



“Practice Resurrection!”

With this Easter imperative, organic farmer and poet Wendell Berry summarizes the Gospel with superb concision. To practice resurrection is to look into the empty tomb and find there the hope, joy, strength, and courage to work within creation toward the healing and renewal of our common home. Pope Francis writes that “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (*Laudato si* #217).

No better sentiments could be heard on this very day, the coincidence of Easter Monday and Earth Day. Today the violent scandal of the cross cedes to the promise of inviolable life. Today the waves of destruction, personal and planetary, revert to springs of hope.

The heavy hand of humanity has marked our times with a painful legacy: global anxiety around climate change, the tragic silence of species extinction, the drying well of potable water, waves of environmental refugees seeking a corner of Earth hospitable to human habitation. We currently live in a world defined by weighty ecological challenges. I would like to use this confluence of celebrations to invite the new Jesuit province of Canada to a deeper reflection and stronger action in face of our global environmental crisis.

Freshly missioned by the Society’s fourth Universal Apostolic Preference - “to collaborate in the care of our Common Home” - we continue that dynamic of the *Contemplatio* in the *Exercises* where we collaborate with the initiative of the Resurrected Christ, by and with his Spirit, who labours mightily within creation.

Carrying forward our existing communal and individual efforts of caring for our common home, we can view our deep rootedness in this vast land as a duty to advocate and act on its behalf and to work with others to develop alternative models of life based on respect for creation. Now that



we collectively span the entire country, a cardinal virtue of our province must be to encourage an ever-deepening ecological conversion in ourselves and in others. This conversion will express itself in bigger and smaller ways as we investigate and analyze in order to discern choices that heal the planet: taking special care of areas such as Old Growth Forests and water rights in our fragile land; collaborating in the emergence of a sustainable development capable of producing goods that, when justly distributed, ensure a decent life for all human beings on our planet; modifying those of our habits of personal, communal and institutional life that are based on an economic model of consumerism and unsustainable production; and continuing to make ongoing small changes in our daily living.

These calls are by no means new to us. Prior to the elevation of ecological care to the level of a universal apostolic preference, General Congregations and previous Canadian provincials have urged our apostolic, communal and private participation in the reconciliation with creation so necessary today, both spiritually and physically (see sidebar). In the former English province, a Commission on Mission and Ecology ran its three-year course, leaving us with a healthy set of recommendations that we, now one province, are better than ever situated to undertake. Jesuits of Canada will now embark on a progressive, participative implementation of its attainable recommendations, accompanied by ongoing dialogue regarding our ecological way of proceeding.

Both action and dialogue can be greatly aided by means of facilitation. The province is looking seriously at engaging an ecological animator, entrusted with advancing the new province's works and communities into ever deeper ecological integrity. This person would help communal discernment and action unfold in a coordinated and effective manner across the province.

Our Documented Ecological History:

1. Healing a Broken World (http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/documents/PJ_106_ENG.pdf)
2. General Congregation 35
3. General Congregation 36
4. 2011 Lenten Letter from Jean Marc Biron (GLC)
5. 2014 Letter from Peter Bisson (CDA)
6. Mission and Ecology Commission
7. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*
8. CCCB declaration on Water
9. Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029



The many ways to practice resurrection within creation are as numerous as we are. Each community, each apostolate, and each person must put their attentive ear to the ground to hear what particular call to action is sounding in that place at that time. Nevertheless, several useful and universal proposals will help our collective discernment and action.

Since 2014 Maison Bellarmin (the location of the new province offices) has been an institutional member of the Green Churches Network (www.greenchurches.ca) a Canadian, ecumenical organization devoted to assisting religious groups move their works and buildings towards Gospel values incarnated in good care of creation. Ecological solidarity amongst us and with our Christian brethren would greatly increase were every Jesuit work and community to join Green Churches. Membership requires some concrete, feasible commitments. It also provides prayerful and practical aids to realize these commitments. Finally, it will do much to unify our new, extensive province.

Resurrection cannot be practiced without praying. Many of us have a personal memory of praying with the Resurrection during the Exercises where we ask to enter into Jesus' own joy at having conquered death and set humanity on the path of redemptions. In the spirit and intent of this letter, I encourage all residential and apostolic communities to dedicate some time to spiritual conversation using the Jesuit Forum's excellent workbook *A dialogue guide for Laudato si* (http://www.jesuitforum.ca/sites/jesuitforum.ca/files/dialogue_guide_laudo_si_2.pdf) for integrating Pope Francis' vision in the encyclical. The Forum's method of small-group dialogue is non-threatening, accessible, and enlightening. Likely you will find it a refreshing variation of communal prayer.

Thirdly, Canada's new Food Guide, along with the latest UN reports on climate change corroborates the wisdom of

Psalm 148

by Greg Kennedy, SJ

Alleluia!

Most beautiful Word!

Feel it echo off the roof of your mouth –

that darkened firmament

dotted with unspoken stars

whistling out galaxies

that swirl from song into being.

Praise the swelling, coursing,

surging sound of God striking her

guitar with gypsy abandon.

No time. No place,

just nomadic endlessness

passing everywhere through fire.

Praise the Lord,

every smile and grimace of creation.

Praise her with rainbow voices

that coo and caw and croon.

Praise her earth and moon

and every wind and tide

that moves between –

bodies never seen

but touched by passion weeping

over the beauty of shedding tears.

Praise her fools and fiends and fears

for her undeviable dancing,

wildly wise, to the highest altar:

Freedom.

Praise the name of the Lord.

Pronounce it Alleluia!

Bounce it off the sphere celestial

of your mouth

until it shatters in supernova!



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Peter Bisson's provincial letter on ecology of 2014. There he asked that communities and works make a conscious effort to moderate their consumption of animal protein products. According to current science, this is the single most effective strategy an individual can use to lessen her or his negative impact on the climate, on the world's stressed sources of fresh water and on our forests and soils. Our reconciliation with creation has much to do with what we eat.

Ecologists say that every day is Earth Day. Informed and inspired by faith, Christians have professed, since Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and the disciples, that every day is Easter Day. We can add that every Easter Day is Earth Day, when the joy of the resurrection begins to be lived out in our daily practices, attitudes and habits. Christ, alive and active now throughout all creation, calls us to participate in his saving work of peace, justice, beauty and universal compassion. We practice resurrection with Christ by caring for the world he unifies. Let this common work be also the root of our own new union.

In Christ,

Erik Oland