the Green Initiative Network of some 20 organizations to assess the commitment of political candidates to environmental concerns. We invited mayoral and congressional candidates to present their platforms for the environment. The network covers Baguio City and neighboring towns in Benguet Province: La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, and Tuba, known as the BLIST area.

Clean-up of the Balili River in La Trinidad is a project of the Baguio Regreening Movement (BRM). Cordillera Green Network (CGN) implements a forestry-and-organic agriculture project in Kabayan, Benguet. Particular groups are responsible for specific watersheds. If taken seriously, a better scenario is predicted to increase forest cover up to 19% based on the key role of the community in forest management.

Baguio City is also plagued by poor solid waste management. Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary participates in meetings of Alay sa Kalinisan (Offer to Cleanliness) in the city. Green Initiative sponsored a workshop on solid waste management in August 2008. Recently, there was a call for the city mayor to conduct a study about the feasibility of converting the open mine pit in Itogon, Benguet into a site for the city's engineered sanitary landfill (ESL) project. It will be another disaster if this project is implemented.

Each of Baguio's 128 *barangays* [local districts] aims to establish a material recovery facility (MRF) that stores non-biodegradable waste materials for recycling. At the World Environment Day Forum held in Baguio in 2008, only four were reported to be fully functional; it is taking other *barangays* longer to organize their members for proper solid waste management.

Earth Day 2008 was a call to people to heed warnings about the dangers of environmental neglect and the importance of ecological vigilance. As lead convener of the Green Initiative Network, Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary had a major role in planning a parade that used slogans for a healthy planet based on UN ecological priorities: Climate Change, Biodiversity, Food Security, Solid Waste Management, Population/Human Settlements and Renewable Energy.

There is growing consciousness in the Philippines of the need to focus on protecting the environment. "Signos" ("Fatal Signs") is a DVD on the threats of climate change narrated by Richard Gutierrez, a young actor and Greenpeace advocate.

Another TV program in Tagalog on climate change anchored by woman Senator Loren Legarda was recently aired and is now available to the public.

Ecology and Spirituality

If faith is "the search for deeper meaning, the journey of opening our hearts to understanding the mystery within which all life is held" (O'Murchu, public lecture, 2009), then it has much to do with the care of ecological systems. These systems make up God's creation, the universe which is the primary revelation of God among us.

As human, I am part of these ecological systems and a manifestation of the unfolding of the universe. In fact, I am the universe that has become aware of itself. Because of this, it behooves us humans to care for this locus of revelation for us. I feel and experience God's grandeur in the beauty of creation and terror wrought by environmental devastation and extinction. Caring for the Earth's ecological systems is an imperative for us who believe that it is a Christian responsibility. Caring for God's creation is a way of giving praise to the Creator who has gifted us with them. An eco-spirituality calls us to develop right and just relationships with these ecological systems.

Global warming, climate change and environmental devastation are upon us. It is in light of these innumerable problems on a global scale particularized in different specific bioregions that our work for integral Earth education was conceived. The 1990 earthquake was a wake-up call to address massive environmental destruction that ripped mountains, brought down our buildings, and claimed more than a thousand human lives in this country. The environmental clock is ticking. We must respond with serious purpose so that we can bequeath a healthy planet to our children and the next generations.

Teresa Dagdag, MM, is the Director of the Maryknoll Sisters Center for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, the Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary in Baguio City. She has a PhD in Anthropology from the University of the Philippines. Photos courtesy of the author.



Catholics Respond to Global Warming

BY DAN MISLEH

From John Paul II's 1990 World Day of Peace message to the U.S. bishops' 2001 statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, Catholic leaders have urged us to recover the ancient tradition of reverence for Creation. Just this August while visiting an Italian diocese, Pope Benedict addressed a priest's question about climate change:

Creation is groaning—we perceive it, we almost hear it—and awaits human beings who will preserve it in accordance with God. The brutal consumption of Creation begins where God is not... [W]e [must] find a new way of living, a discipline of making sacrifices, a discipline of the recognition of others to whom creation belongs as much as it belongs to us...a discipline of responsibility with regard to the future of others and to our own future, because it is a responsibility in the eyes of the One who is our Judge and...Redeemer...

U.S. bishops and other faith leaders have been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that public policies addressing climate change take into consideration the requirements of all of Creation. This is especially true for the most vulnerable people among us since they will suffer the harshest impacts of climate change and they possess few resources to adapt or get out of harm's way.

In tandem with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' work at the public policy level, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change—which enjoys the bishops' support and whose members include a dozen other national Catholic partners, including NETWORK—

works to ensure that Catholics embrace Church teaching on environmental justice. The work places a priority on prudent action in the face of uncertainty, promotion of the common good, and protection of people in poverty.

In dioceses, parishes, schools and especially religious communities, the Catholic faithful are responding to the climate crisis and environmental justice in inspirational ways. In the Diocese of Stockton, California, Bishop Blaire dedicates one Sunday in October, Pro-Life Month, to the care of Creation because "the environment is the envelope that holds all life." Texas bishops also recently voiced concerns about plans for several new coal power plants because of toxins from the smokestacks. They urged state officials to harness other energy sources like wind and solar.

And I write this article from Presentation Retreat Center in the hills above Los Gatos, California, where the sisters have constructed an impressive welcome center and dining hall with a gold certification from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system.

Building on these efforts, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change is launching *Catholics for Climate Justice: The St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and Poor People*. This is an unprecedented outreach effort to every U.S. parish, highlighting the impressive array of activities already happening in our faith community and encouraging Catholics to renew our Covenant with God to be caretakers of God's wonderful gift of life.

At the heart of the effort is the *St. Francis Pledge*. Catholic individuals, parishes, dioceses and organizations are encouraged to do five things:

- TO PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and protect people who are poor and vulnerable
- TO LEARN about and educate others on the moral dimensions of climate change
- TO ASSESS our participation—as individuals and organizations—in contributing to climate change
- TO ACT to change our choices and behaviors contributing to climate change
- TO ADVOCATE Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact people who are poor and vulnerable.

In this way, the Catholic community will respond to the call of Pope Benedict:

Before it is too late, [we must] make courageous decisions that reflect knowing how to re-create a strong alliance between [humanity] and the earth.

Dan Misleh is the Executive Director of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (www.catholicsandclimatechange.org). See page 13 for more information about the St. Francis Pledge. To learn about U.S. bishops' actions on ecological justice, see www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/climate/backgrounders.shtml and www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.shtml.



“Once we start living in a way that is people-friendly to all of God’s family, we will also be environment-friendly.”

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Raise the Clamor for Climate Justice!

Climate change is now widely recognized as a looming environmental danger that affects the entire global community. It is less widely recognized as a matter of global justice.

In the U.S., many people are waking up to the reality of our warming climate by taking small steps toward lessening their own adverse climate impact—for instance, by switching to energy-efficient light bulbs, weatherizing their homes, and buying more fuel-efficient vehicles.

But are our individual measures enough? What is our collective responsibility, as citizens of a nation responsible for a disproportionate amount of climate-warming emissions?

How can we act in solidarity with people in the developing world who already feel the impact of climate change—through worsening droughts, more frequent natural disasters, water scarcity, and increasing malnutrition and disease?

How can we respond as people of faith who believe in the principle of responsible care for Creation?

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change is launching an important new initiative to promote reflection

about our role in climate change and to galvanize a common Catholic commitment to address its impacts. To guide Catholics in responding to this call to care for Creation and stand with poor and vulnerable people affected by our changing climate, the Coalition has developed the *St. Francis Pledge*. Read the pledge below. Then see the next page for resources that can prepare and guide you in your efforts to promote climate justice.

The St. Francis Pledge

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God’s creation and protect poor and vulnerable people;
- **LEARN** about and educate others on the moral dimensions of climate change;
- **ASSESS** our participation—as individuals and organizations—in contributing to climate change (i.e., consumption and conservation);
- **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors contributing to climate change and;
- **ADVOCATE** Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact poor and vulnerable people.



DAN TERRO

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.

“Securing the blessings of liberty for ourselves and future generations requires that we shape our economic and regulatory systems so they are balanced and sustainable. We cannot have healthy human organisms on a sick planet because all life relies on interdependent, healthy ecosystems.”

—Platform for the Common Good

Pray

Begin each meeting with prayer, such as the prayer of St. Francis:

*Dear mother earth, who day by day unfolds
rich blessing on our way,
O praise God! Alleluia!
The fruits and flowers that verdant grow, let
them [her] praise abundant show.
O praise God, O praise God, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Alleluia.*

This and additional prayer resources can be found at: www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/resources/prayer.html

Learn

How is climate change impacting different parts of the world, and especially people in poverty?

What are possible policy responses?

- ❖ www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/resources/education.html
- ❖ www.maryknollogc.org/ecology/climate-change.htm
- ❖ www.pewclimate.org

“Ecological responsibility requires that we manage and distribute material resources across all humanity and into future generations.”

—Platform for the Common Good

Assess

How do I and the organizations to which I belong contribute to the sources of climate change?

How can I be a part of the solution?

- ❖ www.coolcongregations.org
- ❖ www.energystar.gov
- ❖ www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx

Act

Commit to change personal behaviors harmful to our climate and to work with congregations and businesses to reduce their contributions to adverse climate change.

- ❖ www.greenpeace.org/usa/getinvolved/green-guide
- ❖ www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/
- ❖ www.theregenerationproject.org/takeaction.htm

Advocate

For policies to reduce our individual and collective energy use, move our economy toward reliance on clean energy, and fund climate adaptation programs for vulnerable populations already losing their land and crops.

- ❖ www.catholicsandclimatechange.org
- ❖ www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/
- ❖ www.nrdc.org/legislation/default.asp

Written by NETWORK Associates Katrine Herrick and Kelly Trout

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.



Yes, Virginia, 727 Votes Can Make a Difference

By JEAN SAMMON

Tom Perriello, known to many in the interfaith community for his international justice and peace work, is now the new representative from Virginia's fifth district. He defeated the incumbent last November by less than 0.25% of the total vote—727 votes.

I spoke with Representative Perriello and his press secretary Jessica Barba (a NETWORK member) on the day the House voted on the economic recovery bill. Here are excerpts:

What made you decide to run for Congress?

I've always felt called by my faith to social justice work. I felt the best way to create change was through the non-profit sector. After a decade or so of working there we found ourselves continually bumping up against decisions being made in politics and asking the question: If faith calls me to community service, why not public service?

My hope is that others will look at this race and say: Maybe the same way I am passionate about serving people in the community, I can serve people through policy as well.

What made people choose to vote for you?

We made an investment in grassroots organizing and direct voter contact. That meant that by the time people saw me on television, they had already met me or a member of my team. If you're trying to change the terms of the debate you can only do that through conversation.

The second thing was conviction politics. We talked about right and wrong, not right and left. For example, we had a very strong position on torture, which might not normally be on everyone's

mind but people in the district appreciated that I had principles that I was willing to stick my neck out for. Sometimes it's more important that you have strong convictions than it is for people to agree with you on them.

What have your first few weeks in Congress been like?

I assumed it was going to be difficult as a freshman to be part of the conversation, but in the caucus room there's very real debate. On the recovery package, I think Congress managed to make the White House proposal much stronger because we sat there and deliberated with each other on it.

We've had Republicans and Democrats at new member retreats and I've found that a lot of the new Republicans share a desire for

energy independence and smart investments like infrastructure. My sense is that new members want to be creative and put problem-solving ahead of partisanship.

How do you balance your responsibility to people in your district with responsibility for our country and our world?

Part of what I wanted to do in the campaign was give people an authentic sense of who I am. Then people can understand that, for example, I'm already spending serious time on new approaches in Afghanistan—but that's not in place of focusing on job creation



Congressman Tom Perriello.

in the district. It's something people understood that I had a passion for, and came to Congress with a different perspective than either political party.

On matters of principle you don't compromise—but on matters of priorities, I belong to the

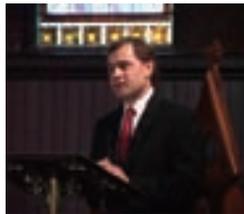
people of the district. My district has a little bit of everything—a university town, old rustbelt factory towns, and rural agricultural areas. So I can't represent my district without taking a pretty broad view.

What can Congress do to create green jobs?

The greatest source of job creation in the next twenty years will probably be in the new energy economy—green jobs. The question is whether they will be created here or overseas. I would like us to create incentives or at least get rid of reverse incentives that stand in the way of that kind of economy happening here.

The federal government doesn't have to decide if it's going to be wind or solar, but it has to put the infrastructure in place. We can build a modern electric

grid, which we need for security and efficiency reasons anyway, and in doing so, unleash market investments that will ripple across the economy.



Campaigning at the University of Virginia.



In Sierra Leone.

***“The bottom line is
always the same for
me: NETWORK is the
Catholic heart in the
public arena...”***

—Sister Joan Chittister, OSB

NETWORK  **Capitol Campaign 2009**

Join with the Board of NETWORK as we secure our future as a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace. Our work for social and economic transformation is threatened by financial challenges confronting most nonprofit groups. In response, we urge all who share NETWORK’s Gospel commitment to justice to invest generously in the **NETWORK Capitol Campaign 2009**. Please watch your mail for information on campaign goals and ways you can personally support our mission.

Mary Ann Gaido
NETWORK Board Chair
March 2009

Why do I support the **NETWORK Capitol Campaign 2009**?

Because for nearly four decades, NETWORK has worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices and interests of people in poverty are included in our national decision-making.

Ironically, NETWORK is embarking on its “Capitol Campaign” just as its members are ourselves confronting economic challenges. But perhaps that is no accident. For that is when giving really counts.

We must trust that what our faith tradition tells us—that God loves a cheerful giver, and that our gifts will be returned a hundredfold—remains doubly true in this time of uncertainty

Now—as we experience the vulnerability with which people in poverty have always been saddled—is the very time when we must trust in God and share what we have abundantly.

I ask and challenge you, especially now, when it may not be easy, to support the **NETWORK Capitol Campaign 2009**.

Mary T. Yelenick
NETWORK Board Member
Chair, **NETWORK Capitol Campaign 2009**