



International Solidarity Reflection

Shalom

Integrity of Creation

September 2020

Introduction

'*Integrity of creation*' - when we think about this topic, especially at the time of the corona pan-demic, we notice even more how closely everything that exists is connected to one another: ag-riculture, environmental and climate protection, mobility, and and and, ... and the conclusion of all reflection is that the integrity of creation must be about right and just relationships with the earth and with all creatures. We all are called to make our active contribution.

Call to Prayer

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Gen 1, 31)

Experience

Every day we hear about different environmental degradations, disregard for life, disregard for human dignity. But aren't there also initiatives that encourage us, that let us celebrate because there may still be a chance for a good future? Since *Fridays for Future*, many politicians have had to acknowledge without envy that young people deal intensively with climate-political grievances and exhort them to act. *A chance for our common future, our common house?*

Some years ago, in our Bavarian Province we initiated in cooperation with the Center for Environment and Culture in Benediktbeuern, the project "Responsibility for Creation". It is beautiful that this project is being carried out by the youngest in our facilities right through to adults. Employees in the kindergartens, teaching staff and many parents are committed. *A chance for our common future, our common house?*

The various actions show that such a project can stimulate and enable an age-appropriate, responsible and careful handling of creation.

- For example, in the Kindergarten St. Theresia Geisenfeld a mindful and sustainable lifestyle was practiced every day, starting with saving energy, water, plastic, paper and making healthy meals, jams and much more.
- At the Theresia-Gerhardinger-Primary school at the Anger, children of all grades were in-volved in various projects such as: collecting cell phones, upcycling old hangers, saving en-ergy, avoiding plastic and waste, environmental days in Benediktbeuern and projects on the subject of creation.
- The enthusiasm for the project was clearly felt in the girls' junior high school Regensburg-Niedermünster. Here is just a small insight into the variety of projects: For example, the school was awarded the Fair-Trade-Seal of the city of Regensburg, and several times a year the students organize the 'Healthy Break' with the sale of regional fruit and vegetable snacks, environmental issues from the Jesuit refugee project and sustainable book covers were of-fered for sale, as well as seeds from the garden project of the open all-day school.
- The specialist academy for social pedagogy in Munich-Au has been working with the Center for Environment and Culture for many years, and continued and deepened the projects that have been offered for years. It is particularly important for the students of this academy that they can also use the projects they have carried out as multipliers.

Their program included garden experiences, nature experience days on water, energy, mountain forest and meadows, which they carried out both in the city of Munich and in the rural surroundings of Ben-ediktbeuern.

What the children, the pupils, the students have grasped and experienced, is certainly formative for their future and pioneering for the careful handling of nature and among themselves. They all know what it means not only to manage the earth, but also to create something from the earth and nature. *A chance for our common future, our common house?*

Reflection

Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*: "In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature", for it has to do with God's loving (...). Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion." (76) Are we getting involved in such an experience that brings us together in an all-encompassing community? *A chance for our common future, our common house?*

From our *Shalom*-document: "The Hebrew word *Shalom* speaks eloquently of the fruit of the ministry for justice. The biblical meaning of *shalom* signifies the dynamic action of restoring all things to their original integrity according to the intention of God. *Shalom* manifests itself in harmonious relationships with God, self, and all of creation. *Shalom* expresses the desire of Psalm 85 that kindness and truth shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss (cf. "Peace," *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Xavier Leon-Dufour. England: Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973, pp. 411-414). Action in this sense: *A chance for our common future, our common house?*

Action

1. Read the Gen. 1 creation account. The writer points out almost like a refrain: *God saw that it was good*. Do we feel impelled to be in unity with this God-wanted creation?
2. The project of various institutions in the Bavarian Province presented above invites you to take small steps. What small steps could you take personally and in community towards the order of creation desired by God, the unity between nature and all living beings?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained. Open our minds and touch our hearts, so that we can be part of Creation, your gift. Be present to those in need in these difficult times, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Help us to show creative solidarity as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.

Make us courageous in embracing the changes required to seek the common good.

Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

We pray through Christ our Lord, under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians, Amen. (*Special prayer dedicated to the Laudato Si' Year.*)