

What is the Work of Justice Now?

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“If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behavior. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market.”

-Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* #215

“What is the work of Justice now?” I find it intriguing that this question is currently being posed by *two* different organizations which are near and dear to our Presentation hearts. One has issued a response to the question and the other is only posing the question for the moment. One of these groups is the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (**LCWR**) and the other is the International Presentation Association (**IPA**). You know them well!

Three of us from the US Unit have been preparing to join with 73 other Presentation People at the upcoming 8th IPA Assembly in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada. The Justice Contacts in attendance have been tasked with sharing with the IPA Assembly, our response to *“What is the work of justice now, in your particular context?”*.

Well, what *is* the work of justice, at this time, in our Western (especially our United States) context? In the midst of current intersectional injustice (forced migration, human trafficking, climate change) LCWR has discerned that the signs of *these* times are crying out for ***transformative justice***.

In recent times we have focused on restorative justice which looks at both the victim and the perpetrator. We realize now that our justice work also needs to take into account **the community**: the community, which consciously or otherwise, allows these injustices to occur. The work of justice in our context at

this time is **transformative justice**---the work of transforming consciousness of the community.

The current predominate Western consciousness is that **everything is separate**: i.e.-we humans are separate from nature and we humans exist independently of each other.

When *that* is the predominate perception, the actions that flow from that consciousness will be short-sighted, unjust and certainly not sustaining nor sustainable. *This* worldview allows for mountaintop removal, racism and other violence towards humans and the rest of Creation. *This* paradigm objectifies – it does not perceive the other as “subject”.

A consciousness that **everything is separate** lies at the heart of intersectional injustice and *this* consciousness is what needs to be transformed. Otherwise, our efforts at justice work will remain hobbled (at best) by this deficient, demeaning and we might even say demonic worldview. Our efforts at bringing about God’s Reign need to be about transforming the consciousness of the community at large.

Transforming consciousness to *what*?

To a worldview that is more aligned with the way the Universe works: to an alternative and sustaining worldview that **everything is related**.

We already believe this as Presentation People-- in terms of “communion” and “interconnectedness”! (Cf: especially C3 & C8)

And, as a Western society, aren’t we *finally* waking up to this fact, to reality?
-When we see the *intersection* of **forced migration** due to **climate change** with **human trafficking** and other predations upon those forced to flee. -

When millions of people in both Canada and the US currently breathing in dangerous levels of smoke due to wildfires (which are due to **climate change**).

Indeed, **everything is related**!

And this broadened consciousness calls into question so much: our lifestyle, our attitudes, our habits, our economy.

Pope Francis is also calling for the transformation of consciousness. In *Laudato Si* he stresses at least nine times that “**Everything is related**”. In chapter 3 Francis implores all of us, especially in the West, to shed the “techno-cratic” paradigm. This way of seeing, this way of doing business proclaims “*limitless ‘resources’ and infinite economic growth*” ---- at the expense of the natural world, people made poor and future generations of all species.

Prior even to *Laudato Si*, Fr. Thomas Berry wrote that the Great Work of our time is to build a *mutually-enhancing human-Earth relationship*. “Mutually-enhancing” – this calls to mind a relationship that is reciprocal, where there is harmony. It is not one-sided.

To meet the signs of these times, let us be about the justice work of transforming consciousness. We can do this by practicing what Thomas Berry called “*the art of evocation*”. Presentation Sisters have been evoking awareness through education for centuries. Let us now be about the work of **transformative justice**: by artfully, intentionally and creatively evoking the reality of the Universe within Western consciousness: that, indeed, *everything is related*.

How do you live, pray and minister out of an interrelated worldview?
How does your witness transform the consciousness of the community?

***“We cannot solve our problems
with the same level of thinking that created them”.***

–Albert Einstein

