

Our Common Home: As Long as the Rivers Flow

Saturday October 22, 2016

Cathedral of the Holy Family 123 Nelson Road Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Water as a Path of Dialogue and Action to Care for Our Common Home

We, who gathered on Treaty Six territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis, to reflect on our duty to care for our common home for as long as the rivers flow crafted the following statement at Saskatoon on October 22, 2016.

We recognize treaties as a covenant to share and care for our common home. As Treaty peoples we are all bound together with each other, the land, and water. Yet, this covenant has been damaged by unjust laws and policies, such as the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools and the 'sixties scoop', which have negative inter-generational impacts. To contribute to healing such trauma, we affirm our responsibility to be Treaty people in the fullest sense.

As a key part of such a response, we are called to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of those on the margins of our society. By dialoguing and acting to care for our common home, we take up our responsibilities toward future generations. We undertake this urgent and exciting task so that all might reach their full potential. The social and ecological benefits of these approaches and actions provide an important opportunity for reconciliation.

Water is a commons,¹ a precious, life-giving gift that must be appreciated and protected. It must not be taken for granted or wasted. Caring for water opens a path of dialogue and action on which we can walk together. Caring for water can also lead to a deep ecological conversion, overcoming the negative effects of consumerism and rapidification.² By honouring Indigenous cultures and values, and entering into wholesome relationships with each other, Mother Earth, and the Creator, we can transform our society.

In all of this we can learn from rivers, the veins and arteries of Mother Earth. Our watersheds provide us with intimate connections to the places in which we live. Listening to what rivers can teach us can help us slow down and gain the necessary courage to be fearless in our work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

In this light, we assembled here today have each committed to an individual or collective action to bring this statement to life. We make these commitments as part of our hope for a vibrant future.

Our commitments include:

1. To live in a more environmentally friendly manner,
2. To take concrete actions to show more respect for our gift of water.
3. To continue to learn to walk with my Indigenous brothers and sisters.
4. To walk mindfully by bodies of water, and rivers, in gratitude and openness to the learning they offer.
5. Slow down
6. Simplify my life to be able to be more responsive to life itself and others, including the Earth.
7. Listen, listen, listen then dialogue, dialogue, dialogue.
8. Cut down on water usage.
9. To learn about Treaty Six.
10. Daily personal examination of how I walk with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and proclaim the wonder and awe of creation within my life.

11. To dialogue as equal and central partners, from idea formation onward on projects that effect our relationship with the land.
12. To be mindful of the precious gift of water.
13. To continue to learn about being a treaty person.
14. To learn more about the treaties and calls to action.
15. To re-envision a nation that is full of collective beliefs, which can all offer a piece of the unity, in order to see how we are all Treaty people.
16. To become more educated and aware of the churches' role in where we are today.
17. No more bottled water for me. I have to pack water when I travel.
18. To take action every day in my own life.
19. To be more personally aware of the use and gift of water.
20. New consciousness of a renewal of the quality of relationships with each other.

[1] Commons refers to spaces that cannot be privately owned. Having intrinsic worth, they are meant to be for the common good of all.

[2] Pope Francis writes in his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*: The continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet is coupled today with a more intensified pace of life and work which might be called "rapidification". Although change is part of the working of complex systems, the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution. Moreover, the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development. Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity (#18).

Keynote Speakers

Archbishop-Elect of Regina Donald Bolen

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Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home) is the appeal from Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility.