



# MISSION NEWS

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI)

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## Caring for “Our common home”: Reflections from the Amazon

A Uitota family gathers yuca in the Amazon region near Leticia, Colombia.

Alfredo Ferro Medina SJ is the Coordinator of the Pan-Amazon Jesuit Service (SJPAM)

The Amazon, part of our “Common Home,” is a territory that covers 7 million sq km and has 35 million inhabitants. Today, this region and the 350 Indigenous communities that live there are threatened more than ever.

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis refers to the world as our common home... one that is under threat from environmental degradation and human greed, where poor and marginalized people are most affected. The Pope critiques the traditional model of development based on voracious capitalism and market economies. It is a system that normalizes poverty, migration and exclusion, and which leads to loss of biodiversity, the destruction of forests, soil erosion and pollution.

This system of free market capitalism has become so accepted that it is difficult to imagine measuring development beyond parameters such as GDP, per capita consumption and population growth. It exerts undue influence on politics and the economy. Its focus on profit leads to negative consequences on vast sectors of the population.

Pope Francis, on the other hand, states that nature is not a commodity that can be bought or sold. He reminds us of the reality of climate change, as seen through droughts, floods and other natural disasters. Legal and illegal mining are impacting communities; and so is our culture of consumerism and waste.

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## The vision & mission of CJI

The vision of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The mission of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

To learn more about Canadian Jesuits International or to make a donation, please contact us at:

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## A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

A couple of months ago, we chose “Caring for our common home” as the theme for this issue. We chose it to mark the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’* which calls us to a deep personal and communal transformation and a new relationship with the earth, our common home.

As we go to print, we find ourselves in what seems to be a new world. Our common home has been transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is marked by fear, suffering and pain.

While not intentional, the coincidence could not be more appropriate. The care of our common home and the current crisis are deeply linked and *Laudato Si’* can show us a way forward.

While it is true this virus can infect anyone regardless of social status, race or geography, it has also exposed deep cracks in our society. The effects of the virus have been felt especially among the weakest: the elderly in care homes, the poor, racialized communities, the ‘essential’ but least remunerated workers, and people in refugee camps, in slums, in the streets. The virus spreads where it is impossible to practice social distancing or to wash one’s hands frequently due to lack of water. The same people have inadequate access to health services or protective equipment.

The economic impact is no less serious. In the Global South people lose their source of income with no assistance from government; migrants and farm workers are going hungry; fields are not being cultivated, setting the stage for famine.

The virus has exposed the divisions in our common home and among those who inhabit it. Yet, through all this fear, pain and suffering, there is hope. The generous and courageous response of many people for the victims of COVID-19 has shown us a new world is possible and we have the capacity to care for our common home and each other.

*Laudato Si’* calls us to heal the earth and all its creatures, to reframe our priorities, to change social structures so that no one is left behind. The experience of our own vulnerability could be the turning point to feel close to those who are always vulnerable, and to infuse us with a desire to build a world based on equality, democracy, defence of human rights and care for our common home.

## Caring for “Our common home”

(continued from cover page)

The concept of Integral Ecology in the encyclical presents a paradigm shift where the ecological, social, environmental, cultural and political aspects come together as one. Everything is interconnected. A true ecological approach is a social approach. It integrates social justice with environmental concerns, hearing both the cries of the earth and the poor.

Pope Francis invites us to recognize our sins against creation as a crime against ourselves, our neighbours and a sin against God. The loss of biodiversity, deforestation, the destruction of habitats and pollution, amount to what the Amazonian Synod, held in October 2019, called ecological sin. Pope Francis also quotes Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, “‘inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage,’ we are called to acknowledge ‘our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation.’”

This is most evident in the Amazon, where the value of vast forests, a diverse ecosystem and an immense river basin, is matched by a rich cultural heritage and a great wealth of knowledge among its inhabitants. It is a “home” characterized by diversity and by the coexistence of two models of society: the Eurocentric model and one rooted in the Amazon, based on life in the forest and the harmony of water, land, sun and life.

Caring for our common home becomes more concrete when seen through the eyes of Indigenous people who have committed their lives to the protection of their territory.

Since coming to the Amazon, I have been blessed with a wonderful friendship with a Uitota woman, Anitalia Pijachi, and her family. They live just 6 kilometres from the Jesuit community in Leticia, Colombia, and we work together in the global and national actions of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM).

Anitalia is committed to the Church and in the defense and struggle of the Amazon. She is a witness to the life and hope of her people. She was invited to the recent Synod on the Amazon by Pope Francis whom she calls the “great white grandfather.” Anitalia made a valuable contribution to the Synod and in the coordinating commission of REPAM. She speaks “without hair in the tongue” as we commonly say, when truth is spoken out of wisdom from the elders. Anitalia, like many women, exercises great leadership in her community. She is willing to take risks to defend and fight for her people and for our common home.

The only way out of our current predicament is developing a culture of caring. This involves walking down new paths where conversion is essential, a “sine qua non”: without it, there is no future. Integral Ecology is a call to care for the earth, our common home, and for all life and habitats. It means caring for poor and marginalized people, Indigenous communities, our cultural heritage and future generations. The integral conversion to which the Synod invites us calls for a spirituality in tune with the earth, a change of mind and

heart and a transformation of our lifestyle. It means becoming aware that everything is connected. It is a call to dialogue and to a new global solidarity as a spiritual path.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis affecting every part of the world. The cries of the earth and of the poor call us to a profound conversion, to a different and new relationship with the earth and with ourselves. The virus has shown the deep cracks in our society and that we must all take responsibility to enact change. It has exposed the dire situation of the most vulnerable people and communities. Pope Francis, in the Apostolic Exhortation: “Querida Amazonia,” has called this an injustice and a crime. We now find ourselves in a very changed landscape which presents both an opportunity and a risk. Whatever else is at stake, each and every one of us has the ability to speak and act in solidarity for radical change in the defense and care for life. ■



Anitalia walks in the forest in the Amazon region near Leticia, Colombia.

# Young people take leadership to care for our common home

Fr Charlie Chilufya SJ is the Director of the JCAM Justice and Ecology Office (JEO), Nairobi, Kenya

One in three Africans, 422 million people, live below the global poverty line. They represent more than 70 percent of the world's poorest people. While we all play a role in addressing climate change, those living on the margins of society should not be made to shoulder equal responsibility as people in wealthy countries. Yet, many young people in Africa have taken it on as a personal responsibility and challenge.

It is inevitable for the young generation in Africa to own its voice and lead our continent to where it deserves to be. Young Africans form more than 70 percent of the population and are constantly learning how they can make a difference. They hunger to do what is right and meaningful and are already making their mark.

Lead Magis Africa (LMA) Youth Network is comprised of such young people. This network, hosted by the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) Justice and Ecology Office, is driven by a strong desire for a more just world and a prosperous Africa. LMA members participated in a leadership development and global citizenship program in Kigali, Rwanda last October 12-14, 2019. The program is rooted in Ignatian Spirituality and was organized by the Justice and Ecology Office, with the support of Canadian Jesuits International and the Jesuit Mission UK. LMA youth are initiating and leading change on social and global issues. One popular cause they are taking up is the "Care for our common home" which they believe is crucial for the survival of our planet.

Upon graduating from the course, these young leaders embarked on a trail of tree planting and cleaning exercises. "According to scientists, planting billions of trees across the world is one of the biggest and cheapest ways of taking CO2 out of the atmosphere," said Joan Gwapasuka, the Zambian Chapter leader. She led her group in two tree planting exercises last December. "I personally feel great after the tree planting event in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology; a contribution to the lungs of our planet," remarked Joshua Kiilu, a member from Kenya.

LMA has embarked on planting a million trees across Africa in 2020. LMA believes this is in line with the Jesuit driven Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), especially "Caring for our common home," and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The network has also been supporting the great work of many advocacy groups pushing Northern governments to adhere to the COP 23 resolutions.

Young people are aware that we also need to make behavioural changes now. The impact of our actions on climate will be greater and the risks higher the longer we delay. LMA believes that individuals can make a big contribution to the protection of the planet. Led by geography student Joshua Kiilu, the network has committed to adopt nine ways to care for our common home: eat less or no meat; use energy-efficient light bulbs; use reusable bags and print as little as necessary; recycle; use reusable beverage containers; don't throw your notes away; turn off lights when not in use; save water in every way; and use public transport or walk as much as possible.

LMA is aware that by making individual lifestyle changes, we can help preserve our common home. "What you do makes a difference!" says Apollinaire, a LMA leader from Congo Democratic Republic. By eating less or no meat, one can cut their carbon footprint by half. Try it and you will see how much impact you have on the world's resources, and adjust accordingly. ■

Lead Magis Africa (LMA) Youth Network members plant trees in Nairobi.



Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM)

# SASAC: Our Common Home

Pramod Dabhi SJ is the Director of St. Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Centre (SASAC)

The disciples of Jesus wanted to learn how He prayed and so asked Him, “Lord, teach us how to pray.” Jesus replied “When praying, pray like this, ‘Our Father in heaven... give us this day our daily bread...’”

Fr Abraham Murray SJ took this prayer to heart which ultimately led him to establish St. Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Centre (SASAC). Fr Abraham, who died in 2012, devoted his life to working with the people of West Bengal, India. He accompanied marginalized communities and highlighted their needs while always respecting their dignity. He believed that God is the Father of us all, and we are His children, irrespective of caste and creed.

We are all related to one another. The earth is our common home and we share equal rights, privileges and responsibilities. God’s kingdom implies harmonious relationships with one another and with the earth. This aspect of our Christian spirituality is beautifully spelled out by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*. However, if God is our Father, and we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, why is there so much inequality and poverty? The preferential option for the poor tells us to treat the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our society with love, justice and kindness. This was the path Jesus took, and one SASAC follows. Our motto is “Help the poor so that the poor can help themselves.”

SASAC runs programs to address the needs of our brothers and sisters, empower them and help care for our common home. Economic programs include square metre vegetable gardens (smvg), dairy farms, piggeries, mushroom cultivation, weaving, and training programs for graduates. Livelihood projects are supplemented by our educational programs: school education, coaching classes and tutorials in rural areas, vocational training, computer training, winter coaching classes and a hostel for students.

SASAC’s social programs focus primarily on medical health but also includes: good hygiene, legal aid and human rights, awareness of human trafficking and Bal Panchayat (children’s parliament).

Our environmental programs include: tree planting, social forestry, and protecting and preserving water

sources. SASAC, in collaboration with the West Bengal Forest Department, plants thousands of trees every year and looks after them.

In February, we started new ventures to strengthen and expand our economic programs. One of these is bee keeping and honey production. This provides additional income to families, involves minimal training and labour, and requires no additional space. It also indirectly helps the environment through pollination. We have also started a floriculture program. Flowers and decorative plants are in high demand during festivals, and hill people love them so there is a steady market. This will also attract more visitors, both locals and tourists, to our facilities.



Bimla and Karishma prepare flowers to be sold as part of SASAC’s floriculture program.

Finally, we have begun rabbit farming. We hope to teach people about this livelihood and provide them with animals. Rabbits multiply quickly and do not require much space. They eat everything that cows and goats eat, so no special feed is required. Rabbits can be sold in pet shops or for meat.

Fr Abraham, who had a heart for the poor, established SASAC as a strong and visible witness to the values of the Gospel. We continue to promote the wonderful work he started by supporting and respecting the dignity of the poor. We will continue to do so with God’s providence and with the support of many people of goodwill. ■

## JUST Change – Advocacy Symposium in Ottawa

Canadian Jesuits International brought together secondary and postsecondary students from across Canada from February 9 to 11, to learn about the deep connections between faith, justice and advocacy. Students from various Jesuit and other Catholic schools attended the event at St. Paul's University in Ottawa.

The symposium helped students understand the importance of advocacy as a tool for change by learning about campaigns in Canada and the experiences of marginalized people in the Global South. They also learned how to engage their political representatives.

Key resource people included Fr Stanislaus Jebamalai SJ, Coordinator of Lok Manch, who shared key principles and meaning of Ignatian advocacy; Jamie Kneen from MiningWatch Canada, who spoke of the Ombudsperson advocacy campaign; and Leah Gazan, MP for Winnipeg Centre, who presented the campaign for



Participants of the JUST Change Advocacy Symposium stand in front of the Parliament Building in Ottawa.

the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Participants also met with the staff of Members of Parliament and asked questions on immigration, refugees, poverty, the environment and Indigenous rights.

The JUST Change Symposium has made an impact on participating students and momentum has been created to equip and shape the next generation of leaders in creating a better world. ■

## Fr Stanislaus Jebamalai SJ visits Canada

Fr Stanislaus Jebamalai SJ (Sannybhai), National Coordinator of Lok Manch in India, visited Canada in February for a series of engagements and school presentations across the country. Sannybhai talked about his work with Lok Manch, a platform that empowers marginalized people in India to access their legally recognized rights.

His first public forum was held at the CJI office in Toronto last February 4. The focus of his presentation was on collective action and how this has made a difference in the lives of poor and marginalized people.

A highlight of his visit was serving as a resource person at the JUST Change Advocacy Symposium in Ottawa last February 9-11. He also spoke at a Youth for Others – Justice Day event at Champion College in Regina on February 13.

Sannybhai met with key leaders of various organizations such as Donna Naughton of Kateri Ministry, Dana Stefov and Diana Sarosi of Oxfam Canada, Archbishop Donald Bolen in Regina and members of Jesuit communities in Toronto, Ottawa and Regina.

His final engagement was in Vancouver on February 18. CJI, together with St Mark's College at the University of British Columbia, hosted a public forum on advocacy and the promotion of social justice.

CJI is grateful for Sannybhai's visit, his inspiring message and his generosity in sharing his experiences and wisdom with Canadians. ■



Sannybhai speaks at a public event in Toronto.

V. Reyes/CJI

## Responding to the COVID-19 crisis

CJI continues to adapt to the fluidity of our new normal. We work remotely as we try to always be faithful to our mission of supporting our partners in the Global South and our friends in Canada. Our online work in collaboration with our partners and supporters include:

- COVID-19 Emergency Appeal
- Webinars
- A compilation of stories from our partners in the Global South on the COVID-19 crisis: <https://bit.ly/39ARway>
- Coordination of our international response with the Xavier Network
- Outreach to secondary and post-secondary students
- Advocacy work with Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA)
- Engagement through a JUST Change Advocacy Facebook group
- Regular communications with our partners in the Global South and our supporters in Canada and the North

Thank you for your continued love, support and inspiring messages! ■

## Fr Mike Hawkins SJ

Fr Mike Hawkins SJ passed away last April 30, 2020 at René Goupil House in Pickering. He was 83 years old and in his 63rd year as a Jesuit. He served 43 years as a missionary in the Darjeeling Province in India. Please visit our website for more information. ■

## Hope in solidarity: COVID-19 and the Syrian refugee crisis

Last May 5, CJI hosted Hope in solidarity: COVID-19 and the Syrian refugee crisis, a webinar with Fr Nawras Sammour SJ, Regional Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service Middle East and North Africa (JRS MENA).

Fr Nawras spoke of how war, poverty, and violence have now displaced over 12 million people in Syria and its neighbouring countries, most of whom now live in



Protesters gather against a Canadian mining company in the Dominican Republic.

## CNCA meeting in Ottawa

Last January 21-22, CJI attended a Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) strategic planning meeting in Ottawa. Representing CJI were Director, Jenny Cafiso, and Communications Coordinator, Victor Reyes.

The meeting focused on two key issues: the Canadian Ombudsperson Responsible for Enterprise (CORE) and mandatory human rights due diligence (mHRDD). In 2018, the Canadian Government created the office of the CORE but fell short of giving the ombudsperson independent powers to effectively investigate abuses perpetrated by Canadian companies with global operations.

The meeting solidified CNCA's position in advocating Parliament to give the ombudsperson the necessary powers they need to be effective. The group also acknowledged the lack of human rights due diligence laws in Canada similar to those in the European Union. An e-petition to call on the Canadian Government to act on both the CORE and mHRDD has been scheduled for May. CJI participates in these initiatives to bring the voice of our Jesuit partners in the Global South where communities are affected by Canadian companies. ■

crowded refugee camps with limited services. He talked about the challenges posed by COVID-19 and how displaced people are highly vulnerable to this disease. Fr Nawras gave updates on how COVID-19 has impacted their work and shared how hope sustains him and others as JRS MENA works tirelessly to support and accompany forcibly displaced people in the region.

A recording of the webinar can be viewed on our website.

## Multicultural night at St Mary Catholic Secondary School

St Mary Catholic Secondary School held their annual Multicultural Night last February 24 on the school grounds in Pickering, Ontario. The event, which has been held since 2008, aims to raise awareness on issues of inclusion and diversity. It also gives students an opportunity to share their traditions and music with the community. The school's Multicultural Night was also a fundraiser for CJI. A big thank you to the students, teachers, parents and school officials! ■

Faiven, Faith, Maraki, Eliana and Meseret (standing at back) share Ethiopia's culture.



P. Niemeyer/CJI

## OUR DONORS SPEAK: Tithing as a way to live my faith

The Jesuits have always played an important part in my life. In 1963, I graduated from Campion, a Jesuit high school in Regina. My brother, Joe, is a Jesuit priest who still teaches physics in St. John's, Newfoundland at age 78!

From the time I started working, my wife Marilyn and I always took tithing seriously; half to our parish and the rest divided among pro-life ministries and third world missions. It was only natural for us to be interested in the Jesuit missions because my brother is a Jesuit. Every year, we donate to the Darjeeling, Nepal and the Calcutta missions, where Jesuit Father Lawrence Abello worked with Mother Theresa. Fr Abello was from Saskatchewan and his three brothers, one of whom is a diocesan priest, were all well known to me.

Although we have never been to any of the missions, our middle son, Matthew, went to Nepal after he was accepted into medical school and worked with the sick there, in collaboration with Canadian Jesuit Fr Robins.



Tom and Marilyn Schuck.

The work of the missionaries has turned out to be a blessing for us in Canada, as there are now many priests from Africa, Asia and Latin America who are now coming to Canada to serve our needs. Our parish now has a priest from the Kerala province in India. We would like to think we are being rewarded for the help we gave to the missions in the past. ■

*Tom Schuck, Weyburn, SK*

*Tom and Marilyn Schuck live in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, where they raised six children. They now have 22 grandchildren.*

### YOUR LEGACY, THEIR FUTURE

Learn more about making a planned gift to CJI.

1-800-448-2148 | [cji@jesuits.ca](mailto:cji@jesuits.ca)

## COVID-19 EMERGENCY APPEAL

Our Jesuit partners have not wavered in their support of poor and marginalized people affected by this pandemic. We ask that you do not waver in yours.

Please give generously by making a one-time donation, a regular monthly donation or a bequest in your will.

Tax receipts will be issued for gifts of \$20 or more. All personal information is held in accordance with Canadian Government Privacy Policy.

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**Thank you for your support!**