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CONNECTIONS

CRC-JPIC Ontario Network

JUNE 08, 2020

- POVERTY
- PEACE
- INDIGENOUS RIGHTS
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- HUMAN TRAFFICKING
- IN THE NEWS

Mark Your Calendar!

This year's CRC-JPIC Ontario Network Meeting

November 4-5

Location to be confirmed OR
online event as plan B

Introduction

Dear JPIC Ontario Members,

We are living a historical moment. A *kairos* moment that can redirect our lives and our mission as Church, if we listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Five years after *Laudato Si'*, never has there been such global awareness of our interdependence, with the Covid-19 pandemic bringing inequalities to light, the Black Lives Matter movement uniting the fight against racism across the world, and concern for “pressing the reset button” on our environmental and economical policies being voiced by so many movements, including faith communities and organizations.

In this edition of the JPIC Ontario Network Newsletter, our Core Committee members and contributors reflect on the interconnectedness of the environment, the transition to a just ecology and economy, the unheard voices of those who are exploited and trafficked, the conversion needed to heed Indigenous peoples' rights and worldview, all in the perspective of the common good. This is the fundamental purpose of an integral ecology. 2020 marks the fifth anniversary of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical and leads us into a “*Laudato Si'* year” to keep moving forward in building the Kingdom of God that is justice and peace (Romans 14:17).

SAVE THE DATE... for plan A or B! The Core Committee is working on the JPIC Ontario November gathering (November 4-5), and we will follow-up soon with program details. An online event is anticipated, in case public health authorities maintain measures restricting gatherings and travel in the fall.

We welcome your feedback! Write mission@crc-canada.org.

Peace and solidarity,

Sabrina Di Matteo, Executive Assistant - Mission

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POVERTY

Rethinking the social safety net after COVID-19

As the weeks passed with ongoing physical distancing and social isolation due to the emergence of COVID-19, Canadians are experiencing a new reality. Required to stay home if at all possible, many have returned to spending quality time with their families and remembering the importance of friends. There's renewed interest in home-cooked meals and the domestic arts. With schools and countless businesses closed, many cars are off the roads, and with much industry shut down, air pollution has visibly improved. There is more birdsong, and rarely seen wildlife is re-emerging.

Had you asked any conscientious observer in any sector — whether it be the environment, climate, indigenous rights, farming, healthcare, housing and homelessness, food security, poverty — they would have been able to articulate in detail the injustices and vulnerabilities inherent within them. But as so many have noted, the arrival of COVID-19 has brought the flaws into sharp relief for all to see: pre-existing holes in our social safety net, the claim that austerity measures, upheld by neoliberals for decades, is the only possible way forward.

Citizens have come together in solidarity to support the public good. Making sacrifices, they follow measures during this unprecedented public health emergency to slow down the progress of the virus and to protect not only themselves but also all of society. Proclaiming “We’re all in this together,” governments have stepped up to the challenge in dramatic and surprising ways to take an essential role in enabling Canadians to adhere to public health directives. Multiple policies which mere months ago had been deemed impossible by politicians and economists alike have been put into place in only a matter of weeks. We have seen numerous financial aid packages, a moratorium on tenant evictions, deferred mortgage payments, free inter-city public transit, free parking, free hotel rooms for the homeless, the early release of non-violent inmates from prison, and more.

Choice and necessity

Canada's federal government has poured more than a billion dollars into research grants to study the virus, make medicines, and discover a vaccine, along with additional millions to purchase Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for front-line healthcare workers. To cushion workers and businesses from the economic shocks of COVID-19, it has created the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) which with the click of a computer mouse has put \$2,000 a month into the pockets of more than eight million eligible Canadians; the Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Rent Assistance Program for business owners; salary top-ups for low-income essential workers; an increased Canada Child Benefit; the Canada Emergency Student Benefit; additional funding for Indigenous infrastructure and business; money to arts, culture and sports organizations; funds for farmers to house migrant workers during the necessary 14 days of quarantine; millions for fisheries; \$1.7 billion to the fossil fuel industry to hire 10,000 workers to clean up abandoned oil wells and restore farmland.

Multiple policies which mere months ago had been deemed impossible by politicians and economists alike have been put into place in only a matter of weeks.

Nearly every day, Prime Minister Trudeau has announced new measures to cover the gaps of yesterday's aid packages. It's costing hundreds of billions of dollars, but no one is blinking an eye. Austerity, it turns out, as journalist Gwynne Dyer put it, had been an ideological choice, not an economic necessity.

Falling through the cracks

Unfortunately, protection isn't being applied equitably across the board -- sometimes because of split federal/provincial responsibilities -- and some Canadians are still falling through the cracks. The vast majority of deaths from COVID-19 are seniors residing in long-term care homes. Grocery store clerks are being hailed heroes along with front-line healthcare workers but many go to work without PPE or pandemic pay. Expectant mothers who have exhausted Employment Insurance aren't eligible for CERB. Businesses are receiving rent relief but residential tenants are not. Students are getting some assistance but not as much as workers who have lost their jobs. Migrant workers remain outside the labour force. While governments are deploying military personnel and recalling retired medical workers to the front lines, fully-trained foreign doctors remain excluded. Social assistance recipients continue to struggle far below the poverty line, and the illnesses their chronic poverty have caused put them at increased risk of contracting COVID-19. In the general population, after many weeks of restrictions and no idea how long this is going to last, tempers are fraying and anxiety is palpable. Liquor sales are up and so is domestic violence. There's increased surveillance in the name of public safety. Too many are dying, and dying alone. There are no wakes and no funerals.

People, not profit

Government's extensive financial aid has led to unprecedented discussion about implementing a basic income. Why continue to patch together myriad programs that still exclude some Canadians when a single measure could protect everyone from falling into poverty? Fifty members of the Senate of Canada sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance on April 21st, calling on them to restructure the CERB to implement a "minimum basic income". There are similar efforts to make basic income a reality across the world: Spain announced it will introduce a universal basic income "as soon as possible" to be in place "indefinitely" as part of its efforts to combat the economic effects of coronavirus. Pope Francis supports basic income as a priority in a post-COVID world to help "eliminate inequalities" and "heal injustices."

Every global pandemic has been unique. And in the aftermath of widespread suffering and loss, positive change has come. Likewise with COVID-19, the real test will come once the crisis is over. Daily, Canada's prime minister acknowledges that there is still much to do and he is committed to doing a better job. Many expect no less than transformative change. Instead of a world order characterized by 'capital', 'profit' and 'consumerism', there's an opportunity to shift towards 'cooperation', 'equity' and 'sustainability'. Will we take the lessons learned during COVID-19 and apply them to a new way of living? Or will we return to 'business as usual', where profit takes precedence over people, and we continue to shut out and discriminate against our poorest and most vulnerable citizens?

Tara Kainer

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Office

Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston (ON)

PEACE

Working for Peace in a Pandemic

Our current global circumstances present many challenges. One of the less obvious perils is the threat to world peace and the elevated risk that war and conflict bring to protecting people from the virus. For this reason, the [United Nations has been leading a call for a global ceasefire](#) until we contain the virus. In March, [Pope Francis appealed for a global ceasefire](#) as the pandemic spread, and [Pax Christi supported this call](#).

Another danger looms when our attention and most media coverage are focused on COVID-19. A pressing Canadian example of this is the swelling support for small modular nuclear reactors on the part of some provincial governments. The [Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick](#) seeks to promote nuclear-free renewable energy, as well as responsible energy use. This technology is being promoted as a homegrown solution to climate change (an alternative energy source to fossil fuels) and is being supported by the federal government with public funding. The Coalition is challenging this assertion and calling on all those concerned about the proliferation of nuclear technology to speak up.

Sample letters to federal and provincial governments are available at crednb.ca and after this article. We encourage you to contact your elected representatives about these concerns – this is an especially significant opportunity for those in Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick, the three provinces most keen on these reactors. Individuals and organizations from various New Brunswick locations (including members of Religious Communities) are core members and “champions” with the Coalition. Others are [welcome to inquire](#) about being “Champions of responsible energy development.”

Just as COVID-19 was reaching Canada, several groups, including the Council of Canadians and the Sisters of Charity, I.C. in Saint John, invited Dr. Gordon Edwards, an award-winning nuclear consultant and president of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, to speak about this issue. He held two public sessions in Saint John and the remaining lecture planned for Fredericton [was held online](#). Roma De Robertis, SCIC, has written an excellent [review of his presentation here](#).

The public in New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan, is receiving ample information from proponents of nuclear energy expansion. The Coalition is committed to providing an alternative awareness. Your prayer and support are appreciated.

Monica Lambton

Coordinator - Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation

Congregation of Notre-Dame (Visitation Province)

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Another danger looms when our attention and most media coverage are focused on COVID-19.

Sample letter for your community

Sample letter addressing funding of small nuclear reactors

*Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada and
Hon. Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Natural Resources
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0A6*

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister O'Regan,

I write to express deep concern about federal funding for development of small modular nuclear reactors. I am opposed to nuclear expansion and believe your government and three provincial governments are headed in the wrong direction by promoting and funding development of SMNRs with taxpayers' money.

With industry, your government and the governments of New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan are promising jobs and carbon neutral electricity generation from SMNRs. We are all committed to meeting vital carbon emissions targets. However, steep financial costs and serious dangers to human health and the environment from nuclear expansion far outweigh any promised benefits. More sustainable and cost-effective advantages would flow from a nuclear-free focus on renewable energy from wind, solar, geothermal and tidal sources.

My main concern is dangerous radioactivity throughout the nuclear cycle, from uranium mining and transportation, to radioactive waste for many generations. Proposals to extract and transfer radioactive materials from conventional nuclear reactors to SMNRs pose grave risks. I am also alarmed about plans for SMNR exports after prototypes are developed in Canada.

Internationally, there have long been troubling connections between nuclear power generation and nuclear weapons. Globally, Canada has played a major role for many decades in this unstable nuclear cycle. Now is the time for you and your government to take the lead by resisting costly and dangerous nuclear expansion, while investing in sustainable energy alternatives for the sake of the environment, as well as present and future generations.

Sincerely,

(Name) _____ (Date) _____
(Address) _____
(Signature) _____

Copies to: [One's MP and provincial premier; no postage needed to Ottawa, but postage required to premier. For MP, please use same House of Commons address as above. Letters to premiers are especially important in Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick.]

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Indigenous Peoples Facing Pandemic and Promise

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development; for we know that things can change” (Pope Francis, [Laudato Si'](#), Encyclical on Care for our Common Home, no. 13). And change they have!

Pope Francis expressed the above challenge in his historic encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, in which he articulates his vision for a global conversion and transformation of human participation in the life-community of our planet, our Mother Earth. At that time, he did not envision the presence and the effect of a life-threatening microscopic virus: Covid-19. Yet, we are now making a concerted global effort to mitigate the effects and protect against this deadly virus. Medical researchers around the world are engaging more cooperatively. Some governments, including Canada's, are engaging more directly and in multiple ways with the people whom they govern. Interspersed with such dreaded words as *tested positive* and *the total death-count*, are *flattening the curve*, *self-distancing* and the message that there will be a *new normal*. Appropriately, we all wonder what this new normal will be.

The urgency of the challenge Pope Francis named has not lessened; rather, it has increased. We are confronted with the truth so clearly expressed by liberation theologians, Pope Francis, and some of his predecessors that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same. This is clear in Pope Francis' words: “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.” (LS, no. 48).

In the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, he writes: “For though it is true that the Amazon is facing an ecological disaster, it also has to be made clear that a ‘true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor’.” (*Querida Amazonia*, no. 8). This is the Gospel call to justice today.

Unheard cries of the poor

One of the societal failures that we now see more clearly is the vulnerability and the economic and social neglect of the elderly, of the poor and of Indigenous peoples. We haven't really heard the cry of these poor. The earth has long cried for clean water and unpolluted skies; for reprieve from our onslaught. Respite is happening in some little ways now, but not enough to prevent radical climate change. We have yet to see how the social justice dimensions will change. Certainly, there is greater awareness of vulnerable peoples but the necessary transformation still needs to happen. We cannot go back to ‘business as usual.’ Nor would Pope Francis want us to do so!

One of the societal failures that we now see more clearly is the vulnerability and the economic and social neglect of the elderly, of the poor and of Indigenous peoples.

In this current pandemic historical memory, the virus, the struggle to decolonize, and the reality of global warming and a climate crisis all come together.

For the past 20-plus years, Indigenous Peoples globally have been publicly challenging the nations of the world to recognize that the earth and humans are interdependent and intimately connected. Though deeply impacted and disadvantaged by the processes of colonization, Indigenous Peoples have insisted that we humans have a great responsibility to care for the earth of which we are an interdependent part, and to acknowledge by our actions that we are grateful for the ways in which Our Mother Earth has cared for us. The reciprocal relationship of Indigenous peoples with the earth is expressed in the introductory [Joint Statement on Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). In addition, numerous articles of the document highlight the relationship between land, Indigenous culture and justice.¹

In *Laudato Si'* (no. 146) and [the final document of the Amazonian synod](#) (no. 9), synod participants and Pope Francis speak of the need to dialogue with Indigenous peoples and to understand and learn from their approach to good living.

Their approach most certainly involves a vision that does not relentlessly deplete the earth or violate its integrity or that of other forms of earth life, as does our current globalized neocolonial consumerist and extractive lifestyle. Rather, it sees the earth as a sacred gift from its Creator.

Indigenous vision and calls to conversion

Indigenous leaders in Canada know well the vulnerability of their people who live with inadequate and over-crowded housing, lack of potable water, major health issues, limited or no access to medical services and resources, challenges of transportation, unemployment, and limited, unrealistically-priced food supplies. As in previous epidemic instances, the elderly and those with compromised health are at the greatest risk. The leaders are taking responsibility for protecting their people in this crisis. They've cancelled all communal gatherings, limited access to their communities and sought funds for medical needs specifically related to Covid-19. As of April 25, 2020 there were 88 cases of Covid-19 and one death identified in Indigenous communities on Reserves in Canada.² Indigenous people, living off-reserve would be included in the provincial counts, and thus not specifically identified.

Indigenous organizations and leaders in Amazonia took early measures to educate and protect their people about the pandemic. We know that Indigenous peoples in colonized countries around the globe know the devastation caused by epidemics in the past. In this current pandemic historical memory, the virus, the struggle to decolonize, and the reality of global warming and a climate crisis all come together. They are the challenge facing us. Where and what is the promise we face?

I find this promise in the vision of *Laudato Si'* which I see as an expression of Pope Francis' ability to "Think globally." I see the *Synod on the Amazon* as an expression of "Act locally," since he focuses on one specific vital biome. His subsequent apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* highlights the need for relationships of love with the

¹ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples General Assembly Resolution # 61/295 (Annex), UN GAOR, 61st Sess., Supp. No. 49, Vol. III, UN Doc. A/61/49 (2008) 15.

² CBC News: The National, April 25, 2020.

land and its peoples. It is a clear call to conversion reminding us that the power of faith and love are what will transform us.

All three of these documents call us to conversion. "Conversion...is the common thread running through the final document of the Pan-Amazon Synod. Conversion is expressed with different accents: integral, pastoral, cultural, ecological, and synodal." ([Vatican News](#)) Another key message, expressed in *Querida Amazonia* (no. 6) is that of incarnation, specifically focused on the way in which the Church is being called to live and act in very concrete, localized and integral ways.

Could this reveal the 'new normal' to which we are called? Are we called in our daily living to be a Church and a people converted to God's way of seeing and relating to Creation and all life in this shared home?

In *Laudato Si'* (no. 10), Pope Francis speaks of St. Francis, his inspiration for integral ecology. He says: "He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. ...He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God and with others, with nature, and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace."

For me, this describes 'integral ecology' and reminds me that we need both prayer and action in order to live in this way. For many of us, our ability to engage in this call appears limited. However it is not, if we recognize in it a call to deepen our prayer life and if we realize the power of witness and prayer. In his April 30th homily, Pope Francis spoke of the power of "witness and prayer." Our lives witness to both our faith and our chosen way of living and being in this world. Pope Francis reminded us that it is God who draws us and empowers us for conversion. If we live in simplicity, faith, trust and harmony as Francis and other saints have done, we can incarnate in our lives the kind of love for creation and for others, and the conversion to which we are called. Can we choose to truly live simply and in respect *for* and communion *with* all creation? This is the challenge and the promise that faces not only Indigenous peoples but all of us.

Priscilla Solomon, CSJ
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ENVIRONMENT

Slowing down and redirecting action

Environmentalists and scientists have been shouting from mountaintops urging citizens of our mother Earth to slow down and stop our mad addiction to fossil fuels. Along comes COVID19 and suddenly we see the mountain.

Coal burning, oil refining and airline traffic reductions due to China's lockdown reduced the country's carbon emissions by 25 per cent, or 200 megatons of CO2 according to the [Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air](#).

Toronto and other major Canadian cities have seen drastic reduction of atmospheric nitrogen dioxide (NO2) from just a year ago. NO2 irritates our lungs, causes coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing. It is linked to the development of asthma and other illnesses.

The evidence that human activity causes pollution and climate change is as clear as the Himalayan mountain range that can be seen from India for the first time in 30 years. And this was accomplished in just a few months.

COVID19 has also shown us what is possible when we work together and what the consequences of inaction are. Scientist and economists have been warning us for decades that the longer we take in addressing the challenge of climate change the worse it will be. We must act now to avert a future global catastrophe.

We need to build more resilience into our systems including our healthcare system, our food system, and our local economy in order for us to deal with what we know will be the adverse impacts of climate change.

And while the immediate concern must be the health and well-being of citizens, our politicians must use this time to consider how post-COVID19 stimulus could be directed to creating jobs in clean tech, renewable energy, energy conservation, and greener transportation.

At the top of our list of priorities, alongside human welfare, must be the biosphere and its future.

This is not a time to bail out oil and gas companies unless to help them transition to clean tech and renewable energy.

Bridget Doherty

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Resources and further reading

[Faith and the Common Good video resources](#)

<https://energyandcleanair.org>

Post-COVID19 stimulus could be directed to creating jobs in clean tech, renewable energy, energy conservation, and greener transportation.

ONLINE EVENT

An Anti-Human
Trafficking online
forum: Celebrating
Courage, Renewing
Commitment

Offered by the
Toronto Counter
Human Trafficking
Network

June 10 at 10 A.M.

[Registration link](#)

This forum will provide in-depth knowledge and innovative approaches on how to maintain anti-human trafficking efforts and provide services to survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic, explore innovative ways of partnership collaboration during the pandemic, recognize and understand how to navigate the system given the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING INITIATIVES

News on anti-human trafficking

There have been some new initiatives in both Canada and the United States in the work against human trafficking.

In Canada, we finally have a nationwide hotline for persons who are in a trafficking situation and need help. The number is **1-833-900-1010**, and it can be a call or a chat. Learn more [on the website](#).



In the US, the Catholic Sisters have a new website, which is now hosting the Stop Trafficking newsletter: <https://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/>. It also includes a monthly reflection. The reflection this month is very timely as it is about women survivors who are living in a safe house during this time of isolation. [Read it online](#).

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) continues its work on advocacy for people caught in trafficking situations of every sort. They held a National Forum in November in Ottawa. The key theme of this year's forum was protection and justice for trafficked persons. The report of the Forum [can be read here](#).

Following up on the Forum, the CCR has produced an "An Anti-Trafficking Action Strategy". In it the CCR calls on the federal government to adopt a holistic approach to human trafficking that addresses root causes, protects rights, provides permanent status and offers access to justice and to services. Now more than ever is the time to focus attention on our demands, in light of the government's new National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2019-2024). The CCR has five central policy demands:



- 1. Root Causes:** Recognize and address systemic inequalities that are the causes and consequences of trafficking.
- 2. Protect Rights:** Protect the rights of trafficked persons and those at risk. This means fixing laws and policies that create barriers and providing better protection of rights.
- 3. Permanent Status:** Provide permanent protection of trafficked persons. This means implementing legislative changes to ensure that there is a permanent and fundamental change in policy to protect trafficked persons.
- 4. Access to Justice:** Ensure effective access to justice. This means stronger human rights-based recourses, and implementing law reform that is non-punitive and recognizes trafficking in all its forms.
- 5. Access to Services:** Ensure universal access to public services for trafficked persons and those at risk. This means access healthcare, education, childcare services, and other psychosocial services.

Lois Anne Bordowitz, FCJ
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IN THE NEWS

➤ What would an ethical recovery look like?

Joe Gunn, Executive Director of the [Centre Oblat – A Voice for Justice](#), at St. Paul University, penned an article titled: “What would an ethical recovery look like?” It addresses the hope for change rooted in the current pandemic experience, and connects it with the challenge of a just ecological transition. It was featured in the Hill Times on May 25th, 2020. We encourage you to [read it online here](#).

➤ Petition: Catholics United for Climate Action

In celebration of the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home, the Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM) called on Catholics across Canada to unite and demand the government “take immediate concrete actions to flatten the curve of global warming and move towards a just and sustainable future.”

“As with all crises, it is those who are already marginalized and oppressed who are suffering most from the COVID-19 fallout. All of Creation is being threatened for the sake of our economy” says Leah Watkiss, the Director of the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care, for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto.

[Read the full piece on the CRC website.](#)

Catholics United for Climate Action was signed by 73 Catholic communities and organizations, and 551 Catholic individuals from across Canada. [The petition can be found here.](#)

➤ Laudato Si’ webinar: Heeding the cry of the Earth & the cry of the poor 5 years on



On May 23rd, Development and Peace, the Canadian Religious Conference and the Global Catholic Climate Movement – Canada organized a webinar marking the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si’. [It can now be viewed online.](#)

Guest panelists were:

- Stephen Bede Scharper, Associate Professor of Environment at the University Toronto and Toronto Star columnist
- Sr. Sue Wilson, CSJ, Office for Systemic Justice, Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada
- Rebecca Rathbone, Development and Peace, Animator for Southwest Ontario and Caritas Youth Leader
- Agnes Richard, Coordinator, GCCM – Canada

➤ **Webinar: In dialogue with Leonardo Boff**

On May 26th, the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice, in collaboration with the Centre Justice et Foi (Montreal) and Earth Charter International held a webinar, also marking the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si'. Mark Hathaway discussed key themes of the encyclical with liberation and eco-theologian Leonardo Boff. [Video of the webinar is available online](#) with simultaneous English translation.

