

Solidarity with All Creation

At the Berlin meeting, Brother Alois invited young people to think together about possible paths “towards a new solidarity.” In recent weeks, at Taizé, a workshop brought together volunteers and young visitors around a variation of this theme: “Solidarity with all creation: the responsibility of Christians for the world of tomorrow.” This issue of the *Letter from Taizé* echoes these exchanges: young people who took part in this workshop, and others too, provide insights from their personal experiences. On the inside pages, we go further with this same topic, with a meditation on the text of Isaiah 41 and a reflective piece on the idea of “ruling over the earth” in the Bible. Finally, an answer is given to the question: “If we believe in eternal life, why be interested in the fate of our planet?”

For a new solidarity among human beings to spring up at all levels—in families, communities, towns and villages, between countries and continents—courageous decisions are needed. Aware of the perils and the suffering that weigh upon humanity and the planet, we do not want to give in to fear and resignation. (Brother Alois, Letter 2012 – *Towards a New Solidarity*)

Daniel (Costa Rica)

Everything created has been a gift for women and men, which God has made us responsible for. For me, this means that I am a co-creator, that I am responsible for what happens to it: my actions will affect each one of God’s works. And this commits me to respect, to care for God’s creation and the need to make it last. Submerged in a world that is constantly telling us about the consequences of climate change, there must arise in us a warning, an alert: What am I doing? What can I do?

For example, in my community we have a couple of big barrels where we can deposit recyclables, so we can promote conservation. Also, I try to spend less time in the shower, in order to preserve water. There is no need to do big things, we can also take small steps and make changes and raise awareness among those around us. Each part of God’s work has something of him in it, and in his creation I have learned to find him. So, this makes me want to make a change my way of viewing what is around me, trying harder to take care of it, and to love it more each day.

Paulina (Poland)

For me being a part of God’s creation is not only a call to gratitude for the gift of life, but also a commitment to environmental care. The gesture of God’s presenting all the animals to the first man (Genesis 2:19-20) I understand as an encouragement to learn about other creatures, but also to take responsibility for them. I find it a very important dimension of human dignity and I think we should talk more about this component of our Christian vocation.

I often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the harm that humanity is causing. It is difficult for me to watch animals treated as objects or to see a damaged or littered landscape. It makes me downhearted and I wonder what I can do to minimize it. I try to make responsible choices in my daily life—when I do the shopping, travel or spend my holidays. I know I cannot save all of nature myself, but this does not relieve me of responsibility.

Charles (India)

Today, the world is threatened by global warming. In order to prevent climate change on the earth, everyone can take the decision to preserve nature in a practical way. Planting a tree is hardly more than a drop of water on a dried up ground, but if everyone on earth did it, it would be enough to protect the climate from too much

carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere. As Mahatma Gandhi advised: if you cut a tree, you should plant two trees to compensate for the damage.

Rich countries, blessed in natural resources, will always have enough water to drink and to use for hygienic needs. But there are places on the earth where people have to wait patiently for water. Sometimes, the water supply works just at a particular time, and water has to be reserved for bad times. Sometimes, there is just a common water-tap or a common channel to support a particular location and its population with water, and people have to line up for water during a long time. Stopping the waste of water, even though we have enough, would be one step towards preserving nature.

Duarte (Portugal)

For me, having faith is about being able to recognize God's presence in everything that exists. It means being able to see the laws of nature as the expression of God's will, since through them God has created everything that is, including humankind. Therefore, when we mistreat nature, we are also going against God's will. No artist, no creator wishes to see their work destroyed. So, in my opinion it is our duty, as Christians, to attempt to bring together once again humans and the rest of creation. The way I see it, God gave the Earth not for us to own it, but rather to take care of it.

Iko (Indonesia)

I am thinking about all those environmental issues. Unfortunately, the food whose production wounds the earth the most is usually cheaper. I obviously cannot afford eco-friendly produced fair-trade food all the time, but I can try not to waste what I buy, to separate my waste, or even to ask other people to consume in a responsible way as much as possible.

It is up to us to understand that the world which God created as something really good has become, over the centuries, something not good any more. This is because of us, because of how human beings treat the world. If we are Christians, if we want to live in solidarity with the whole creation, we have to make our contribution. Many people doing many small things can make a big difference.

Théophile (France)

With my friends who are also architecture students, at the University of Nancy, I spent a week reflecting on issues of sustainable development. A group went out to meet the gypsies, to find out what they needed in order to provide solutions for social improvements. Indeed, in many cases cities have great problems accepting them, and so they find themselves located far away from the city center, housed together in a single rudimentary place. Is this really what being a citizen means? My friends suggested reintegrating them into the urban network, in several different places, so that they are close to the infrastructure they need: hospitals, markets, schools.... They looked for different places where new insertion-points would be possible, and came up with a very practical plan. Architecture, and here urban planning, are also ways to build human solidarity, by forcing us to think about how to serve humanity by making the places where we live more hospitable.