



# International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

*Shalom*

Sustainability

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## **Introduction**

**Sustainability:** In 1987, the **UN Brundtland Commission** defined sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainability has three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. We achieve sustainability in a balanced interaction of these dimensions. This in turn promotes our wellbeing without adversely damaging the environment on which we depend. A deeper reflection on sustainability, though not often acknowledged, recognizes a spiritual dimension. The spiritual dimension provides the inspiration and focus that bind together the other three dimensions of sustainability.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reframes sustainability in terms of *integral ecology*. Given the interconnectedness of all creation, the answer to sustainability requires an integrated approach which not only includes development and resource use, but also the impact this has on all forms of life that are a part of our “common home.”

Pope Francis stresses that “Integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals and contemplating the Creator who lives among us, whose presence, ‘must not be contrived but found, uncovered.’” ~ *Laudato Si'*, 225

## **Call to Prayer**

“Then Jacob woke up from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid, and said, ‘How awesome is this place! It is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.’” ~ Genesis 28:16 -17

## **Experience**

**The Blue Community Project** (<https://canadians.org/>) encourages municipalities and indigenous communities to support the idea of a water commons framework, recognizing that water is a shared resource for all, by passing resolutions that:

- *Recognize water and sanitation as human rights.*
- *Ban or phase out the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities and at municipal events.*
- *Promote publicly financed, owned, and operated water and wastewater services.*

The Council of Canadians, the Blue Planet Project, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) initiated the Blue Communities Project in 2009. Eau Secours is a partner

on the Blue Communities Project in the province of Quebec, Canada. The Blue Communities movement has grown internationally with Paris, France, Bern, Switzerland and other municipalities around the world going “blue.” Schools, religious communities and faith-based groups have also adopted principles that treat water as a common good that is shared by everyone and whose care is the responsibility of all.

## Reflection

### A Spirituality of Sustainability

Thomas Berry notes: “We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the wind and stars. We have broken the great conversation. By breaking that conversation, we have shattered the universe. All the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual ‘autism’.” (*Befriending the Earth*, 1991)

Pope Benedict reminds us that “our earth speaks to us and we must listen if we want to survive.” (*Speech, July 2007*)

When asked what we most need to do to save the world, Thich Nhat Hanh replied: “What we most need to do is to hear within us the sound of the earth crying, Let us listen with our ears to the earth and its creatures lamenting and allow it to awaken our compassionate response.” “Once we grasp the spectacular fact that material existence is permeated with the divine, even the most humdrum activity becomes a path to finding God. To say that divine life pervades matter is therefore not only a comment on the cosmos. It is a comment on everything that happens or meets us in daily life.” ~ David Richo, *Everything Ablaze*, p.16

“To see the World in a Grain of Sand  
and a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
and eternity in an hour.” ~ William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence”

“Even through the hollow eyes of death I see life peering.” ~ Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Scene1

## Action

- Become a **Blue Community**
- Take a nature walk in silence, alone or in community, and allow God to surprise you.
- Study *Laudato Si’*.
- Divest your community of plastics that pollute Earth.

### Closing Prayer

“Lord, you have given us this beautiful world, with the ability to harvest its products for our nourishment. Yet in our greed we have been robbing future generations, poisoning your world, and destroying many of your creatures. Help us to realize that we interfere with your world at our peril. It is your hand, not ours, that rules your world, and we are here, during our short lives, as temporary caretakers.” ~ *Green Ecology*