

Beyond A Throwaway Culture: Finding Good Eco-Questions for our Faith Communities Saturday, February 29th 2020



It was a great joy to gather together a group of interested, invested participants for a day of reflection and challenge on the theme of eco-justice in our world this February.

As a centre, we are convinced that the climate change conversation is the most important of our time, but we are also struck by how challenging it is to discuss it in the face of deep social injustice and poverty in our cities. So we decided to look at Eco-justice, through the lens of poverty and the UN sustainable development goals.

We were blessed to have Brenda Farrell lead us in prayer, as we lit the Eco-congregation candle and prayer:

“Creating God, your name is written in every leaf, every bird, every river, every living being. Thank you for calling us by name. Thank you for your continued creating power in moisture, rivers and oceans. Make us attentive to the wounds of the earth and willing to work for the healing of the whole creation.”

Dr Eoin O’Mahony of UCD School of Geography started our reflections with a challenging presentation on “Warming planet: ‘cool off there buddy’: Wealth and ignoring the 2 degree threshold’. Taking us on his daily bicycle commute to work across the relatively small city of Dublin, he tracked how energy is used and available, where old trees, bicycle stands and bus stops make good choices easier for residents. We were left asking ‘what is the quality of life of our parishioners today?’.

Then Dr Ciara Murphy of the Jesuit centre for Faith and Justice helped us create links between Laudato Si, UN Sustainable Development Goals and the reality of life in Dublin city today. Looking at the areas of Land Management, Transport and Housing, Ciara reminded us

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (LS139)”

We asked ourselves – What is the role of a (faith) leader in reflecting on climate and social justice? What are good questions for leaders to be asking of themselves and of the world, on behalf of their (faith) communities?

We noticed that such questions on such a broad topic were overwhelming and could bring us to despair. In order to maintain a sense of hope, we came back to the local, the small ordinary activity that inspired and networked people together.

This truth was very helpful for our afternoon workshops where we learnt about the Daily Mile from Frank Greally, the Bio-diversity work done here in St Marys and the grounds from Natalie Cunningham and the spiritual nature walk from Brenda Farrell. Each participant received information from each workshop as well as a copy of Bio diversity Irelands ‘Pollinating for Faith Communities’, which was most inspiring.

Finally, as part of a beautiful closing prayer, we blessed a Crab Apple Tree for planting in our bio-diversity garden (where she flourishes!), and each received a seed bomb of irish wildflowers with the instruction/invitation “We had planted our tree to grow and thrive here now we give you Irish seed bombs to take home. These seeds contain the mystery of life-the energy of God-with our care that energy will unfold-under our care these seeds will grow and bloom and thrive-we will become co-creators with God.”

Sent forth in hopeful expectation that what God creates, we can nurture and what God calls us to, we can achieve. Each in their own way and time. Thanks be to God.