

Notes from March 13, 2016 Conversation on Care for Our Common Home

Topics That Emerged in the March 13 Groups

About Pope Francis and the Encyclical

- The pope has said astonishing things about community being the bottom line.
- Proud of Pope for making such an eloquent plea.
- Environmental concerns and social justice
- A scientist admires the good science in the pope's encyclical
- Pope f. not an ideologue, solves problems, but stays within church doctrine

Our responsibility to others

- Green rhetoric is rarely combined with worry about poverty.
- Cannot get environmental justice without social justice. All is interrelated. We have 65% of same genetic makeup of a banana tree.

About the poor

- Should change "cry of the poor" to "cry of the excluded".
- Think of "excluded" rather than "poor". Label is important.
- -Rappahannock has changed. Lived poor in Gid Brown Hollow, did not know we were poor. Thought we just lived with the songs of the birds.
- Some of the poorest people have great empathy for animals
- Since 1980 wages have increased 4%. Out of proportion to rise in GDP.
- In poor communities, The land is abused and the children are abused; both are clear cases of abuse.
- Kids who are uneducated don't know the truth; neglect is abuse.
- We impose logic without experiencing poverty ourselves. We who are more advantaged must take responsibility.
- Climate change does not relate directly to poverty. Mechanisms for change are needed
- Poor people do not have the power to make changes because they are dealing with day to day problems and survival.
- The poor are directly affected by climate change.
- We can volunteer to help but must teach people how to help themselves. Vicious cycles continue. Unless we do this they are trapped in poverty.

- Parish in Warrenton, division between rich and poor. Hispanic population. 1 mass per week in Spanish. How to communicate between cultures. Hope to improve living standards.
- Frustration about asking immigrants their legal status, if trying to help them. how to help, how to communicate.
- Missing education opportunities, No GED/diploma/credentials.
- every immigrant group has faced non-inclusiveness.
- Lyme disease. A high cost disease. Meets support group at cc church warrenton.
- We have plenty poor people in Rappahannock. \$7 million of public money is spent on about 1500 poor people in Rappahannock.
- What is "poor"?
- We discuss how we first met poverty: All over the world; at home here in Rapp., in DC.
- Creation of all – equally created by God. Degradation of human beings and environment
- Coming from perspective of different countries, you see poor people in Russia and China. I have seen it. poverty of mind and spirit in those places. Poverty of the heart.
- - We are all poor if we do not have spiritual connections to the land, and we are poor in that way. How can we shift the attitude to understand that the earth is our home.
- What is poor. Poor people Rappahannock, poor in the outside world as well. Why are some people poor?
- approaching people with helping hand extended as opposed to a scolding finger wagging in their faces.
- Half of food grown is thrown away.
- 60% calories are from processed food.
- App for food to be given away.
- Women in Poverty
 - Women heads of household are a larger number of poor statistically in the US.
 - Women need more education and support to help raise their standard of living.
 - Better education of women also means better health of all in the family
 - Discussion of the use of mini business loans to women in Haiti as a way to help bring families out of poverty. NGOs help to create cottage industry this way.

Concerns of Young People

- Younger people are more exposed to education re climate change

Education is important.

- Children especially should be learning about the ways to make change that affect the climate and
- all of us can learn more about alternative energy. Know the problems.
- Team Green World is a program involving kids through music and art.
- We need good schools.
- I hate public education.
- public schools in Rappahannock are defended by describing the talented kids of the Quiz Bowl.
- Study Canadian results of a carbon tax.
- Can we involve school kids in real world applications, in the community, in the land.

What I can do on my own to feel that I am making a contribution.

- I advocate for abused and neglected children.
- Explore your own portfolio. Put your money in clean companies.
- Divestment of stock in south africa helped change there.
- Open your eyes and look at things you throw away and reuse them.
- How can we live in a smaller way. Need kindlier, gentle ways.

Community action is central

- We cannot improve our treatment of the earth without social change
- We can do our part, in our own little way, but the big guys...
- Influence in church community.
- Local Action, Volunteerism is important.
- we need to literally embrace the poor...
- long description of successful farming in Idaho -- lots of potatoes -- while keeping the waters and the environment healthy.
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- The story about Idaho is like a story from YES magazine...telling stories of communities that come up with solutions that are good for people and good for the earth. Sustainability. These stories highlight the
- importance of community.
- Community needs to be inclusive.
- How do you intervene in needy families? Through volunteering at the schools?
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- Wonder how to help low income folks with learning how to use vegetables.
- Language barrier – looking to develop bilingual connections
- How to organize a community around the resources they need.

- Focus and set priorities in areas of greatest need.
- Many people demonize low-income, less educated people

How living in Rappahannock affects lifestyle

- Rappahannock is isolated; we take much for granted such as clean water, quiet, dark skies.
- We interact with a broad range of people in rapp county. Heterogeneous neighborhoods
- However there is resistance to affordable housing in rapp.
- In Rapp no public transportation,
- Some people in rapp county have no indoor plumbing
- We live close to the land.
- Working class cannot afford to live in rapp. County.
- It is easy in our prosperous community not to see the poor right away. Are we willfully blind to poverty in our area?
- Many households of elderly and families are in poverty. The Food Pantry and Free Clinic see some. Others cannot get to services due to poor health or lack of transportation. Some are afraid or do not feel comfortable in coming for help.
- Land use in Rappahannock County: The area depends on Tourism and Farming for much of its money
- Discussion on the need for water in the country – Could Rappahannock investigate the building of a reservoir to save water to sell in the future?
- Discussion of Services provided by the county and the population growth of the county.
- Where does biodynamic and native plant use fit in to the land use?
- Wealthy impact on environment. Out here, driving uses a lot of energy.
- Wealthy make big lawns, use fertilizer.
- Financial base in the county is limited. Does increased tax always benefit all its population. How does the county compare in tax base and rate to other counties and countries? How do we increase the income base and promote county job creation?
 - many county residents work to both protect the natural world in Rappahannock County, and to help the poor here.
 - By geography we are protected from the extremes of climate change so far, such as flooding, melting of glaciers, melting of permafrost, desertification.
 - By natural resources and economic protections we are isolated from damage such as that from mining and other polluting industries.
 - By being in the USA we are protected by law from the most extreme environmental damage from air and water pollution of industry.
 - By virtue of demographics we are protected from the extreme poverty that is seen in very densely populated places.
 - We take for granted good supplies of clean water. Changing precipitation patterns are a challenge that at my house we address with cisterns to capture water when it comes.
 - Our agriculture in Rappahannock is small scale and mostly healthy. No CAFOs, no large monoculture crops.

- Most of us in Rappahannock live closer to the land and nature than do people in modern America, especially urban areas. This gives us a special responsibility to share our understanding and caring with others.
- We have many volunteer efforts in Rappahannock to assist the poor who are here.
- In Rappahannock, volunteer organizations do much of the work that support people, as opposed to larger counties where the government has more services for the poor.

Zoning in rapp. Co. Who is negatively impacted?

- Large-lot zoning in Rappahannock is designed to preserve agricultural land and agricultural industry.
- Zoning laws inhibit the development of small neighborhoods in the county although development is encouraged in the existing villages.
- Discussion of ways to influence county to consider partitioning of tracts of land in the neighborhoods with maintaining larger tracks of open green space. This would maintain the beauty of the area. Groups need to be at the county meeting in support of more housing that also supports open land.
- - At the Rappahannock Planning Commission we didn't talk about the poor.
- We don't have much affordable housing.
- People who live and work here cannot afford house in county. Zoning designed to keep poor people out, teachers etc live elsewhere.

What can you do in Rappahannock to help the earth and the poor?

- Offer bilingual skills; help with education; engage with cclc, support local farms; volunteer at the Food Pantry.
- Get churches working together.
- We have to begin to think how we can care for people.
- Recently learned about rapp. Poor by volunteering at the Food Pantry.
- Trash: Accumulation of trash; burning trash; ask if you can help take neighbors trash to the dump. There are issues about how trash is managed in rapp. Co. because it is up to the individual landowner to take their trash to the landfill or recycle center.
- Immigration
 - Discussion of how to develop ways to bring families here to the county. Need for housing and employment.
 - Several groups are already volunteering to sponsor a family.
 - Agencies who work with this are at this time not willing to bring immigrants to the area.
- Decreasing taxation will not help.
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- We need paid firefighters but county does not want to raise taxes to pay for it.
- Do we need an attitude where tax dollars are not always bad?

- Foothills Forum is dispensing information (?).
- NRCS Family Foundation grant???
- New org – RappU. Learn Spanish, teach class.
- Do we need a community organizer to inventory and pull local organizations together?

Public Policy: State, National and International Efforts

- We are, as a nation, the first and the worst in affecting the environment.
- A carbon tax is needed.
- Carbon tax raises \$ to cover cost of mitigating pollution. Cannot be done individually. International agreements are needed, and countries need to honor their limits.
- Clearing of rainforest would not have been so devastating if there was a carbon tax on each tree
- Externality. What we do affects everyone around us. Milton Friedman. People should pay for the pollution they cause.
- Solar panels in VA will cost \$44.00 per month extra. State law.
- How to create jobs and opportunities.
- Lobbying in Richmond to include invasive species in regulation: Wavyleaf grass, Japanese stiltgrass.
- Delegates to senate...should extend Medicaid to people to help Lyme disease be addressed.
- Grassroots vs government solutions.
- Uneven commitment of resources.

Political problems

- Think big. Vote for people who are not denying the problems caused by climate change. Denial is widespread in America but only here, mostly for political reasons.
- We are the only country in denial about climate change.
- Denial and ignorance are not the same. Denial is a choice with vested interest.
- How to make capitalism a force for healing.)
- Re-think the growth model. Bring an end to “more, more, more”.
- Much resistance to higher taxes is cultural. Education is needed to show people how they are/will be affected

- Educate on the science; communicate with political leaders so they support our concerns
- How to get momentum to change. Get your congress man involved. Educate, advocate, change minds
- 2 absolutes – market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism both are evils. Free markets are solution
- How can we affect pharmaceuticals, corporate, who trample creation underfoot.

Urgency

- There are too many warning signals to ignore. We must step up and find solutions.
- . We can't wait until the crops fail and people are dying in global epidemics in large numbers from tropical diseases. We must have enough technology and infrastructure intact to deal with the problems.
- This is a finite planet. WE HUMANS NEED TO CHANGE, CHANGE CULTURE
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On Faith and Religions and churches

- I have more faith in churches than in government to do something constructive.
- Note the Idaho story involves a community that is predominantly Mormon.

Factors that affect the damage of the earth

- Wealth makes some wasteful and things easily disposed of whereas poverty makes one desperate for things. Both add to the destruction of the earth.

Current environmental problems

- Invasive species of plants are increasing in number and extent. This in part is due to increased CO₂ in the atmosphere which increases speed of growth of vines.
- Invasive species of damaging insects are moving northward as the temperature increases. Tree species are threatened.
- Working on invasive species on land. Variety of landowners between me and boundary. Working on many properties. PRISM Blueridge. How to incentivize less affluent folks to manage their land properly.
- Some people are rich in land, but their wealth is not something they cherish, not what they care for. They view it as a possession. So for example they are able to let their cattle pollute the streams because they don't care. Or they let the exotic invasive species take over.

- Poverty in Brazil re sugar growing , burning, ash, filth
- Water poverty in Africa.
- Developing countries disproportionately hurt by climate change -- agriculture, fishing, forestry

On climate change

- We must act now to address climate change and mitigate its effects
- The poor are directly and disproportionately affected by climate change.
- Poverty and refugees caused by droughts, climate change, e.g. Syria, El Salvador, Mexico.
- Climate change is existential threat to planet
- Climate change deniers come from all strata of society
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Agricultural Practices, Sustainability and Food

- Half of food grown is thrown away.
- 60% calories are from processed food.
- App for food to be given away.
- Pasture vs row crops discussed as part of land use. Sustainability of current food production model is limited. Is this the end of plenty of food with the increase in population in the country and the world? Can part of the solution be in proving small productive family farms? Education is needed for small farmers and government to promote this idea.

Alternative Energy

Growth in solar power has increased rapidly

On How to Conduct the Dialogue in Our Lives

- Look at things from other people's point of view as much as possible instead of preaching.
- "We and they" adversarial relationships and ignorance about the lives of people who do not have options for change do nothing to help.
- We must try not to frighten people into denial and offer ways to take positive action.
- Can needs be met at a volunteer level, or county, or state or fed.
- New paradigm. People are more aware and willing to listen.
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Our feelings about the state of the earth and our actions

- Be positive about any progress.
- It is hard for people to change.
- It is tempting to view environmental issues independent of social issues

- Earth and people are crying for help
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BACKGROUNDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Mental health field; Professional facilitator

Peace corps; Commercial real estate

Job corps; Government; Farmer; Publicist

ecology writers, Native Plant grower, Activist for the poor and adoptions, nurse, priest , massage therapist, innkeeper

Live in: Greene County, Albemarle County, Rappahannock County, Culpeper County, Fauquier, Madison, Prince William

RESOURCES

Earth 2100, and animated story about our future, was recommended.
See Atlantic monthly for article by James Fellows.

The movie, Merchants of Doubt was recommended.

Partnership with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) centered in Warrenton in our area in letter writing campaigns.

People do not know how to be people. They have not learned to fully BE.

The cry of the earth, the cry of the poor.

Politics/transportation

?Poor and deforestation.

Medications from pharma...rural, poor, insurance, fast food, marketing is targeted.

Linda Buento Notes from Care of our Common Home March 13, 2016

Hear Both the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

