

## DISCUSSION ON LAUDATO SI', ST. JOHN XXIII PARISH, GENEVA

Saturday, 28 January 2017

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### Group C (Care for the Poor)

**Facilitator - Shyami Puvimanasinghe**

### Participants

Shyami Puvimanasinghe, LSC, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bob Orton, Latter Day Saints (LDS) Charities, Joy Orton, LDS Charities, Cassandra Moll, Quaker United Nations Office, Christine Klekr, Parishioner, Denise Yeoman, Eimear Farrell, LSC, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Evelyn Von Steffens, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Francis Kofi, Parishioner, John Puvimanasinghe, LSC, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Johnny Camaddo, Lutheran Church, Maria Mercedes Rossi, Association Pope John XXIII, Mario Granadin, Monica McKinley, Lutheran Church, Monnot Christophe, Roswitha Grass
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### Context:

Recalling our connections with God, ourselves, humanity and the Earth as outlined in Laudato Si, the facilitator drew attention to relevant passages of the Encyclical, including paragraphs 49, 114, 51, 52; key issues including globalization, poverty, development, and migration; and Pope Francis' call for social justice and love.

### How can I make a difference? How have I been participating or living Laudato Si?

- The Care and Concern Pastoral Committee assists at the soup kitchen in Montrbrillant once every 3 months.
- The Lay Dominicans study Laudato Si and endeavour to apply the teachings to their surroundings (e.g. recycling).
- It was reported that the President at Latter-day Saints Charities (LDS) had sent a letter asking each community to help refugees. Members raise funds via fasting, which they contribute to humanitarian and relief efforts. They endeavour to act as 'eyes' and 'ears' to communicate the needs of the poor to Church leaders.
- One participant shared her experience of living with the poor in a fraternity house in Africa, drawing attention to the structural obstacles that persist and recalling a commitment in the SDGs to "leave no-one behind". The importance of personal contact, of prayer, of living in sobriety and of recognizing our perpetual need to grow was emphasized. We are (not yet) a human family.

- At the global level, human rights, the Right to Development and right to international solidarity were suggested as additional frameworks for guiding action.
- A member from the Lutheran Church offered examples of some concrete initiatives they are engaged in, e.g. soup kitchen and a sharing programme, where the Church contributes its collections to support grassroots and local initiatives, e.g. a home-schooling programme in Syria.
- In the area of global health, it was noted that while there has been some positive progress in terms of fighting diseases such as HIV/AIDs, TB and malaria, lack of political will and inadequate funding means that we are failing many population groups that are in critical need.
- Group members reflected on the need for personal transformation and for consciousness-teaching: we are all one. Love leads to conversion and responsibility for others.

### **What are other ways I/we can contribute to 'living Laudato Si'?**

- Give more of ourselves
- In Switzerland, more adequate housing is needed for refugees and there is an opportunity to provide welcome programs, language lessons, occasions for sharing etc.
- We are called to live in greater sobriety and to engage in a more critical consumerism
- Question ourselves to open up our houses, our lives, our minds, our arms, our hearts
- Consider fiscal objection
- Develop human contact, engage in true relationships with others – move from being people who help others to becoming one with others
- There was a reflection on global trends that risk drowning out the cry of the poor (globalization, conflict, populism, secularism, consumerism, corruption etc.) and there was a discussion of other potential barriers to action (fear, lack of trust)
- Need for education, awareness, advocacy

### **3 key recommendations:**

- 1) Live more simply – so all people can simply live – Work towards sharing and overcoming our own separations, including our separation of mind and heart.
- 2) Move beyond our comfort zones, to bring comfort to those around us - Give more of ourselves: time, energy, compassion, talent (*See concrete action below*).
- 3) Concerted action for education and awareness raising.

### **Creative reflections and Plenary group presentation:**

Two quotations/adaptations were read out to emphasize the interconnectedness of humanity:

- “Don’t ask what humanity can do for you, but what you can do for humanity”
- “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.” (John Donne, Meditation XVII).

The Group invited everyone to hold hands and appreciate our connections, both to each other and to the earth. Group C members launched a challenge to themselves, as well as to the wider Group, for **one concrete action: *Have a conversation with someone you don't know over the next few weeks – By reaching out to listen to the cry of the poor – Eg: A beggar, refugee or other person in need of our response.***

