

OPEN SPACE

January 2017, volume 9, number 1



Cartoon: Jesus Felix Diaz / World Bank Group

Engaging the signs of the times:

UN GOALS: AGENDA 2030

FORUMWORD

OPENSPACE

is published three times a year
by the Jesuit Forum
for Social Faith and Justice.

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Established in 2007 by the Jesuits
in English Canada, the Jesuit Forum
for Social Faith and Justice wants to
help build a better world. It brings
together small groups of people, who
want to – and can – make a difference,
to reflect, share and speak openly
and honestly on a range of issues.

The hope is that this trust-building
approach will counteract the growing
privatization of peoples' faith and
deepest convictions. Rather it fosters
friendship, energy, enthusiasm and
a deeper understanding of the world
in which we live. The Jesuit Forum
process helps to uncover creative so-
lutions that are within us and direct
them outward, helping us to deter-
mine what we can do with others to
build a better world.

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Since our last issue, we've become a Trump world. It's a strange place and likely to become stranger.

The Jesuit Forum, as a work of the Jesuits in English Canada within the **Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States**, continues to collaborate with others to build relationships, foster dialogue and deepen community.

We want to help make the change needed to achieve the United Nations 2030 goals for sustainable development. The agenda is lofty and the challenges are great, as **Bill Ryan** reflects one year after being ratified by all 193 member states of the UN.

Also offering a much different face to our world from the Trump take, is the ongoing process of the **World Social Forum**. Come with us for a snapshot of this year's inspiring gathering, held for the first time in the Global North, in Montreal (pages 8-9). This creative, graced space is a breath of fresh air that we hope will continue into the future.

Last June, the English Canada Jesuits partnered with St. Michael's College, University of Toronto to organise a series of events to mark the first anniversary of the final activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Amongst the many moving speakers, **Dr. Marie Wilson** spoke from the heart at the **Truth, Reconciliation and Hope** conference. She is a former TRC commissioner who heard the painful testimonies of residential school survivors over several years. We share a very short but powerful excerpt of her memorable talk (page 10).

With the help of Jesuit scholastic, Kevin Kelly, who is working with us full-time for two years, we want to promote and encourage the use of our recently published **dialogue guide for Laudato Si'**, which embodies the inspiring teaching of Pope Francis. We might soon be coming to a town near you! We hope to visit Regina, Vancouver, Sudbury, Montreal and St. John's in the coming year. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have a request.

Kevin has also facilitated a much closer working relationship with **Regis College** at the University of Toronto. We very much look forward to ongoing fruitful collaboration.

With warm wishes and blessings for Advent.

Anne-Marie Jackson
DIRECTOR

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A road map to a more just global society?

A document of breathtaking hopefulness won a resounding affirmative vote at the United Nations last year. The Sustainable Development Goals aim for nothing short of “the end of poverty in all its forms everywhere” by 2030. Its official title is “Transforming the World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” For short, it’s known as Agenda 2030.

In September 2015, all 193 member states of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path for the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of Agenda 2030 are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governmental challenges of our time. The SDGs are intended to apply to all nations, leaving none behind. (1)

The poor with you always?

For Gospel-reading Christians, Jesus’ sobering remarks in Matthew 26: 10, “the poor you always have with you,” can’t help but invite a somewhat incredulous initial response to a program that speaks of transforming the world and eliminating extreme poverty in 15 years. But on deeper reflection, especially if they have also been reading Pope Francis’ encyclicals, the SDGs feel like a precious moment of social hope and a call to action.

In this reflection, I focus on the first goal: **the end of poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030**. As *The Economist* rightly claims, all the other goals depend on achieving this first one.



sustainabledevelopment.un.org

Many commentators give Agenda 2030 enthusiastic support, including several major development institutions, including UN agencies, the World Bank and the Bill Gates Foundation. Even the usually more skeptical NGOs see good in them. Kate Raworth of Oxfam called the draft goals, “humanity’s best chance to envision a shared and lasting prosperity for all.”(2) Much of the support from such groups is based on the success of the earlier Millennium Development Goals which are credited with halving extreme poverty in the world between 2000 and 2015.

But for a chorus of critics, the program is unrealistic and misleading. For many of them, it is almost an article of faith that only capitalism in one of its forms, not official development aid and not philanthropy, can bring people out of poverty. They believe that only technology, in a context of unlimited growth and open markets, can achieve such a miracle. No doubt they are reinforced in this conviction by Francis Fukuyama’s influential *The End of History*, arguing as it does that since its ideological rivals are now dead or failing, liberal capitalism remains the only viable model today.

– continued on page 4



UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

Whatever one's position, it is surely clear that, if achieved, these goals could create a more peaceful, inclusive, successful global society. This explains the strenuous program of promotion that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is pursuing. He challenges business and civil society, as well as governments, to pursue implementation, urging them to build confidently on the success already achieved by the Millennium Development Goals and the unanimous vote by the UN members for the more comprehensive and inclusive SDGs.

But this enthusiasm is by no means universal. *The Economist* points out that the estimated total cost of achieving the goals would be US\$2-to-3 trillion a year for the next 15 years, even though only a few nations honour their commitment to contribute 0.7% of their GDP to international development.⁽⁴⁾ The same article notes that China should be given more credit for the reduction in the number of people living in abject poverty than the Millennium Development Goals, even though these goals did make a substantial contribution.

Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, calls the SDGs "a negotiated wish list ... fairy tales, dressed in a bureaucratise of inter-governmental paralysis and poisoned by the acid of nation-state failures. Yet this is served up as our future."⁽⁵⁾

Corporations invisible

Writing in *The Guardian*, Zoe Williams insists that we can't discover a solution for poverty as long as we do not first recognize its cause. For her, economic growth is not a solution unless governments and corporations are willing to do something about wealth extraction. She writes: "Corporations don't feature at all in the report, even while many have more wealth and greater reach than governments and indeed an even more important 'partnership' role in the UN. There is a glaring contradiction between relying on endless growth to end poverty while at the same time taking urgent action to combat climate change (Goal 13), and vowing to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (Goal 15)."⁽⁶⁾

Williams also quotes Pope Francis' more reserved, thought-provoking critique: "We must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences."⁽⁷⁾ The pope had addressed the UN members just before they voted unanimously for the new goals. He saw many things he liked: the inclusive process and agreement by consensus; the application to all countries and all individuals "with no one left behind;" the interconnectivity between the goals; the inseparability of the environment, the economy and human society in the process of development. And, most fundamental, the dignity of every person.

Reality greater than ideas

With several of these goals overlapping with the pope's analysis in *Laudato Si'* (8), why his reticence? I believe Williams has put her finger on what Pope Francis fears. His suspicion is expressed, rather abstractly, when he speaks of "nominalism," pointing to what happens when people get caught up with words and concepts, without being

“
Corporations don't feature at all in the report, even while many have more wealth and greater reach than governments and indeed an even more important 'partnership' role in the UN.

— Zoe Williams
The Guardian



grounded in action and experience. In his writings, the pope often reminds us that reality is more important than ideas. In the *Joy of the Gospel* he wrote: "Ideas – conceptual elaborations – are at the service of communication, understanding and praxis. Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. Formal nominalism has to give way to harmonious objectivity." (9)

It would seem that Pope Francis suspects that the SDGs may rely on economic growth without questioning whether such growth assumes that the Earth's reserves are unlimited. If the economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit without concern for the potential negative impact on humans and the Earth, the resulting growth cannot be sustainable. Many, many assumptions, fixed ideas and patterns of power need to change before the world can have economic growth that is both environmentally and socially sustainable.

Pope Francis rejects the myth that an economic model grounded on individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism and unregulated markets can achieve sustainable development.

The pope also has concerns for what he sees as "unaccountable power" concentrated in a few hands. The UN, the Davos Forum and some governments are promoting a new phase of "socially responsible capitalism" that champions partnerships in which corporations, governments and civil society would work together to rid the world of poverty and to promote economic development. In most cases, multinational corporations, because of their technical knowledge, mobility, financial resources and massive production capabilities, would be the driving force. But will big corporations share important information and decisions with their partners? Pope Francis pleads for a new international political power able to ensure accountability of all major political and economic actors on the global stage.

Another serious concern is the accepted dominance of Western economic thought with little concern for its impact on local cultures, religious values, lifestyles and models of production. The degradation of living in poverty is very different from the frugal self-sufficiency of a traditional society and its economy. And both are very different from our own ad-soaked consumer society. Such contrasting social realities do not exist only on an economic plane: they are multi-levelled. If the rights, culture, dignity and concerns of poor communities are not respected in a process of change, other forms of diminishment will wreak havoc on them even if "economic growth" is documented.



In whose hands does all this power lie? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it.

— Pope Francis in *Laudate Si'*

Joint appeal to world governments on adoption of the SDGs

"Transforming Our World: Agenda 2030 seeks to respond to many of today's most pressing challenges. It sets out a vision of a world where all life can thrive. It rightly proposes a universal agenda, recognising the interdependence of economic, social and environmental goals....

"But responding to the crises means recognising and addressing the limitations, gaps and inconsistencies in the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the SDGs do not overcome contradictions in seeking harmony with nature while prioritising sustained growth for all nations. The goals imply continued competition for limited natural resources and, hence, further rises in greenhouse gas emissions. The goals do not tackle unjust global rules of finance, taxation, trade and investment, essential to realise the structural transformation needed to address the root causes of poverty and inequality. **We need more ambition in these three critical areas for a real transformation of our world! ...**

"People are ready to embark on a future where equality, fairness, rights and a life in harmony with nature are what matter. **We, the undersigned, commit to accompany people in this effort, taking big and small actions of our own. We ask you to walk with us and all people who are embarking on this new journey! Assume the leadership that this historic moment demands!**



Signed by 51 groups, including many Catholic agencies, such as CIDSE, Development and Peace, CAFOD, Caritas Internationalis, Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, the Catholic Climate Covenant, plus the Transnational Institute, Third World Network and many others. See the full statement and list of signatories at <http://www.cidse.org/sectors/rethinking-development/public-call-to-world-leaders-on-the-occasion-of-the-united-nations-summit-on-sustainable-development-september-2015.html>



The degradation of living in poverty is very different from the frugal self-sufficiency of a traditional society and its economy. And both are very different from our own ad-soaked consumer society.

While the SDGs provide a road map for the way ahead if we are to have a more just and peaceful global society, it is left to each nation to implement them. Presently there are many failed or failing nations, while others face serious levels of public debt. In the absence (so far) of legally binding agreements on implementation, and since the world has not yet constructed a global political authority with enough power and prestige to outweigh national selfishness or apathy, what can we do to maintain the best possibilities of the Sustainable Development Goals?

We can all be involved

This is where all of us come in. It will be the responsibility of civil society in its many forms to educate their members about these goals, seeing the implications for their own lives and institutions, and holding accountable their governments and businesses. This is work that needs to be done for the long haul, and with broad and deep vision.

Is such striving, such clarity and such intense caring simply beyond us? Should we sadly agree that the SDGs are unlikely to be taken seriously in the real world – that they are a “negotiated wish list” and a “fairy tale”? Is that what Jesus meant by “the poor you will always have with you”? Perhaps – unless we can expand our hope beyond a list of noble goals to include the “bold cultural revolution” which Pope Francis calls for in *Laudato Sí*. He sees the present ecological crisis and the tragedy of the constantly growing gap between rich and poor in the world as a “sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity.”

This dual crisis calls for “a healing of all fundamental human relationships Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.” (119) We need “a renewal of humanity itself,” a miracle that can only happen with God’s power and in the wisdom of faith and love. The fact that we need God’s mighty help should not make us say: “Well then the SDGs are impossible and the world can never be that way: let’s

not try.” Rather our Christian faith should nourish our hope to tackle these goals with enthusiasm, dialogue and realism in whatever way we can, praying all the while.

In *Laudato Sí* we find the appeal, intensity and urgency of the challenge our generation faces in engaging these goals. Pope Francis sees the world torn apart with tragedy, indifference and illusion, but renewal is always possible because the mercy of God towers above our sins, and we can always begin anew in hope.

He believes that “humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home” even while he recognizes “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.” (16)

Yes, it is a huge agenda. But that’s why we can all be involved. Not everything has to happen on the level of the United Nations, the World Bank, or binding international legislation. There are local works of renewal which can be taken on by a community which has “broken out of the indifference induced by consumerism.” Around these community actions, “relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges ... a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world and the quality of life of the poorest are cared for with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.” (232)

– continued on page 7



Cartoon: Jesus Felix Diaz / World Bank Group

On whatever scale our situation enables us to act – local, national or global – we can all act in the spirit of the social hope set out in the Sustainable Development Goals and in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. For us Christians, it is crucial to remember that our creating and redeeming God, in whom we trust, can enter into such actions and can give divine substance to our human hope.

Bill Ryan sj

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Celebrating with the people of El Salvador!

The struggle against mining in the region of Cabañas is about "Water for Life". There is a lot of work ahead, but this is a significant moment to celebrate.

In the face of the murders of movement leaders, the people have remained steadfast in upholding their right to water over a company's desire to mine. It was seven years ago that **Pacific Rim** (a Canadian company) sued the government of El Salvador for \$250 million against loss of expected profits after their bid to mine for gold was turned down.

On October 14 this year, an international tribunal of the World Bank Group ruled against the new owner of **Pacific Rim, Oceana Gold**.

This long and painful story in a country where a third of the population lives in poverty, is the reason for opposition to such trade agreements as the *Trans-Pacific Partnership* that gives corporations the power to sue governments.

For more information, www.inequality.org



Wallhanging produced by women in Cabañas, El Salvador. It says: "We don't want mining in Cabañas." and "No to mining. Pacific Rim - get out!"

Reproduced with many thanks.



Thank God for the World Social Forum—a graced gathering, people-centred, creative, and full of energy and ideas. In this listening, sharing space, there is a feeling of hope and possibility, even up against the overwhelming challenges in our world.

Established in 2001, it is an alternative to the World Economic Forum, an annual meeting of government and corporate leaders in Davos, Switzerland. At the World Social Forum, people come together to discuss common issues and to build movements to challenge a global economic model that is based on consumerism and competition. This model fuels the race to grab land and own every natural resource, even if it means trampling on those who live and work on the land for their livelihood.

In August 2016, for the first time in its history, the WSF was held outside the Global South—in Montreal. Unfortunately, this may not happen again because almost 300 invited participants, including Aminata Traoré from Mali, a candidate for UN Secretary-General, were denied entry visas by the Canadian government.

A crisis of civilization and the environment

Despite this setback, the WSF brought together people from all continents whose voices are calling for change.

Gloria Chicaiza of Acción Ecológica, Ecuador, said that extractivism—the global economic model based on the removal of natural resources for export, “is not a model for the common good. It has led to a crisis of civilization and the environment. In terms of alternatives, there is *buen vivir* (living well)—ways of living that are from the margins, from a different source and a different place; not perfect, but valid.” She added, “This concept of accumulation of goods is not part of Indigenous culture, The idea of luxury doesn’t exist.”

Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of Jubilee South based in the Philippines, called for transformation of our energy systems, noting the “excessive use of energy by corporations while two billion people don’t have enough for their basic needs.” She added, “the causes of climate change are rooted in an unjust system.”

Asume Osuoka of Social Action based in Harcourt, Nigeria explained how the *Bring Back Our Girls* campaign, to find and save the Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram, connects back to the issues of land grabbing, climate change, and ecological debt. In the early 20th century, several European-based corporations divided up the land around Lake Chad. Then, in the 1970s, the IMF and the World Bank pushed loans for dams and irrigation projects. Water flow into the lake was blocked and those with power took over irrigated land, leaving millions of people displaced and impoverished. All of this served as fertile ground for the growth of violent extremist groups like Boko Haram.

Everything is connected

In the midst of the World Social Forum was the well-attended workshop on *Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home*, organized by **Development and Peace** and



by **CIDSE**, which is an international alliance of Catholic social justice organizations.

Interconnectedness is key to *Laudato Si'* as Pope Francis explains by the nine themes of the encyclical: “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper of each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.” (16)

Moema Miranda, an anthropologist working for IBASE (Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis) and also a member of the international council of the World Social Forum, said that “*Laudato Si'* came at the right moment when so much of living is in terrible conditions and inequality is part of our drama on Earth. *Laudato Si'* calls us to conversion—not any conversion but to ecological conversion. Ecology is the connection between everything—the soul, nature, ourselves. Why, then, are we so deeply disconnected? “We don’t have the answers,” Moema says, “but we keep asking the questions.”

Shalmali Guttal from Focus on the Global South also commented on the encyclical and highlighted land grabbing, which she said, “means loss of seeds, forest, water and, often, entire ecosystems.” She also spoke passionately of Indigenous people who have been at the forefront of those warning the world about ecological disaster, though they and the poorest among us are the first and most profoundly affected by climate change.

It is worth highlighting the integration of faith-based groups in the WSF. **Chico (Francisco) Whittaker**, one of the founders of the World Social Forum, was a representative of the Brazilian bishops at that time. This year in Montreal, he spoke at the *World Forum on Theology and Liberation*, one of the many gatherings

held before and after the main WSF events. He told us that there are ongoing discussions by the WSF international council as to whether it can continue. Many challenges exist, including costs and logistics. Yet, there is nothing comparable, he said, no other space for bringing together peoples’ movements and civil society on a global scale..

Living life in a good way

The stories of the original peoples of Canada took special place at this Forum. **Jacinda Mack** from the Secwepemc and Nuxalk Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia, whose home is in Williams Lake, spoke about the tailings pond spill at Mount Polley. The impact of this terrible mining disaster in 2014 continues to damage the ecosystem and affect the lives of residents. Instead of pushing for more discussions with the mining company, her community decided to concentrate on the change they want. They would focus on getting to know each other better and on using their imaginations for alternatives to mining while challenging the idea that extraction is the only way.

Matching Jacinda’s strong voice were those of **Alma Brooks** of the Wabanaki Confederacy; **Viviane Michel**, director of the Innu Nation and president of Quebec Native Women; **Elana Nightingale** of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, and many others.

Barbara Dumont Hill, Algonquin, born on the Kitigan Zibi reserve outside Maniwaki, Quebec, told us that before their people were introduced to the word “Hello,” they had a different way of greeting one another: “I hope you are living your life in a good way.” What a powerful everyday greeting. What if we all reflected on that wish—to live a good life in a good way? This is the hope for everyone on the planet but to get there will require deep change. The World Social Forum is a space for bring this hope to reality and creating a sustainable, more inclusive world.

Anne-Marie Jackson



Shalmali Guttal



Jacinda Mack



Isaac Asume Asuoka

(c) Fabrice Praz



Alma Brooks



Barbara Dumont Hill

“I was punished for who I was, not what I did”

Marie Wilson juxtaposes the Beatitudes with quotes from Residential School Survivors

Dr. Marie Wilson, former TRC Commissioner, spoke at the *Truth, Reconciliation and Hope* conference on June 22 2016.

“I am trying to grow comfortable with the way that Jesus’ teachings of these most beautiful words from the *Sermon on the Mount* 2000 years ago juxtapose with the residential school survivor teachings in Canada of the past 6 years. We still have such a long way to travel as a church, as a society and as a country.”

On June 22nd, the **Jesuits in English Canada** and **St. Michael’s College** organized a series of events to coincide with the first anniversary of the closing of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**. The end of the TRC also clearly marked the start of a renewed awareness of the situation of the First Peoples of Canada and some first steps towards reconciliation and hope.

There was a listening gathering with three residential school survivors. Later there were moments of dialogue and a conference. **Toronto Council Fire** hosted a feast of strawberries for speakers and organizers.

Go to www.jesuits.ca/trh to watch all the talks. Four short YouTube pieces are also available.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

“How could I learn when I was afraid and humiliated all the time? I was punished for who I was, not what I did. What did I do so wrong? I was just a little kid.”

*Blessed are they that mourn,
for they shall be comforted.*

“My mom and dad had 13 kids and every single one of us went to residential school. And my younger brother, his name was Michael. He was black and blue in the hospital and he passed. It’s about him and all the children who never came home.”

*Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the Earth.*

“I want my identity back. Is that too much to ask?”

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after
righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

I learned to steal in residential school. We were hungry all the time. I used to like to work in the kitchen because of the leftovers from the priest’s plate. I stole bread to feed the little ones who were so hungry.



OpenSpace is a publication of the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice
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